



# **SURVEY OF LATINOS IN HIGHER EDUCATION:**

Unveiling Barriers, Celebrating Persistence, and Identifying Opportunities for Tomorrow



# Speakers - UnidosUS



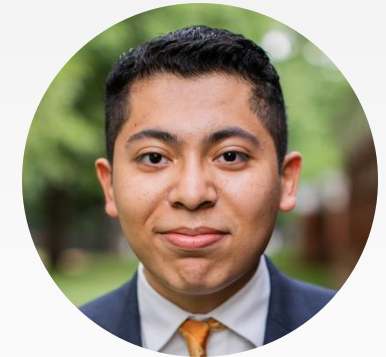
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# Speakers - BSP Research



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# LATINOS AND HIGHER EDUCATION SURVEY

# About the Survey

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- Total N=3,000
  - Latino current or recent college graduates, age 18-35
  - Margin of error +/- 1.8%
- Oversamples
  - Arizona, Florida N=300 in each state (+/- 5.7%)
  - Texas N=500 (+/- 4.4%)
  - California N=600 (+/- 4.0)
- Field Dates: August 16 – Sept 25, 2024
- English or Spanish, according to preference
  - N=227 completed in Spanish, N=2,773 completed in English

# Key Findings

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**1. Latino college students are aspirational, they see college as a pathway to big life goals: well-paying jobs and providing a better life for their families.**

- Latino students consistently cite getting well-paying jobs as the top reason they decided to pursue college, followed by providing a better life for their families.

**2. Latino students face significant barriers to success, at the most basic level— the majority of Latino students (85%) reporting lacking affordable and healthy food**

- 88% of part time students reported that it at least happened a few times to them, with 69% saying it happened to them at least a few times a month
- Arizona had the highest share that report lacking affordable and healthy food at least a few times a month at 71%

**3. The barriers Latino students face (lacking food, having to work, FAFSA failures) occur across the population— whether at a 2-year, 4-year, or private university, Latino students encounter serious challenges to academic success. These barriers occur at even higher rates among lower income students, LGBTQ+ students, and single parents.**

- 1 in 5 LGBTQ+ reported having heard of the closure of affinity centers on their campus, +5 points over the national average
- Low-income students were most likely to report they were unaware certain activities could have a positive impact on admission

# Key Findings

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## **4. Many Latino college students had technical problems trying to file their FAFSA application**

- 43% of respondents who filed the 2024-25 FAFSA report having technical problems with the application, including 46% of students already enrolled and 52% of students who left and are continuing.
- 77% of students with family incomes under \$29k said the FAFSA technical problems strongly or somewhat impacted their decision to attend or continue attending college
- The impact of the issues was worst in California, with 47% of students reporting problems

## **5. The vast majority of Latino students work: 80% overall, and 31% held a full-time job while in school.**

- 78% of currently enrolled students report having a job while being students, as well as 90% of those who have recently graduated
- Students with family incomes \$100k+ were +11 points more likely to say they worked a job during college than students with family incomes under \$29k

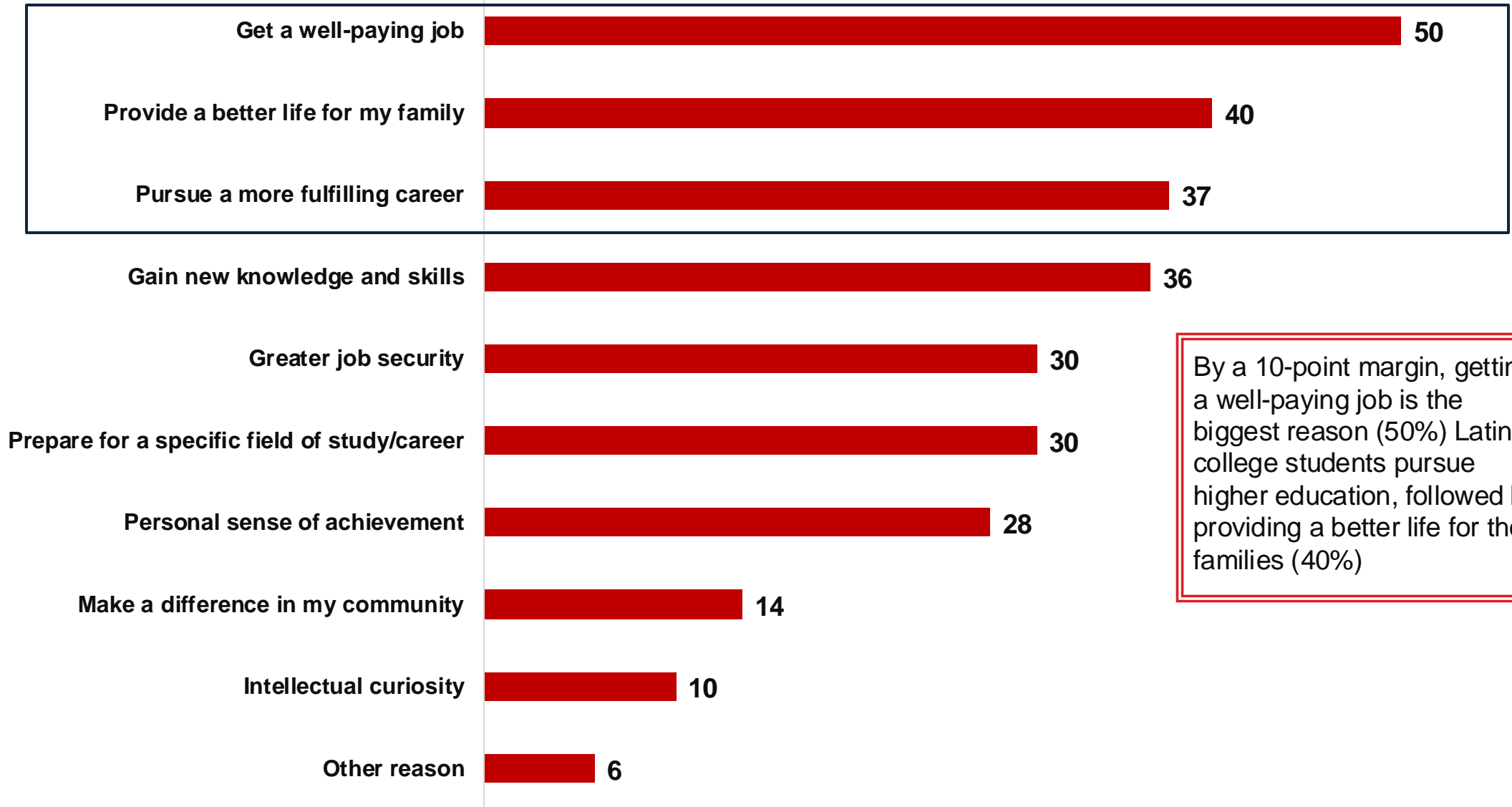
## **6. Two-thirds of Latino students considered leaving school at some point during their time in college, and one-third of them actually did leave at some point.**

- 77% of single parents and 71% of LGBTQ+ students report having considered leaving school at some point, with 44% and 39% respectively having done so.

# Motivations to pursue higher education

What are the most important reasons you decided to go to college? Rank your top three reasons

TOTAL ranked 1, 2, or 3 illustrated (Rank up to three. Sorted highest to lowest)



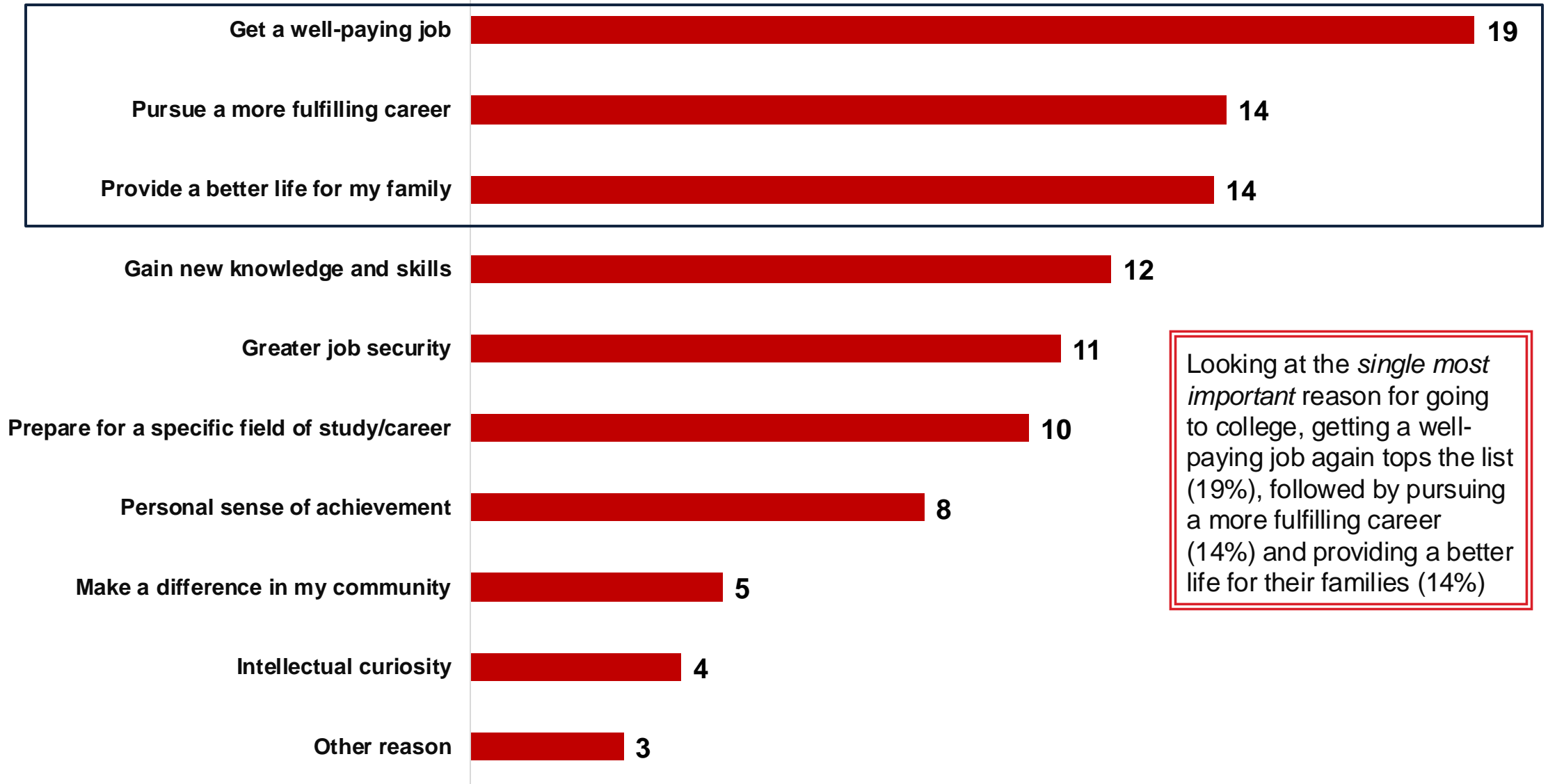
By a 10-point margin, getting a well-paying job is the biggest reason (50%) Latino college students pursue higher education, followed by providing a better life for their families (40%)



