

Americans' Attitudes on Education Debt

Research Findings Prepared by Global Strategy
Group for Center Forward



Project Methodology

Registered Voters

Global Strategy Group conducted a survey of **1,000 registered voters nationwide** between March 6th and March 13th, 2023.

Interviews were conducted online.

Note that additional interviewing was also conducted across seven 2024 battleground states.

Margin of Error

The margin of error among nationwide registered voters at the 95% confidence level is **+/- 3.1%**.

The margin of error on further sub-samples is greater.

Care has been taken to ensure the partisan and demographic composition of registered voters are properly represented.

Key Findings

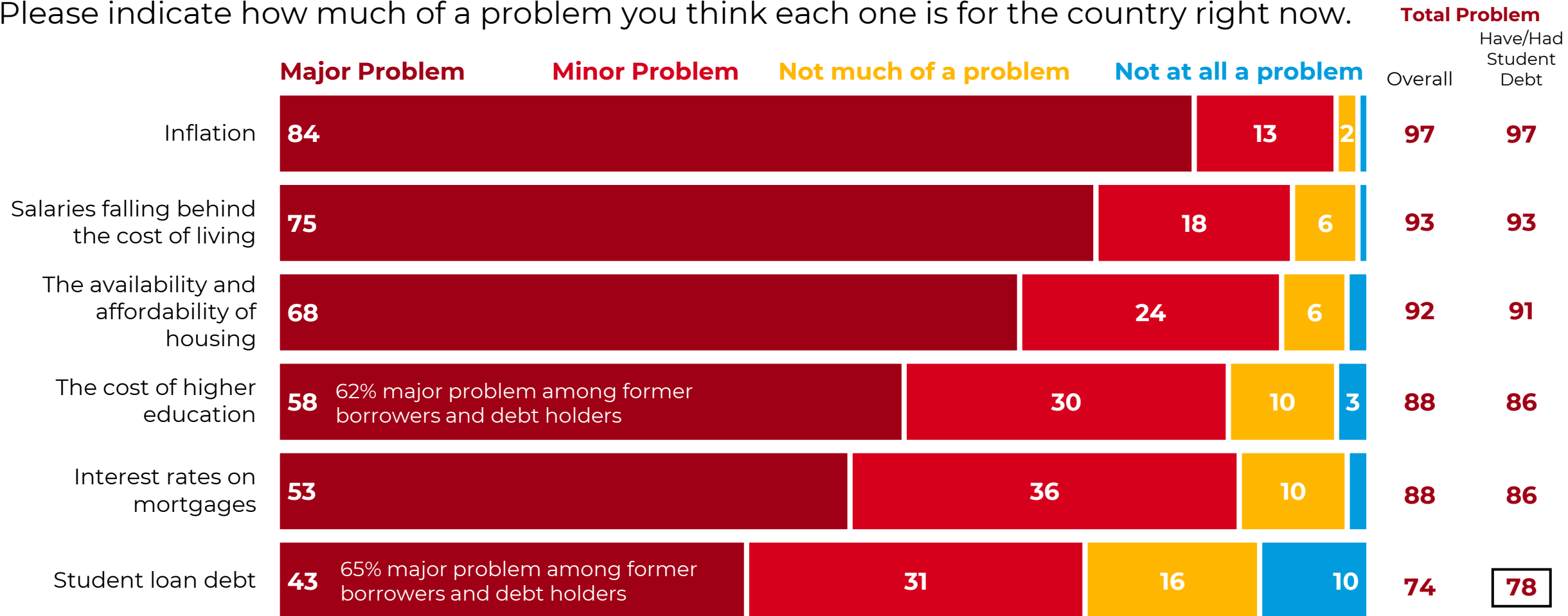
- Voters of all parties identify the **soaring costs of a college education as a problem that the government should be doing more to address**, and hold **the federal government as well as colleges responsible** for the burden of federal student loan debt.
- While crediting colleges with providing grant assistance to low- and moderate-income students, voters say **colleges are not doing a good job at making higher education affordable or a good value for students financially**, something for which Americans think higher education institutions should be held responsible.
- Voters are in favor of **limiting how much debt federal student loan borrowers can take on**, including limiting the amount parents can borrow under the Parent PLUS Loan program and the amount students can borrow under the Grad PLUS Loan program.
- Hearing that many **parents jeopardize their retirement** by taking out PLUS Loans in high amounts is effective in further driving support for capping Parent PLUS Loans.
- Though voters worry that eliminating these loans would restrict access to higher education for some, they are more certain that these **loans hurt more than they help**, and capping these loans would **force colleges to lower tuition** and students to **attend more affordable colleges** as a result.



Landscape

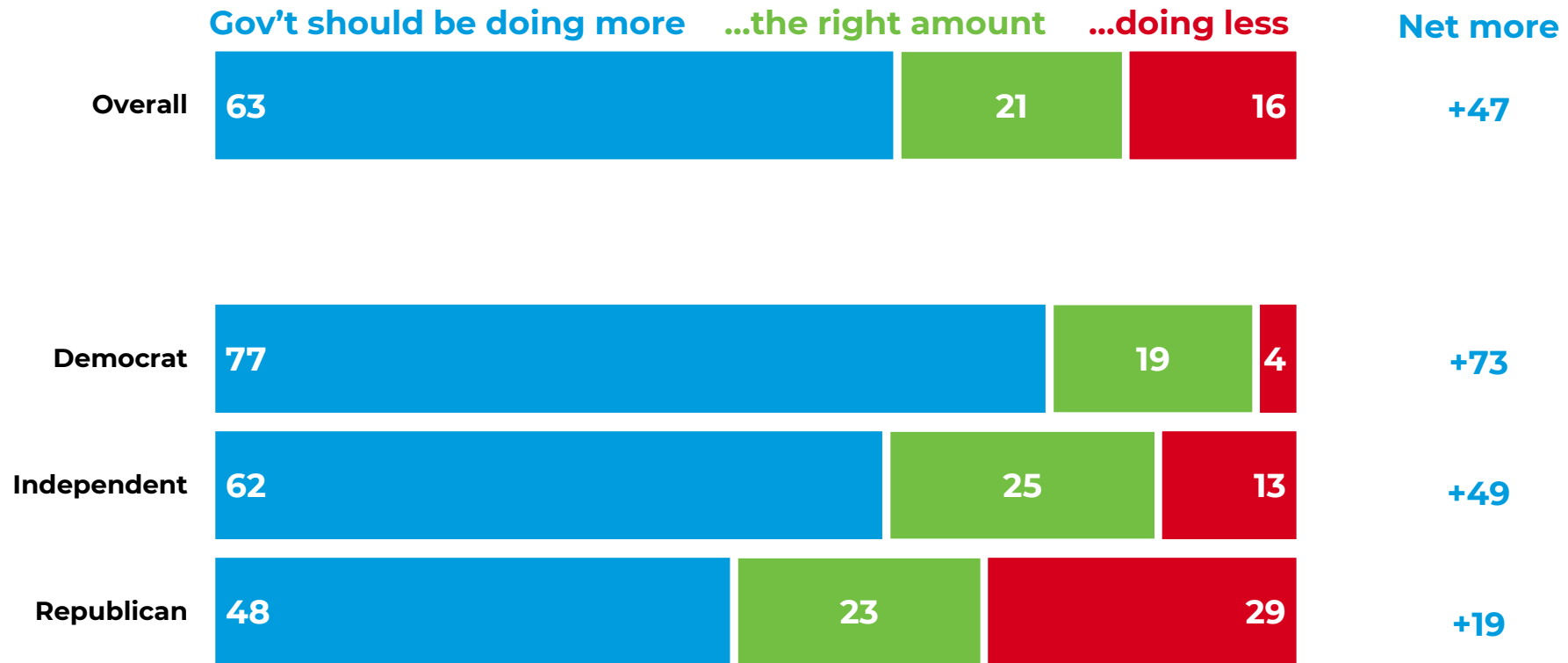
The cost of higher education and student loan debt join other key pocketbook issues as major problems for the country

Please indicate how much of a problem you think each one is for the country right now.



Americans regardless of partisanship want government to do more to make college or continuing ed affordable

Do you think government should be doing more, should be doing less, or is doing about the right amount when it comes to **making college or continuing education more affordable** for regular Americans?