# Motivations to pursue higher education

What are the most important reasons you decided to go to college? Rank your top three reasons

TOP ranked response, rated FIRST, most important (sorted highest to lowest)



Looking at the *single most important* reason for going to college, getting a well-paying job again tops the list (19%), followed by pursuing a more fulfilling career (14%) and providing a better life for their families (14%)

# Latino college students believe a college degree is important to their future and goals

How important do you believe having a college degree is to achieve each of the following:

(Percent important illustrated, sorted highest to lowest)

Extremely important      Somewhat important

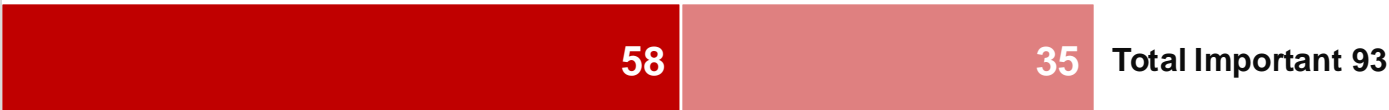
Providing a better life for myself and my family



Getting a well-paying job in today's economy



Advancing in a job / getting promoted



Growing personally and intellectually



# Latino college students concerned Supreme Court decisions will mean fewer Latinos are admitted to colleges, and that colleges will be less diverse

■ Concerned
 ■ Don't know enough to say
 ■ Not Concerned

How concerned are you that the recent Supreme Court ruling, that race/ethnicity cannot be considered in the admission process, will mean fewer Latinos will be admitted/get into colleges and universities?



How concerned are you that the recent Supreme Court ruling, that race/ethnicity cannot be considered in the admission process, will reduce diversity on college and university campuses?



# Specific mention of fewer Latino students being admitted to colleges prompted larger concern

How concerned are you that the recent Supreme Court ruling, that race/ethnicity cannot be considered in the admission process will [reduce diversity on college and university campuses /mean fewer Latinos will be admitted or get in to colleges and universities]. *Percent concerned illustrated.*

● Will reduce diversity on college and university campuses ● Will mean fewer Latinos will be admitted/get into colleges and universities

The majority (well over 50%) are concerned about *both* scenarios, but especially so when framed specifically about Latinos.

Difference “fewer Latinos will be admitted to colleges” vs. “reduced diversity on college campuses”:

Total: +12

Enrolled: +10

Democrat: +13

Indep/Oth: +10

Republican: +13

Men: +13

Women: +11

LGBTQ: +11

US Born: +11

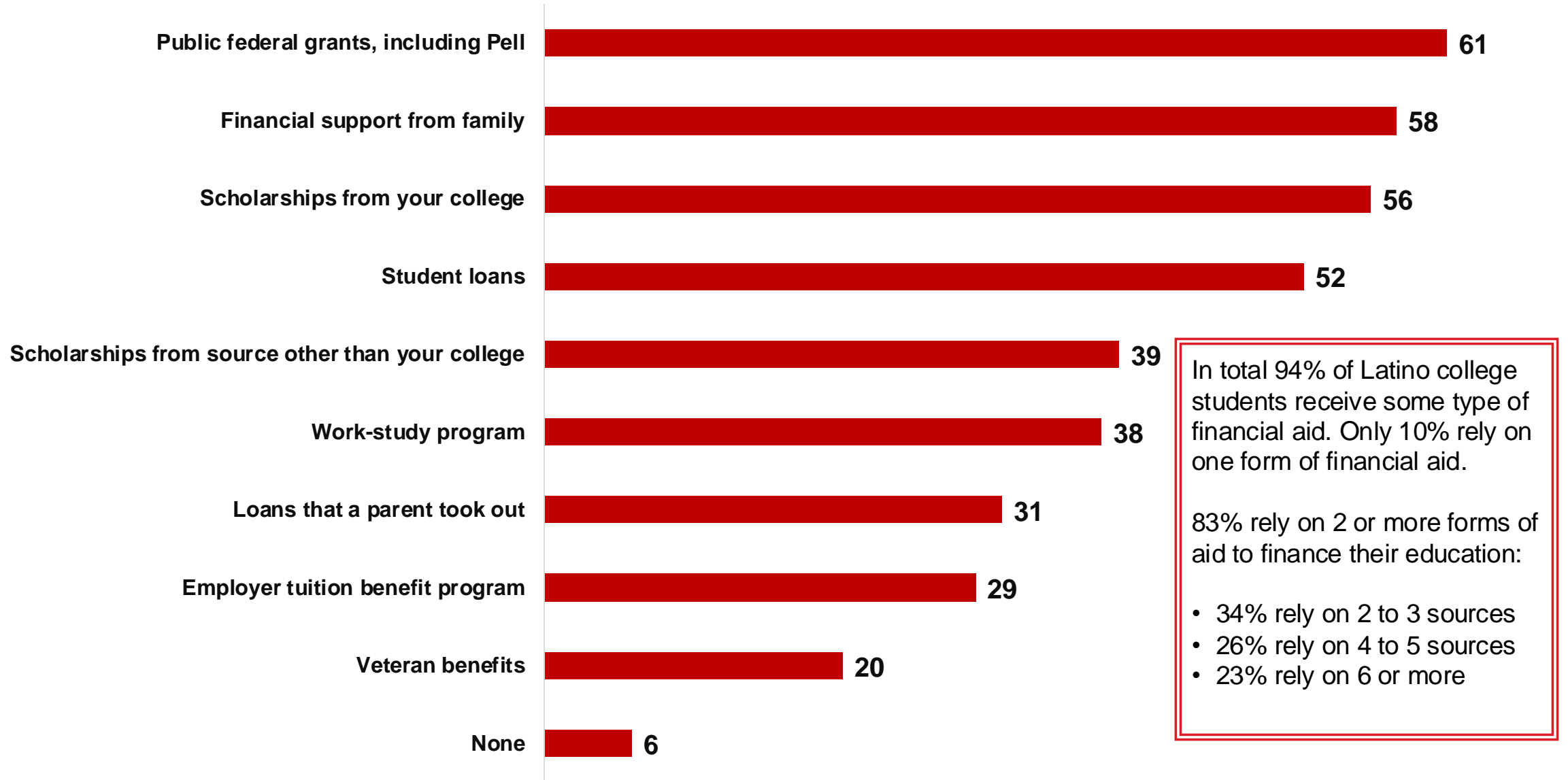
PR or Foreign Born: +20



# The vast majority of Latino college students receive several types of financial aid

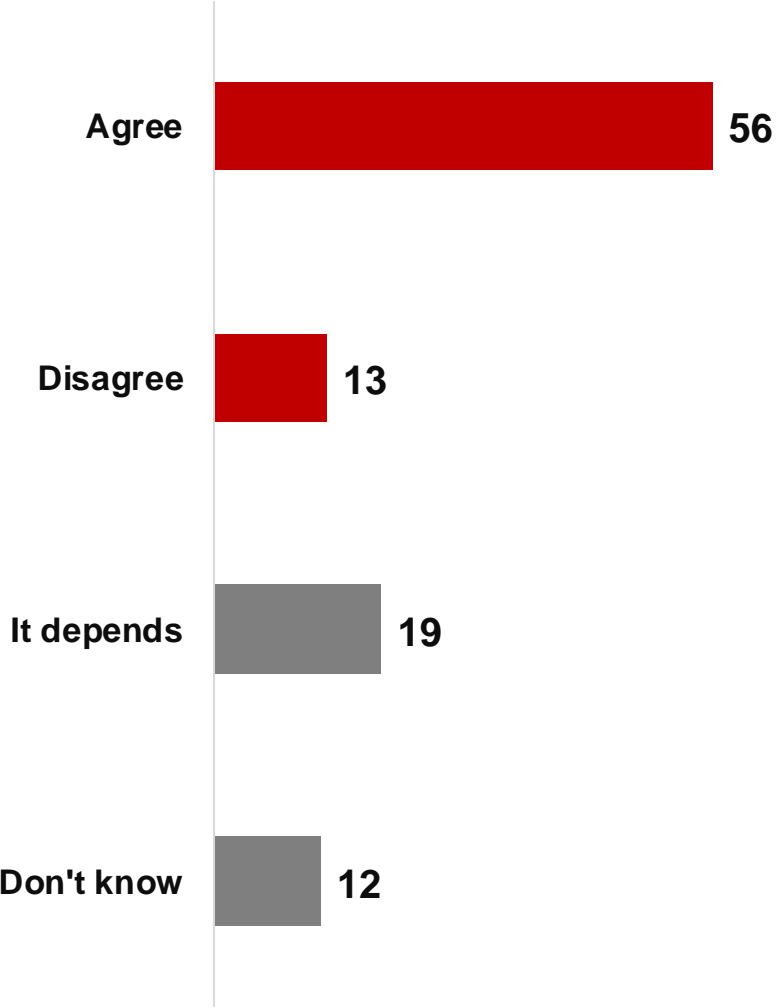
Did you receive any of the following types of financial assistance or support for your college education at any time that you were a college student?

Percent yes illustrated (Sorted highest to lowest)

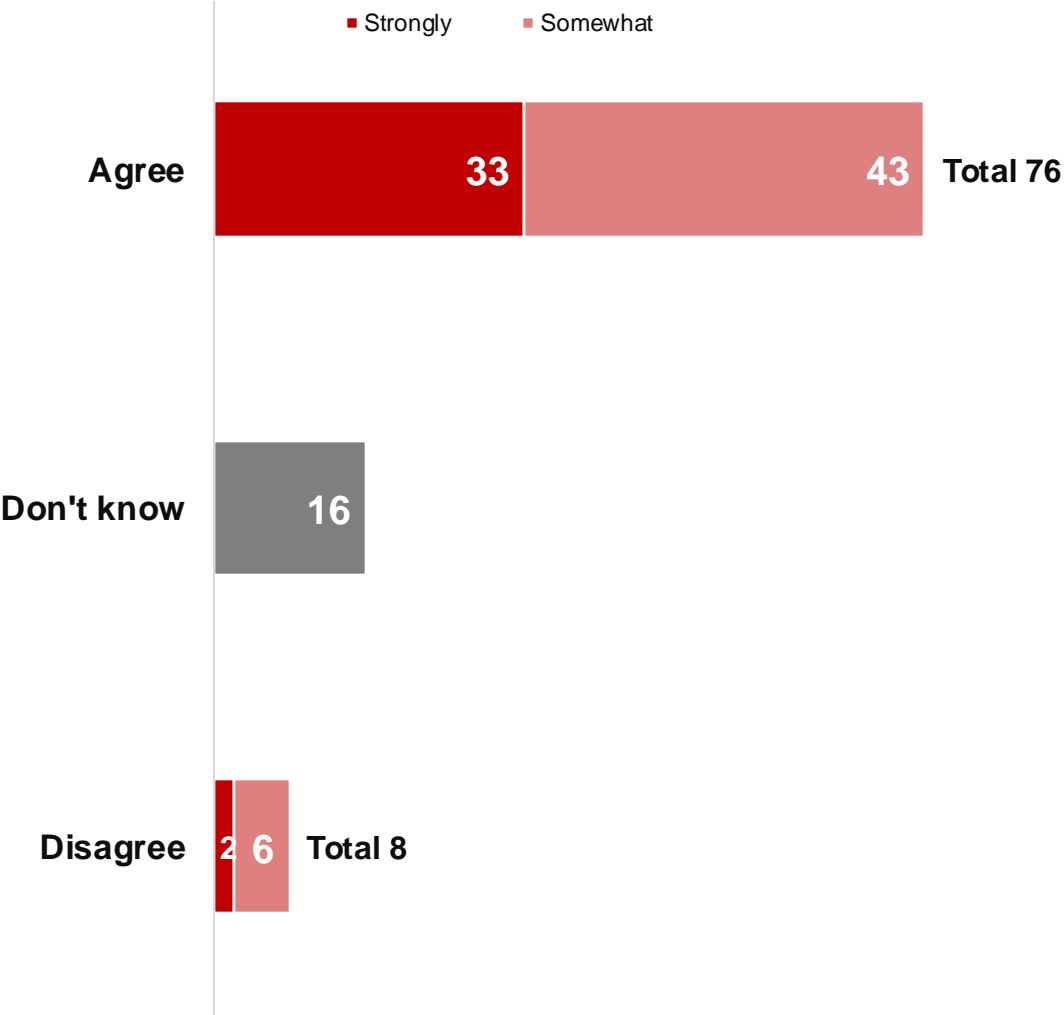


# Basic FAFSA information and campus resources

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement about financial aid: FAFSA is only for federal financial aid



Do you agree or disagree with this statement: My college provided sufficient information about financial aid and scholarship options to help me understand how to pay for school.



# Most Latino college students filed a FAFSA application during their time in college

Have you ever submitted a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application

FAFSA application rates among currently enrolled students vary a bit at the state level where California and Texas are ahead of the national average, and Arizona and Florida lag behind.