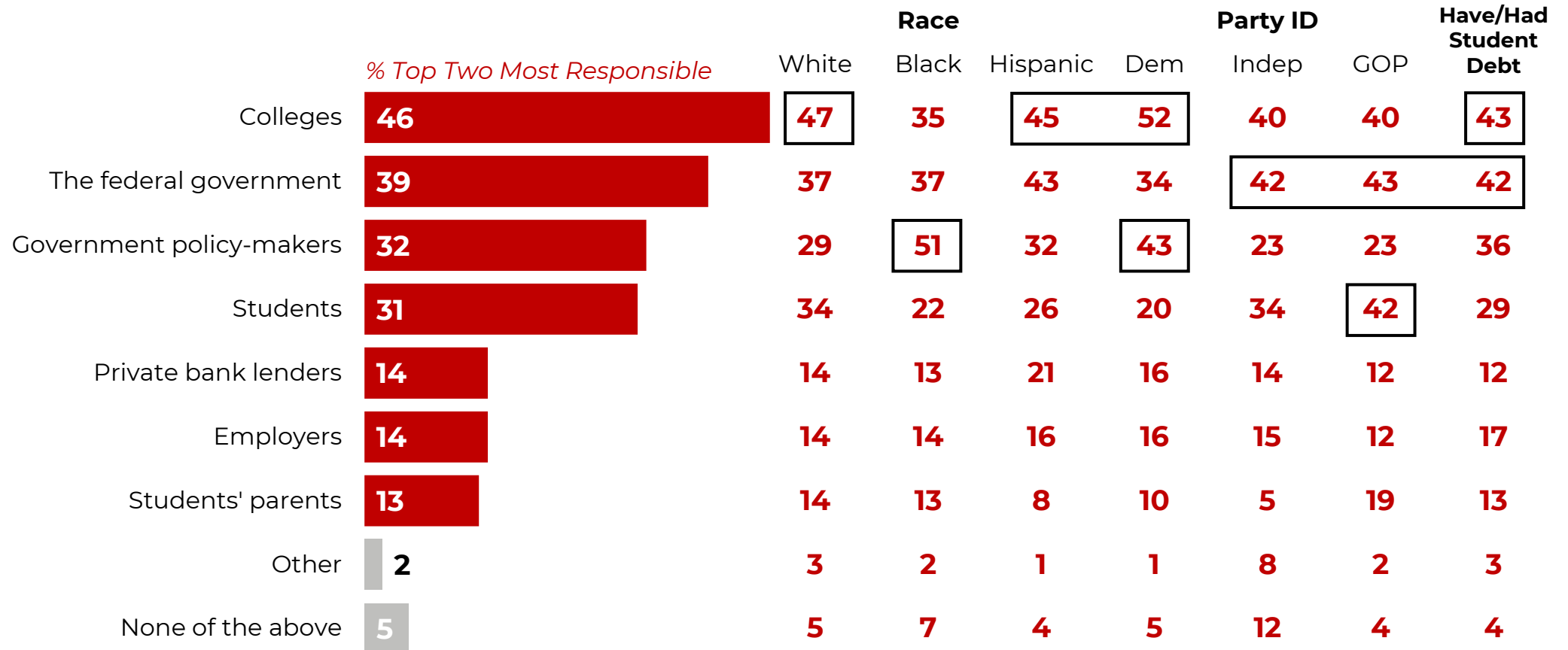




Student Debt

Colleges and government are seen as largely to blame for the country's student loan debt burden

Over the past 15 years, the burden of federal student loan debt in the United States has tripled, ballooning to \$1.6 trillion. Who do you think is most responsible for the country's student debt burden?



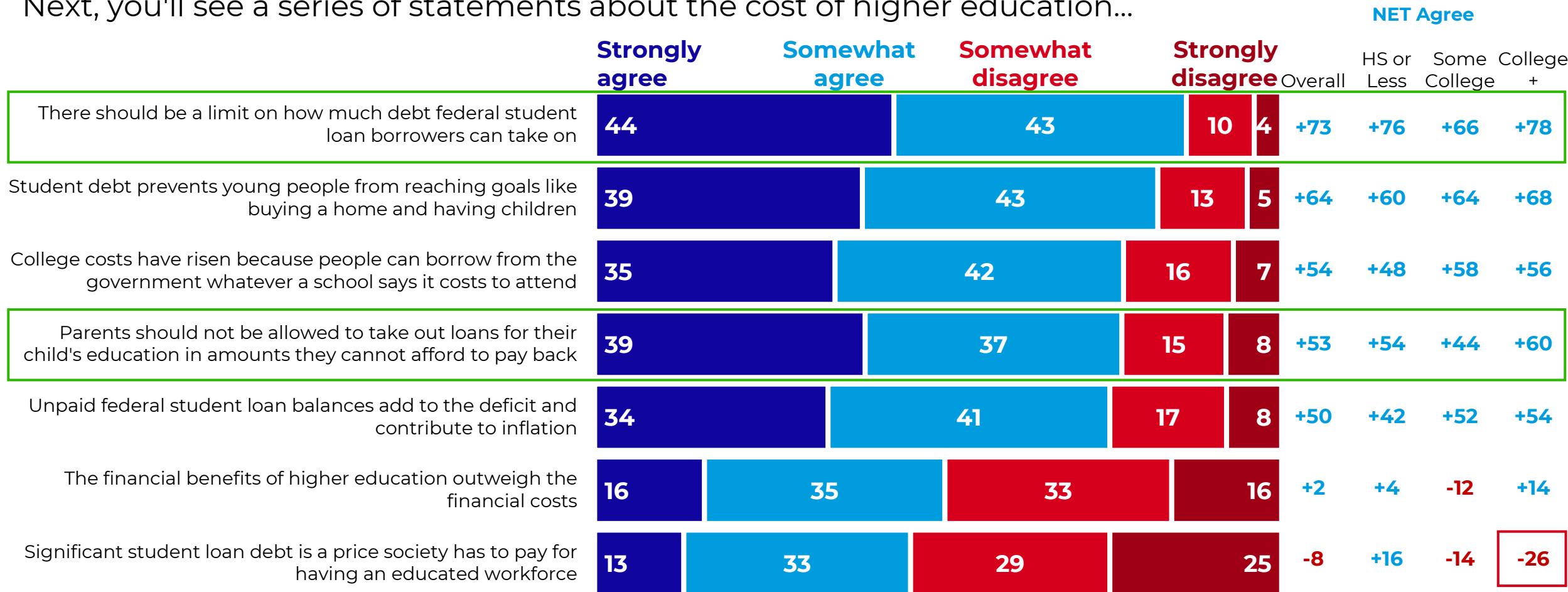
Colleges receive failing grades on making higher education affordable and a good value for students

Please give colleges and universities a letter grade for each...

	A	B	C	DK	D	E	F	Total Failing Grade	Colleges should be "very responsible" for this
Making higher education affordable for students and families	8	8	19	7	18	10	30	58	56
Making higher education a good value for students financially	9	10	20	7	20	11	23	54	60
Preparing students to be financially independent after graduation	9	12	18	10	17	12	22	51	47
Preparing students to enter the workforce after graduation	9	16	23	7	17	10	18	45	60
Preparing students to earn good salaries after graduation	7	16	23	11	17	9	17	43	50
Ensuring students complete their education	8	12	26	13	18	8	15	41	45
Investing in improving education programs	11	15	25	13	17	6	13	36	58
Providing grant assistance to low- and moderate-income students	11	17	25	13	14	9	11	34	46
Investing in campus improvements and infrastructure	9	18	24	23	13	6	7	26	56

Voters agree that federal loans should be limited, but are split on the net benefit of college and push back on the idea that student debt is a necessary burden

Next, you'll see a series of statements about the cost of higher education...

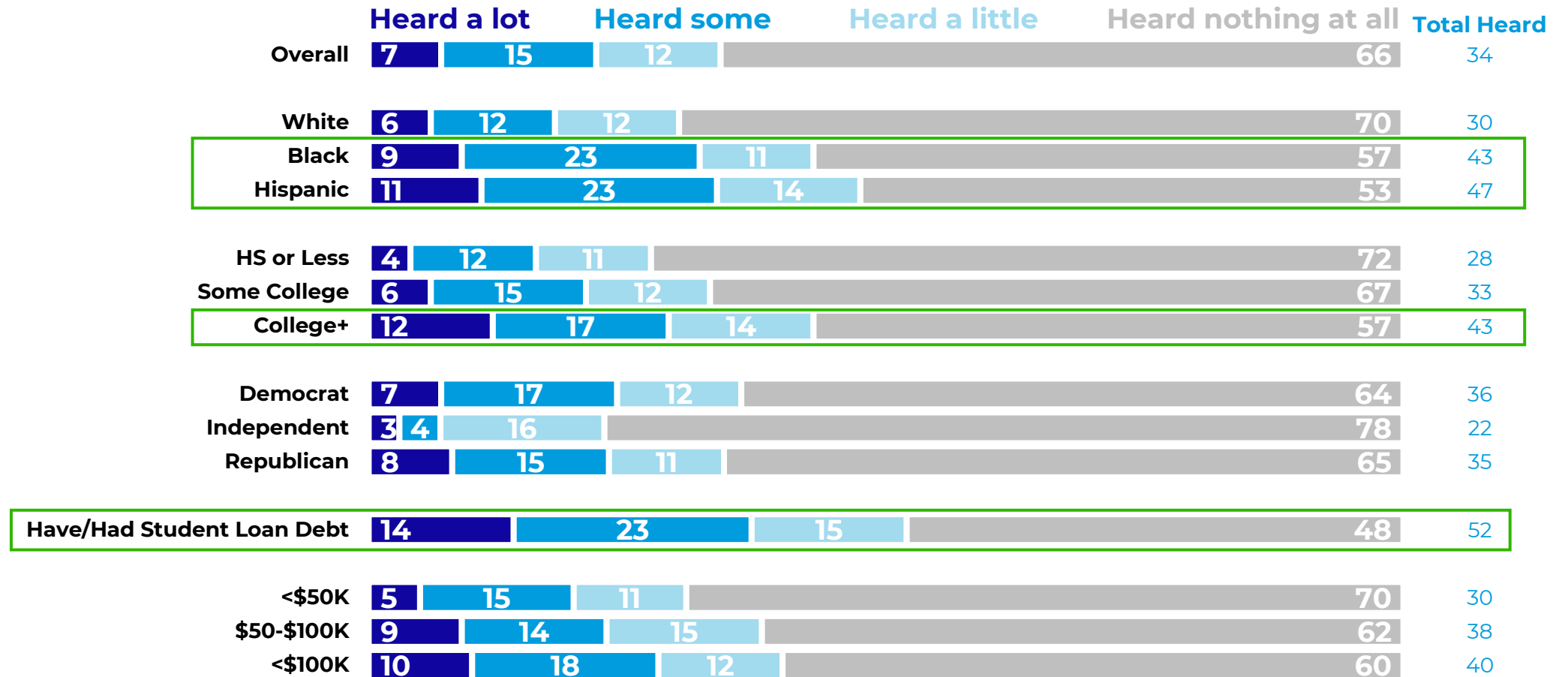




Parent PLUS Loans

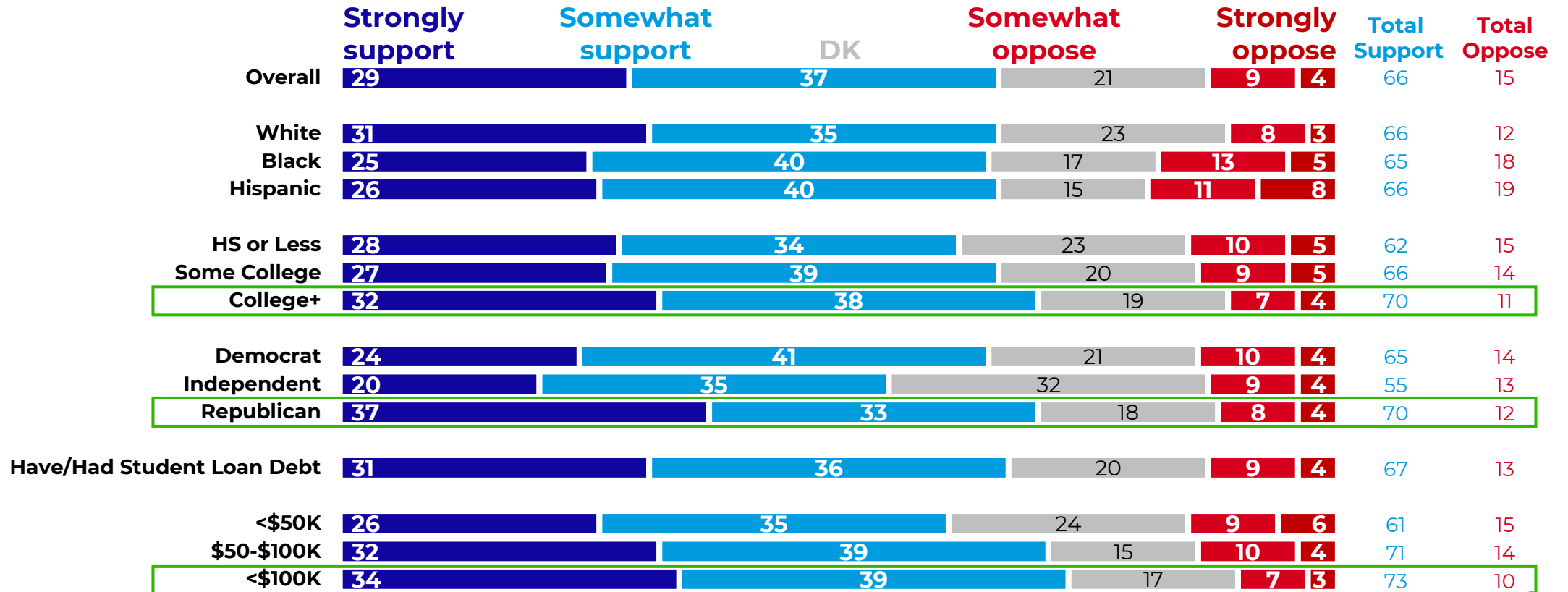
A third of voters have heard about Parent PLUS; voters of color, those with debt, and college voters are more familiar

Prior to taking this survey, how much had you heard about the Parent PLUS Loan program?