*Percent currently enrolled students filed FAFSA*

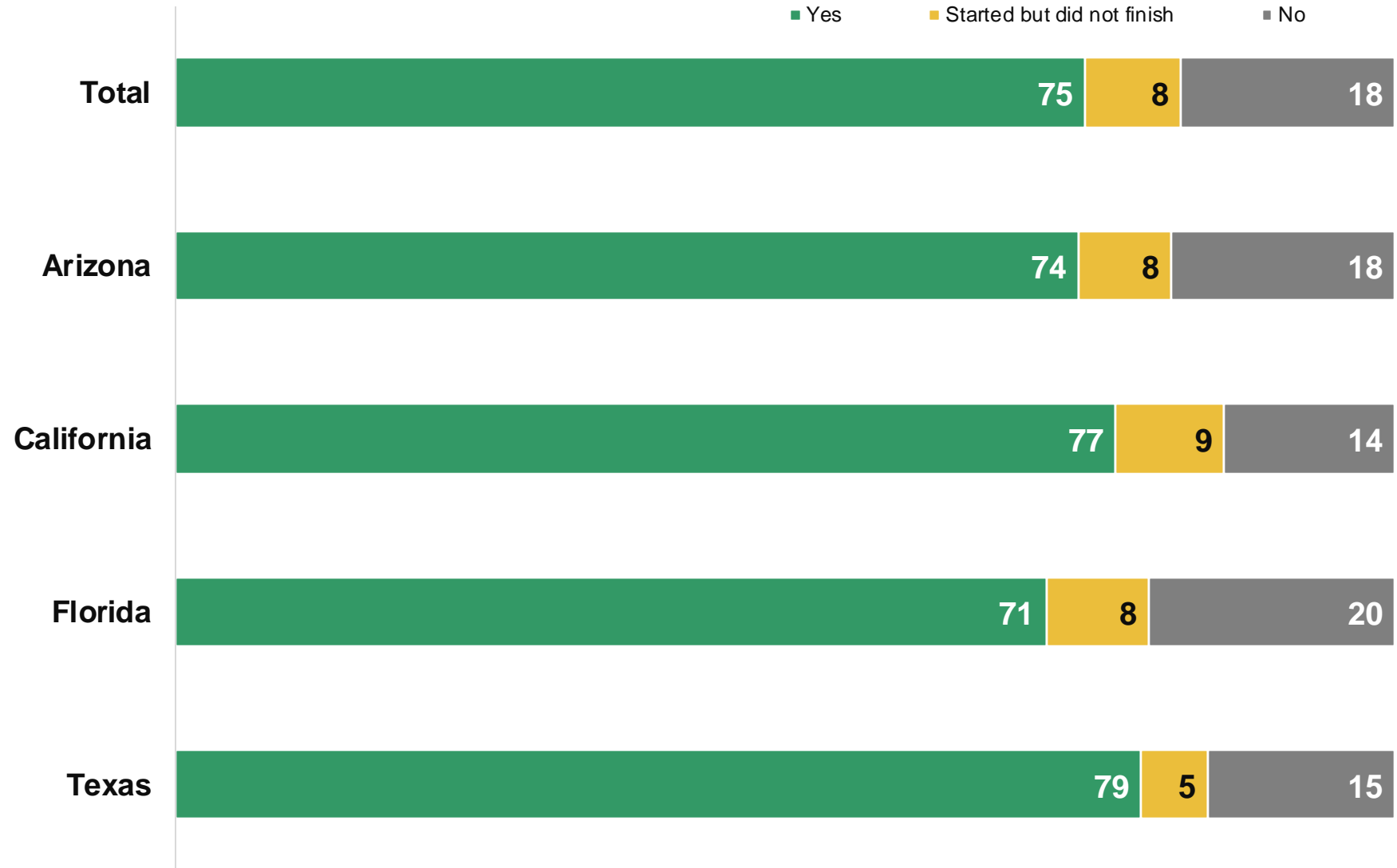
Total: 78%

California: 82%

Texas: 81%

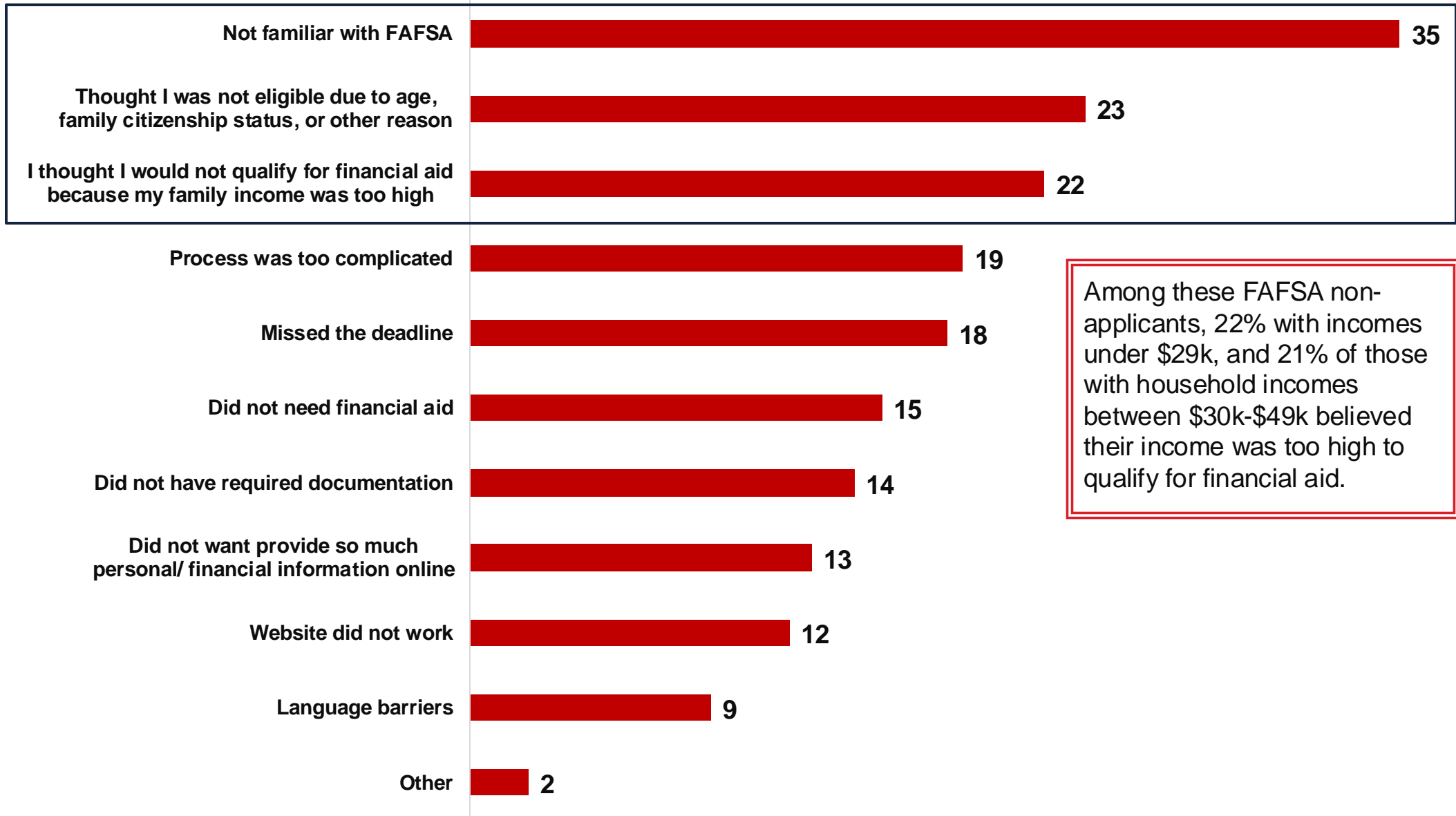
Arizona: 75%

Florida: 73%



# Among those who did not file a FAFSA application lack of familiarity was biggest reason

[If did not submit FAFSA] Which of the following are reasons you did not complete or file a FAFSA application? Select all that apply.



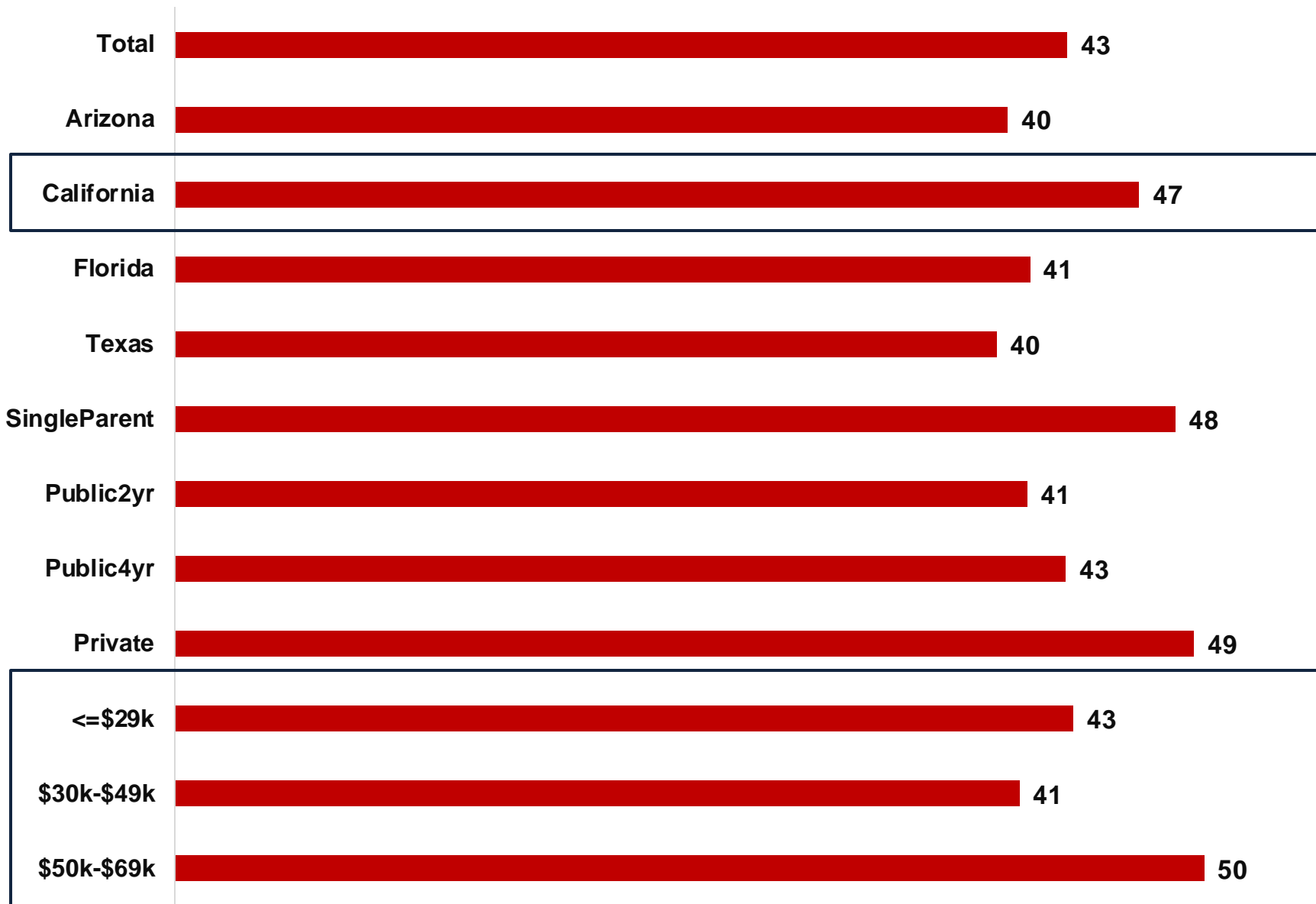


# Latino FAFSA applicants had technical problems with the 2024-2025 application at very high rates

If you completed FAFSA for the 2024-2025 school year, did you have any technical problems with the application? *Percent yes illustrated (among those who applied)*

Over 40% (more than two out of five) Latinos who filed FAFSA applications had technical problems with their applications.