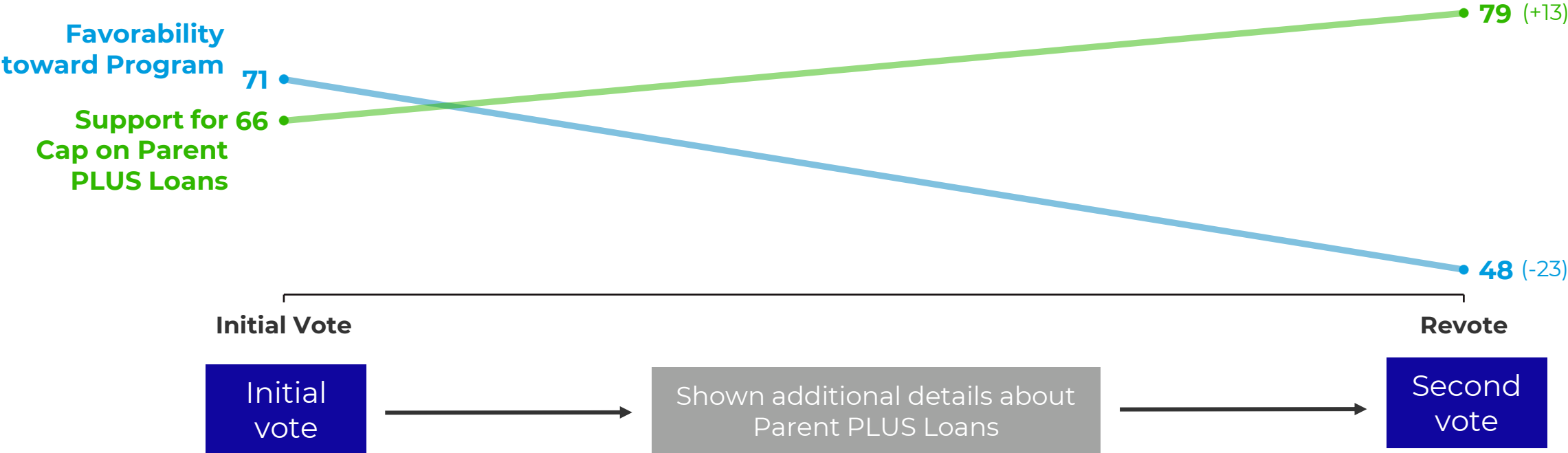
Americans broadly support capping the amount parents can borrow under the Parent PLUS program

As you may or may not know, Congress is considering capping the amount parents can borrow under the Parent PLUS Loan program. Do you support or oppose capping the amount parents are able to borrow for their child's education through the Parent PLUS Loan program?



Favorability for PLUS Loans falls after reading additional details, while support for a cap increases

Movement on favorability toward Parent PLUS Loans and support of capping the amount parents can borrow under the Parent PLUS Loan program



Voters are swayed especially by risks parents take on when taking out Parent PLUS Loans. Those who have or have had debt say these details make them particularly inclined to support a cap

% much more likely to support capping the amount parents can borrow

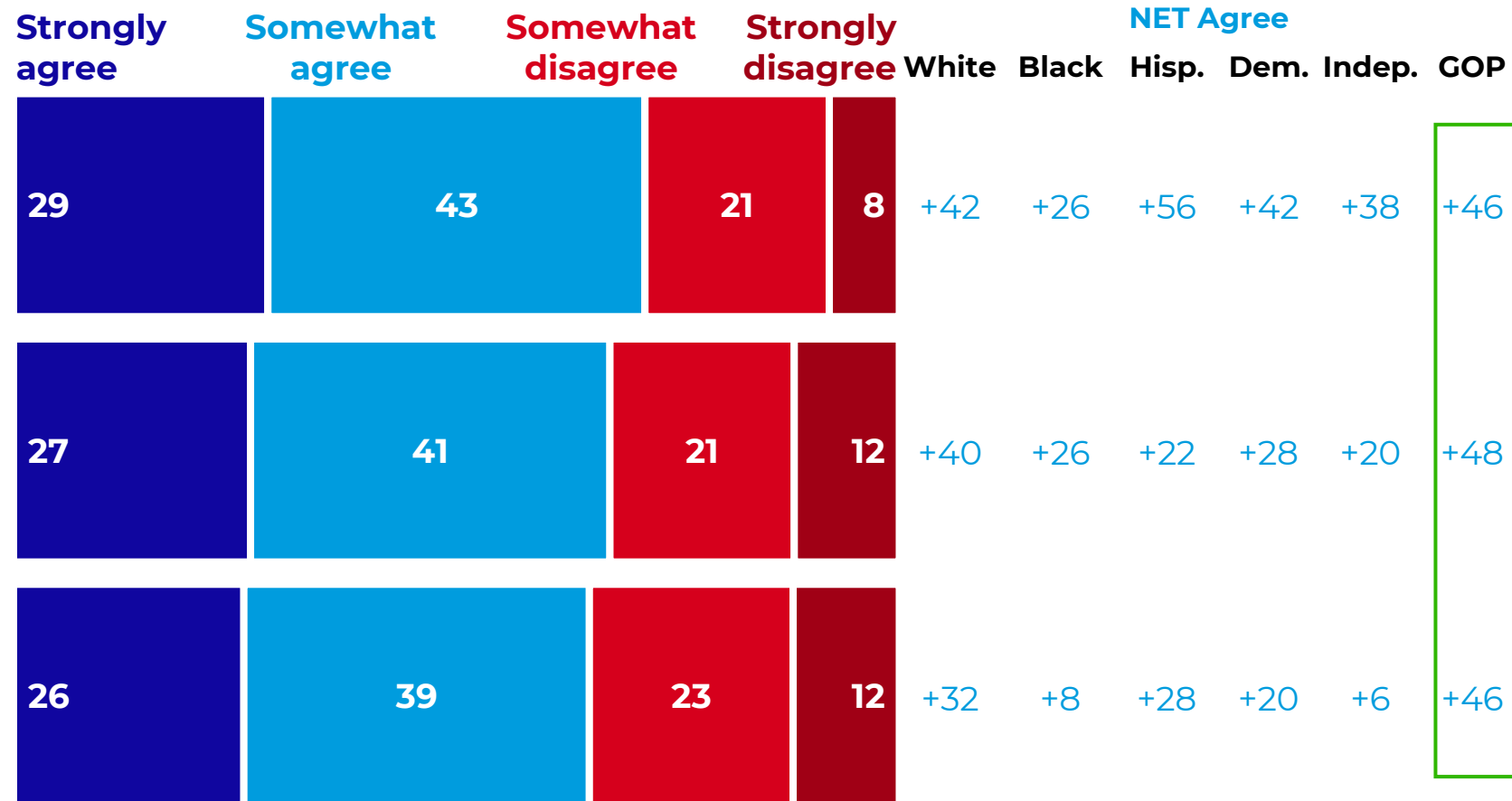
Overall	Have/Had Student Loan Debt	
26	30	Parents who take out Parent PLUS Loans must balance taking on debt while managing their household expenses and saving for retirement
25	29	As costs of higher education continue to go up, parents are borrowing even more through Parent PLUS Loans, making it less and less realistic that parents will be able to pay them back
25	26	As a student loan, Parent PLUS Loans are harder to get rid of during bankruptcy
25	26	Parent PLUS Loans differ from other federal student loans in that there is no grace period. Interest begins to accrue on the loan balance as soon as funds are disbursed and can accumulate quickly
24	28	Parents can take out multiple PLUS Loans if they have more than one child attending college, putting them into even debt
23	28	Parents can borrow up to what the school determines to be the full cost of the child's attendance each year, minus other federal aid, which could amount to tens of thousands of dollars that might not be paid back
22	25	Eligibility for Parent PLUS Loans is not related to the parent's ability to repay the loan; factors such as income and other debt are not considered
20	22	Because parent incomes tend to be more fixed than student incomes, Parent PLUS Loans are not eligible for most income-driven repayment plans, like other federal student loans are



Priorities for Voters

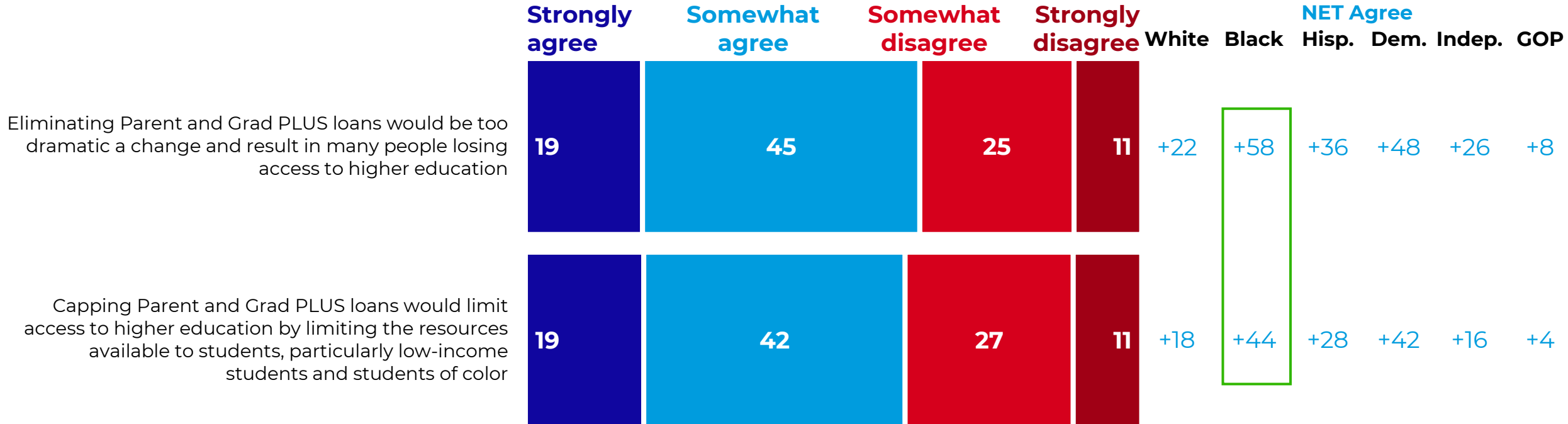
Voters believe that students pay more because of unlimited loans, and that capping will force colleges to lower tuition