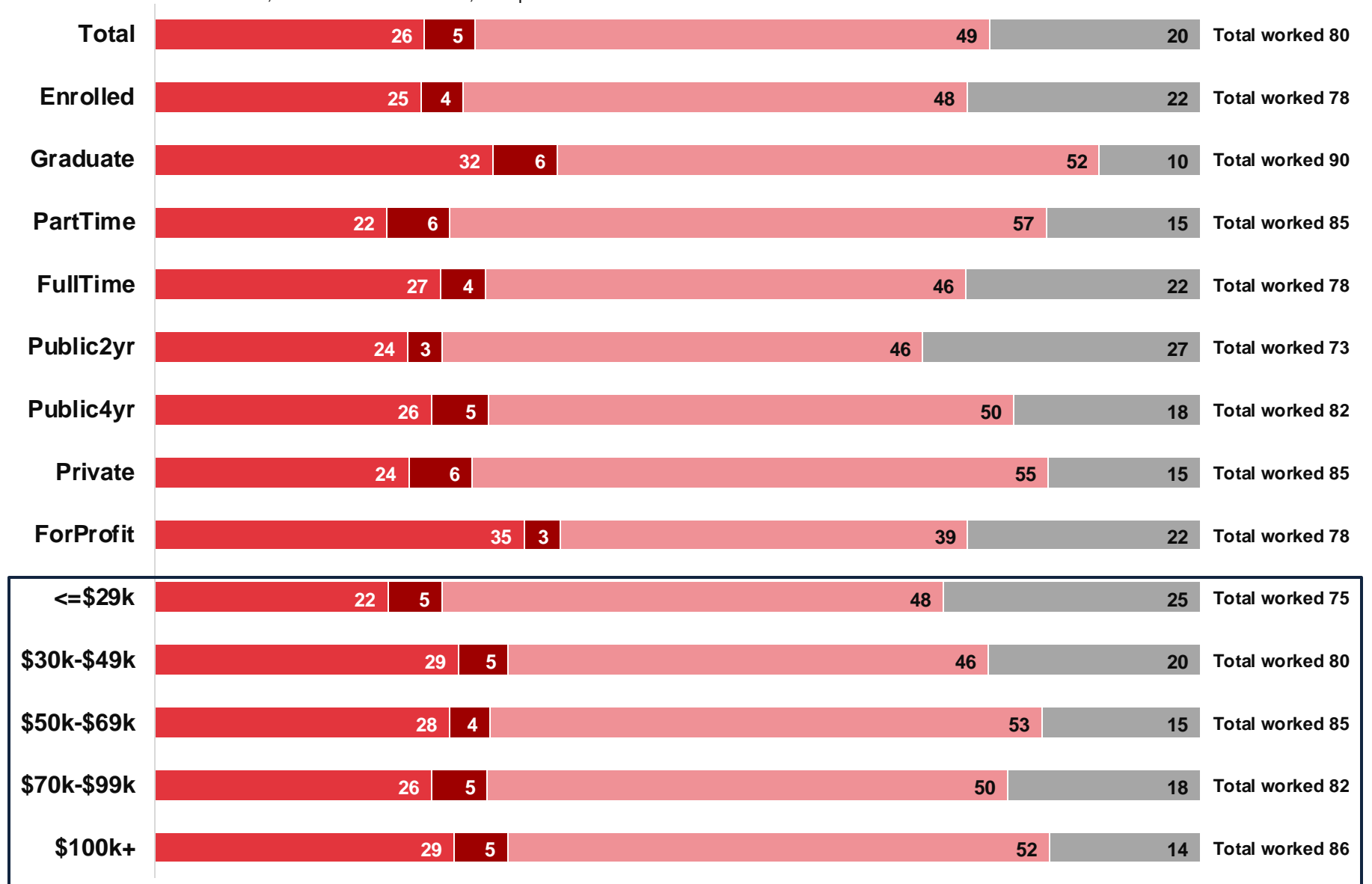
FAFSA tech problems created barriers to accessing financial aid at very high rates across states, income categories, and school types.



# A large majority of Latino college students hold jobs: 80% overall, and 31% work full-time

At any time that you were enrolled in college, did you have a job?

■ Yes, full-time ■ Yes, both part-time and full-time



Most Latino students work during their time in college:

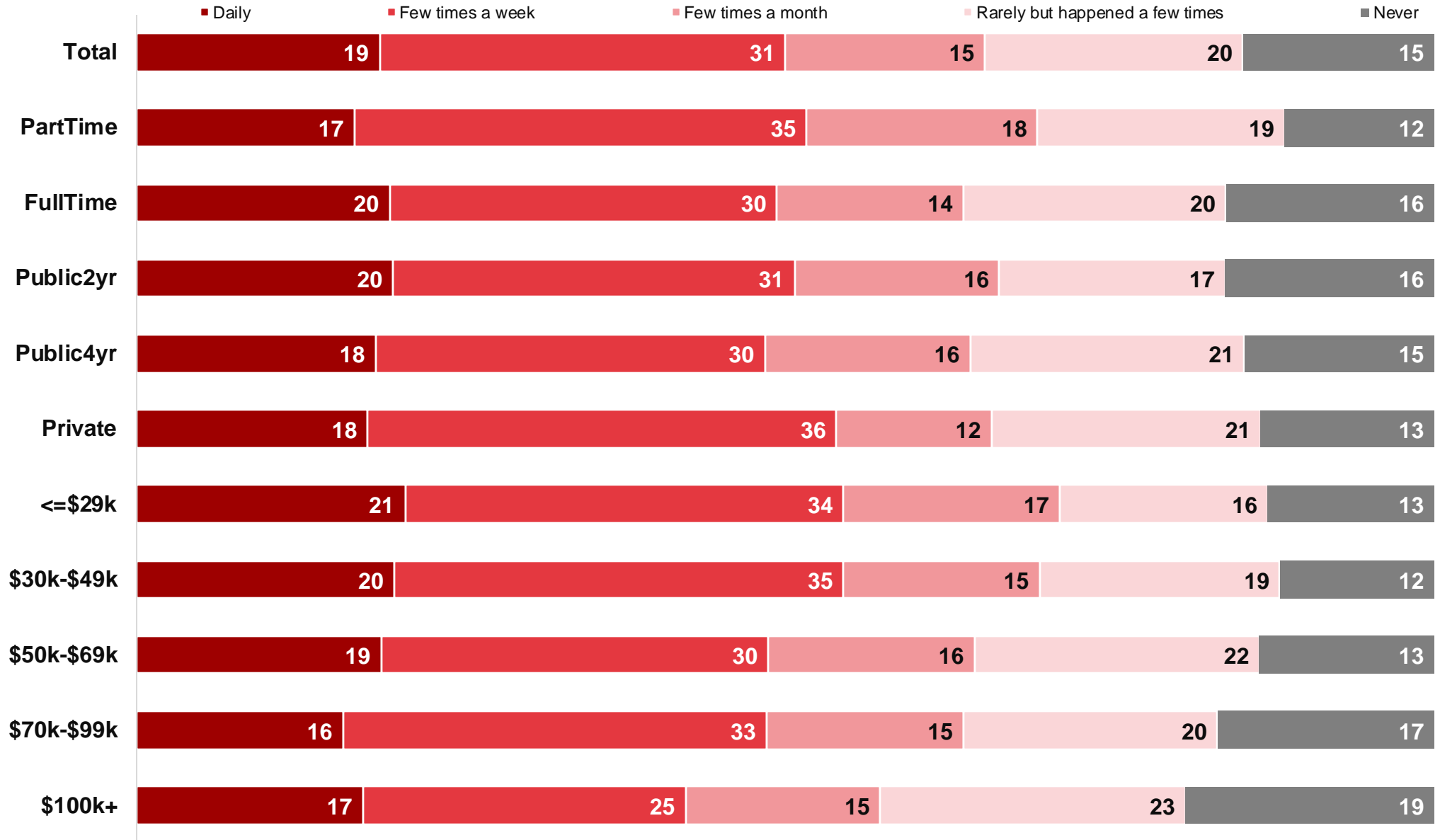
26% full-time  
49% part-time  
5% BOTH pt and ft  
20% did not work

In total 80% work, and 31% full time.

The consistent rate at which Latino students work is notable: income and school type do not matter, Latino students are working no matter the type of school they attend or their family income.

# Most Latino college students (85%) have been unable to get affordable and healthy food

During your time in college, how often are/were you unable to get affordable and nutritious food?



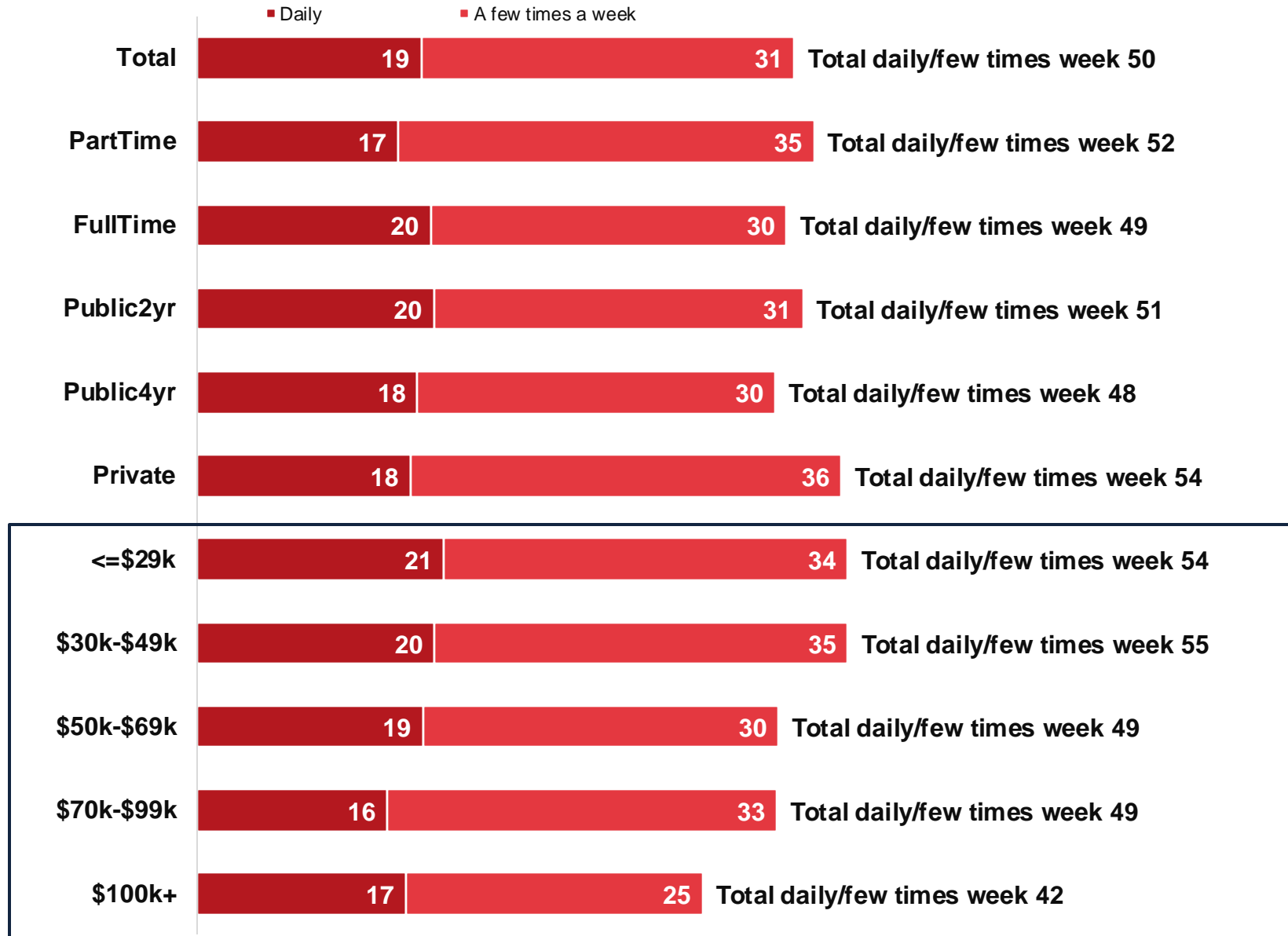
# Half of Latino college students are unable to get affordable and healthy food on a regular basis