Below are some statements about paying for college...



Despite concerns, voters oppose elimination of the programs; Black voters in particular worry about limiting access

Below are some statements about paying for college...



Voters across partisanship and financial means think offering unlimited loans hurts Americans more than it helps

Which do you agree with more, even if neither is exactly right?:

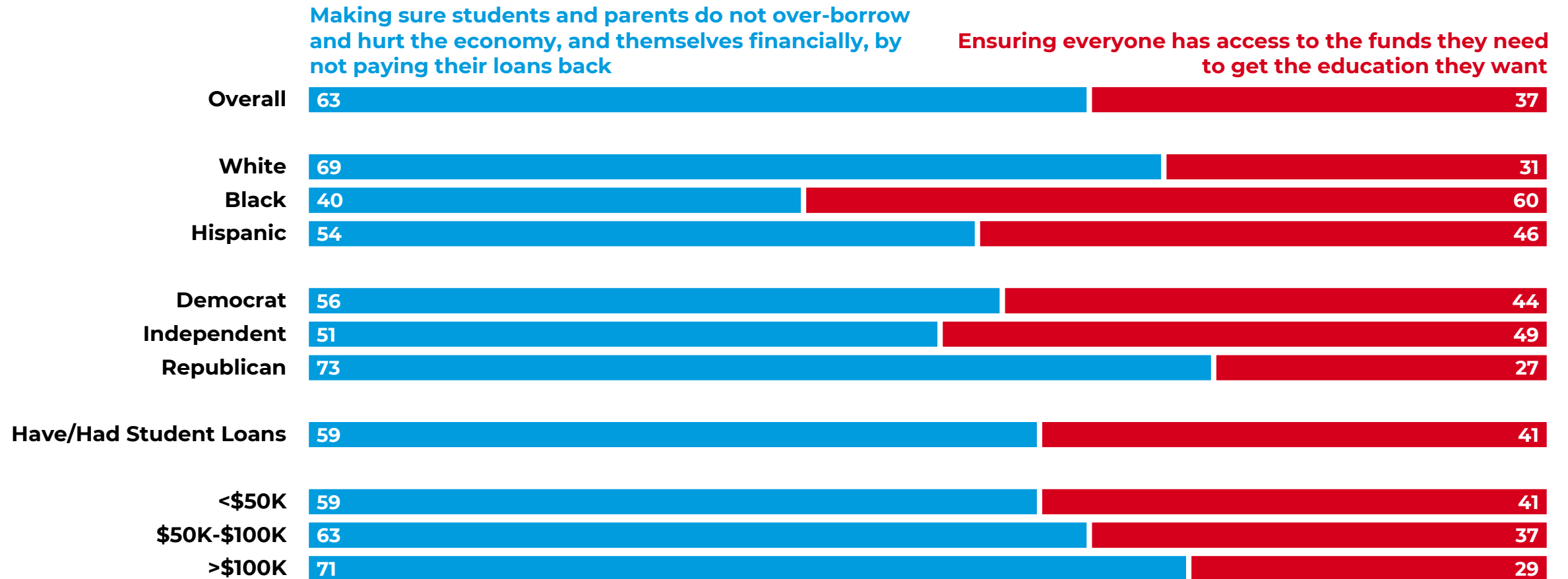
Offering unlimited loans to parents and students for college hurts low- and middle-income Americans more than it helps because it forces them to take on massive debt that is hard to pay off

Capping Parent and Grad PLUS Loans will penalize low- and middle-income Americans and make it harder for them to go to competitive colleges and universities



Voters prioritize protecting students and parents from over-borrowing over ensuring everyone has access to all needed funds

Which do you agree with more, even if neither is exactly right?:



Thank You

New York

Washington, DC

Hartford

Chicago

Denver

Seattle