During your time in college, how often are/were you unable to get affordable and nutritious food?

HALF of Latino college students report being unable to get affordable and healthy food on a regular basis.

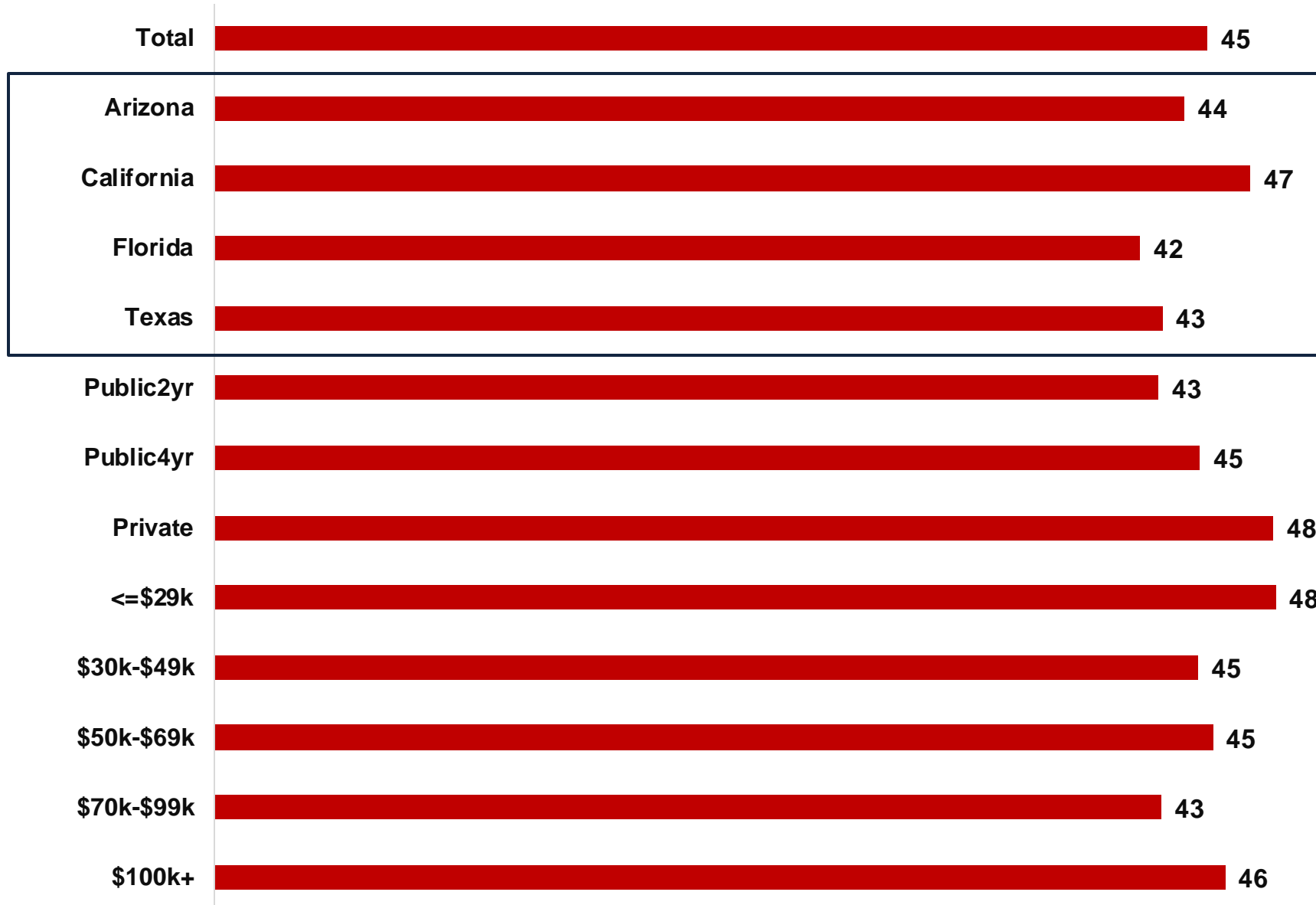
- \* Daily 19%
- \* Few times a week 31%

It hits hardest at the lowest income levels, but notable that more than 40% of those from higher income households also face this problem.



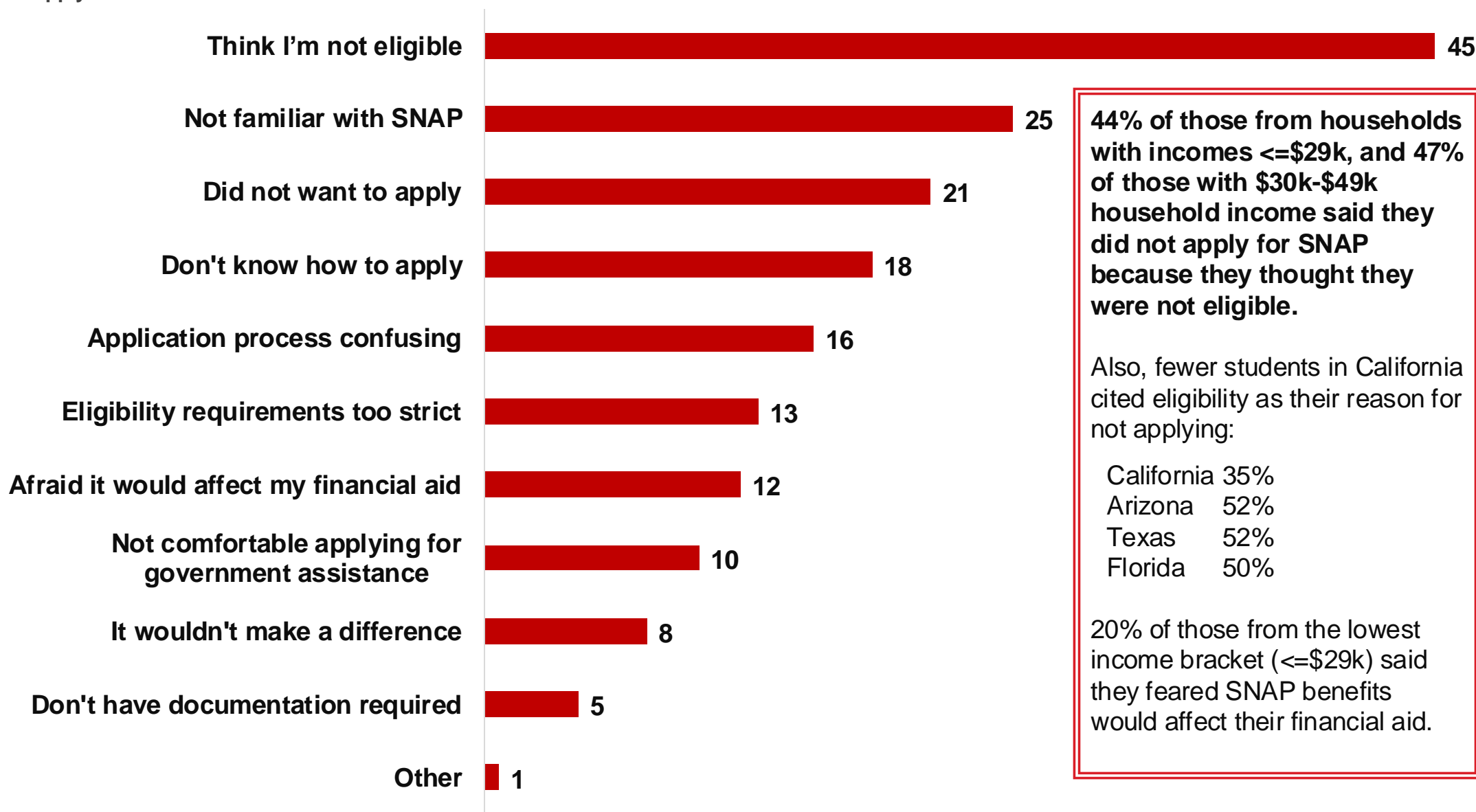
# Less than half of Latino college students who report lacking food have applied for SNAP benefits

[If unable to affordable, nutritious food daily, few times a week or month] Have you ever applied for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)? % yes *illustrated*



# Eligibility and lack of information are the top reasons cited for not applying for SNAP benefits

[If did not apply for SNAP and unable to affordable, nutritious food daily, few times a week or month] What are some reasons you did not apply/have not applied to SNAP?  
Select all that apply.



# Latino college students largely report feeling comfortable and a sense of belonging at their school.

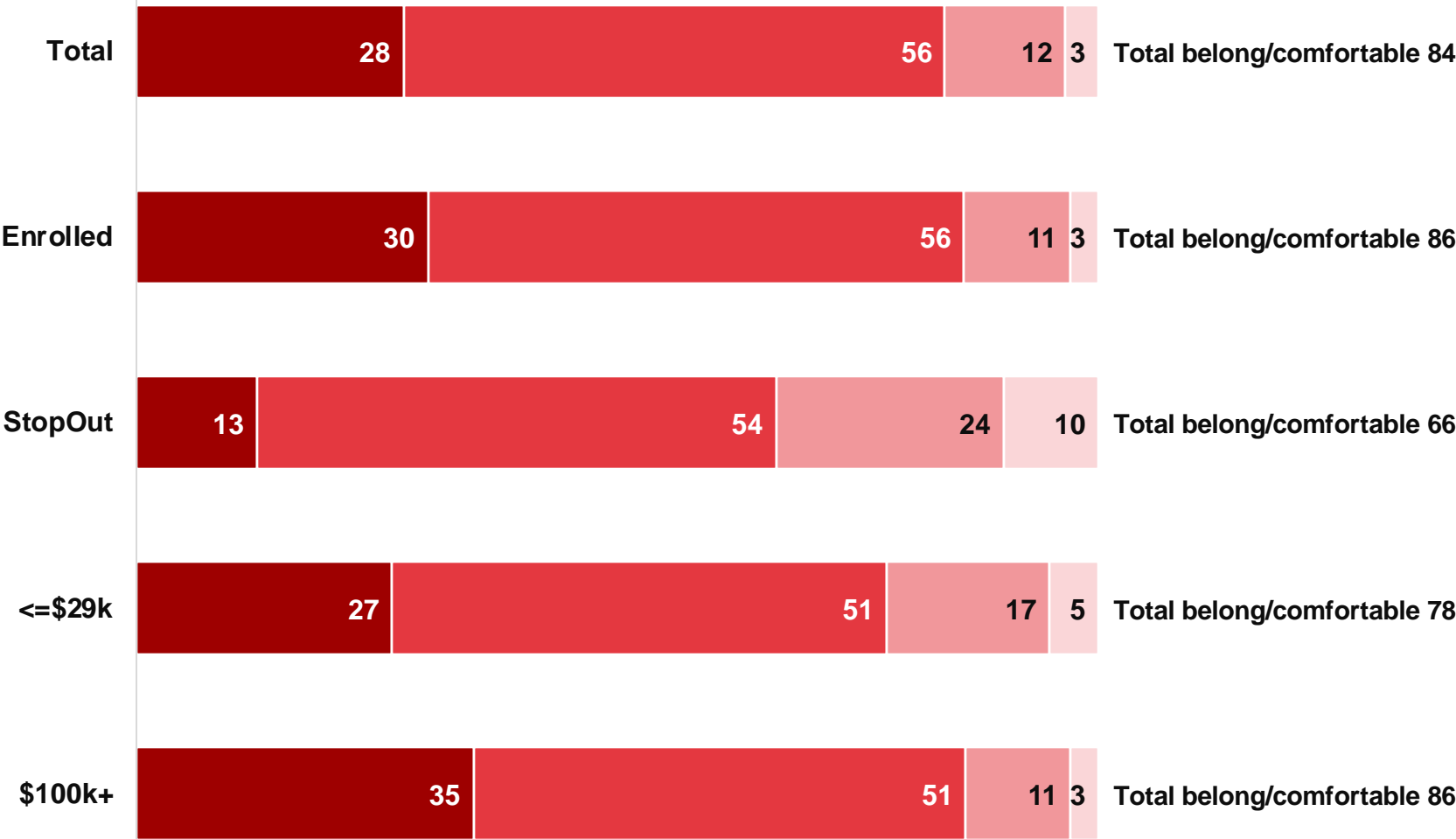
Thinking about your college experience, did/do you feel a sense of belonging at your school?

■ Yes, felt a strong sense of belonging
 ■ Yes, felt comfortable
 ■ No, felt like I did not really belong
 ■ Not at all, felt like an outsider

The vast majority of Latino college students (84%) report positive feelings about “fit” at their school with 28% saying they felt a strong sense of belonging and another 56% said they felt comfortable.

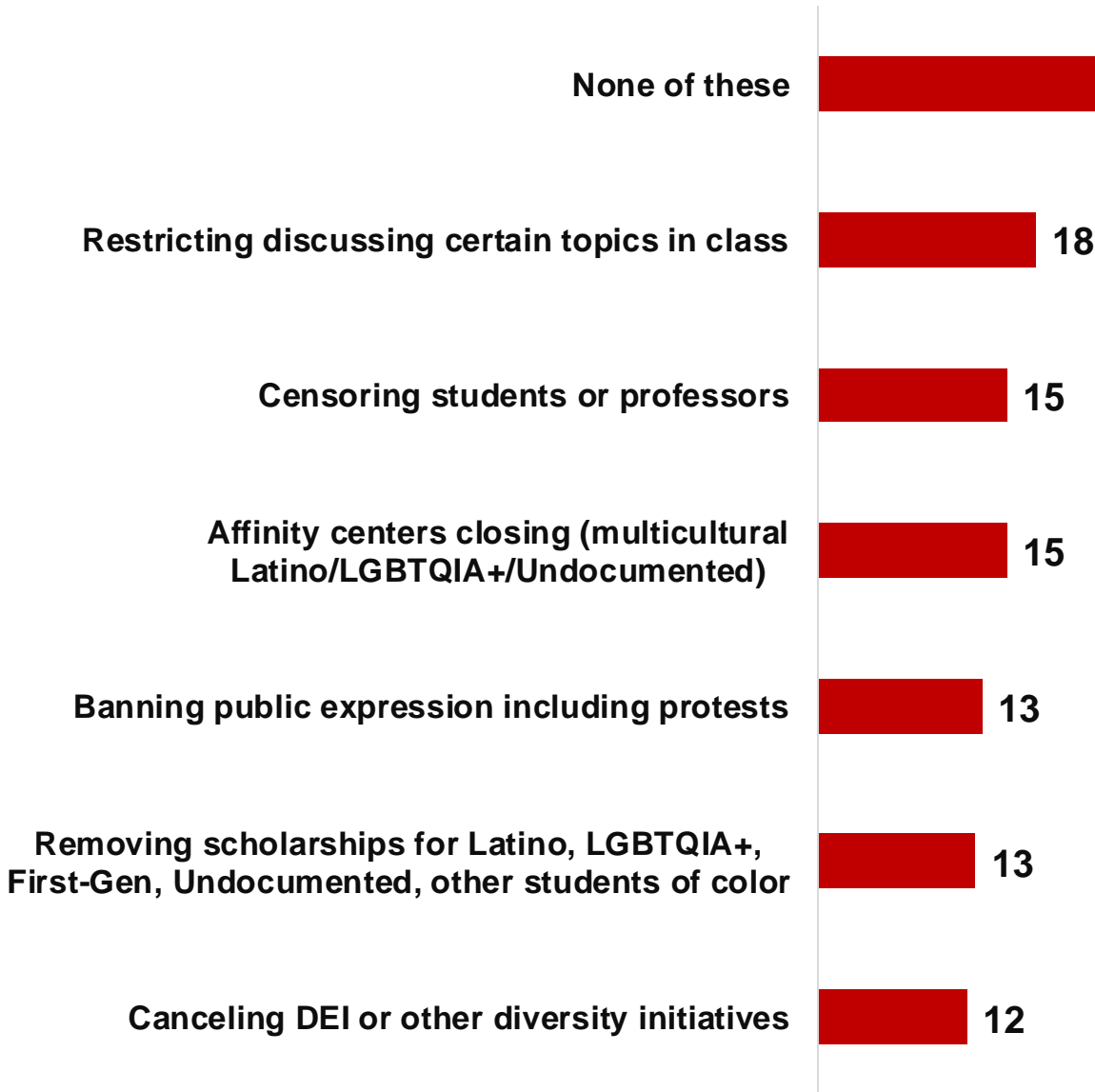
Note that one-third (34%) of those who left school and did not return did not said they felt they did not belong (24%) or like an outsider (10%).

While most lower income students are comfortable, it is still true that a larger share (22%, one-in-five) feel they don’t belong (17%) or like an outsider (5%).



# A little more than half of Latino college students have not heard about efforts targeting diversity or speech at their school.

Have you heard about any of the following happening at YOUR college or university? Select all that apply.



The majority of Latino college students (53%) say they haven't heard about efforts targeting diversity or speech on at their school.

Few had heard about any single-item on the list. The top response (topics being restricted in class) rang true for only 18% of respondents.

However, a sizeable minority (47%) have heard about at least one of these actions happening at their campus.



# A little more than half of Latino college students have not heard about efforts targeting diversity or speech at their school.

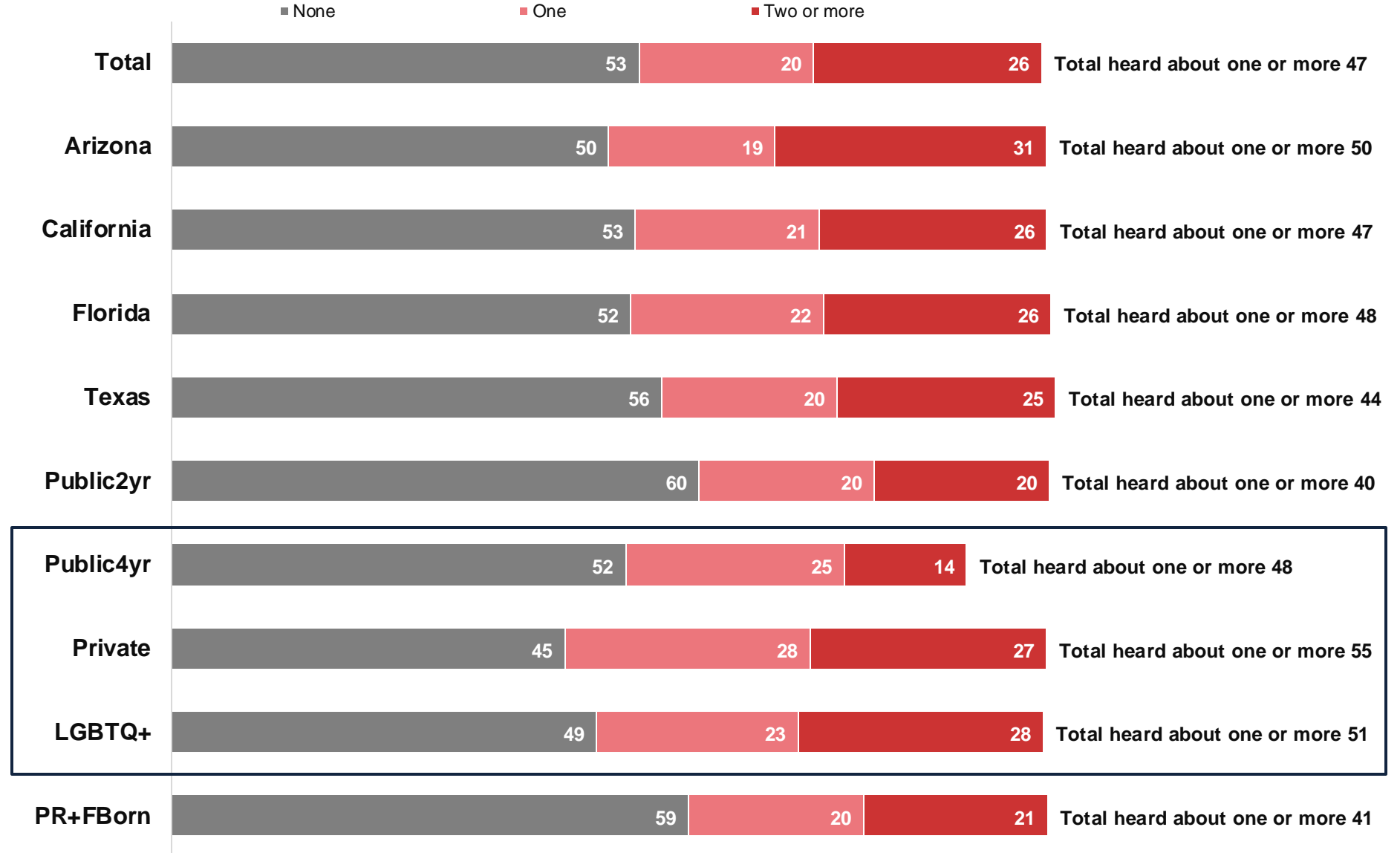
Have you heard about any of the following happening at YOUR college or university? Select all that apply.

Overall, 47% of Latino students heard about one or more of these actions taking place at their school: 20% one, 26% two or more.

The majority of students at private colleges (55%) had heard about these actions at their school.

A slight majority of LGBTQ+ students (51%) have heard about these actions, 23% one, and 28% two or more.

That figure was even higher for LGBTQ students in Texas where 58% were familiar (34% two or more) with these events taking place at their school.



# Efforts targeting diversity and speech motivate some, but discourage others

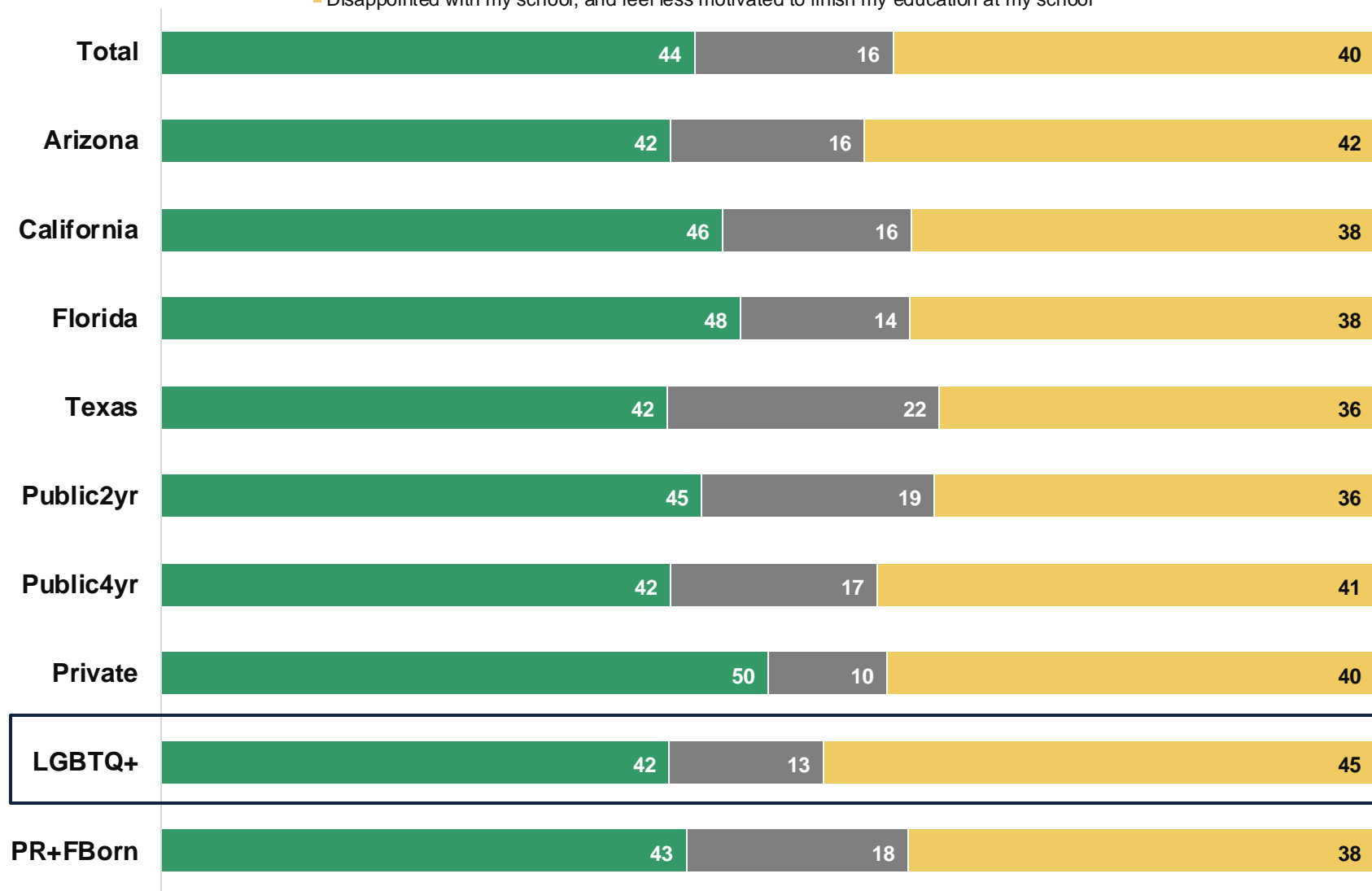
[Among those who heard about these actions on their campus] What impact have these events had on your motivation to stay at your college/university or continue your education?

- More motivated to be involved in issues I care about and finish my education at my school
- No impact on my motivation to continue my education
- Disappointed with my school, and feel less motivated to finish my education at my school

On the whole, Latino students that heard about efforts targeting diversity or speech at their campus were motivated by the experience: 44% said they feel more motivated to finish their degree and engage on issues they care about as a result of the experience. A smaller share (16%) said these events had no impact on their motivation to continue their education.

A sizeable minority though (40%) felt disappointed with their school and less motivated to complete their education at that institution.

Among LGBTQ+ Latino students, more were disappointed and discouraged about completing their studies at their school (45%) than motivated (43%) by the events on their campus.



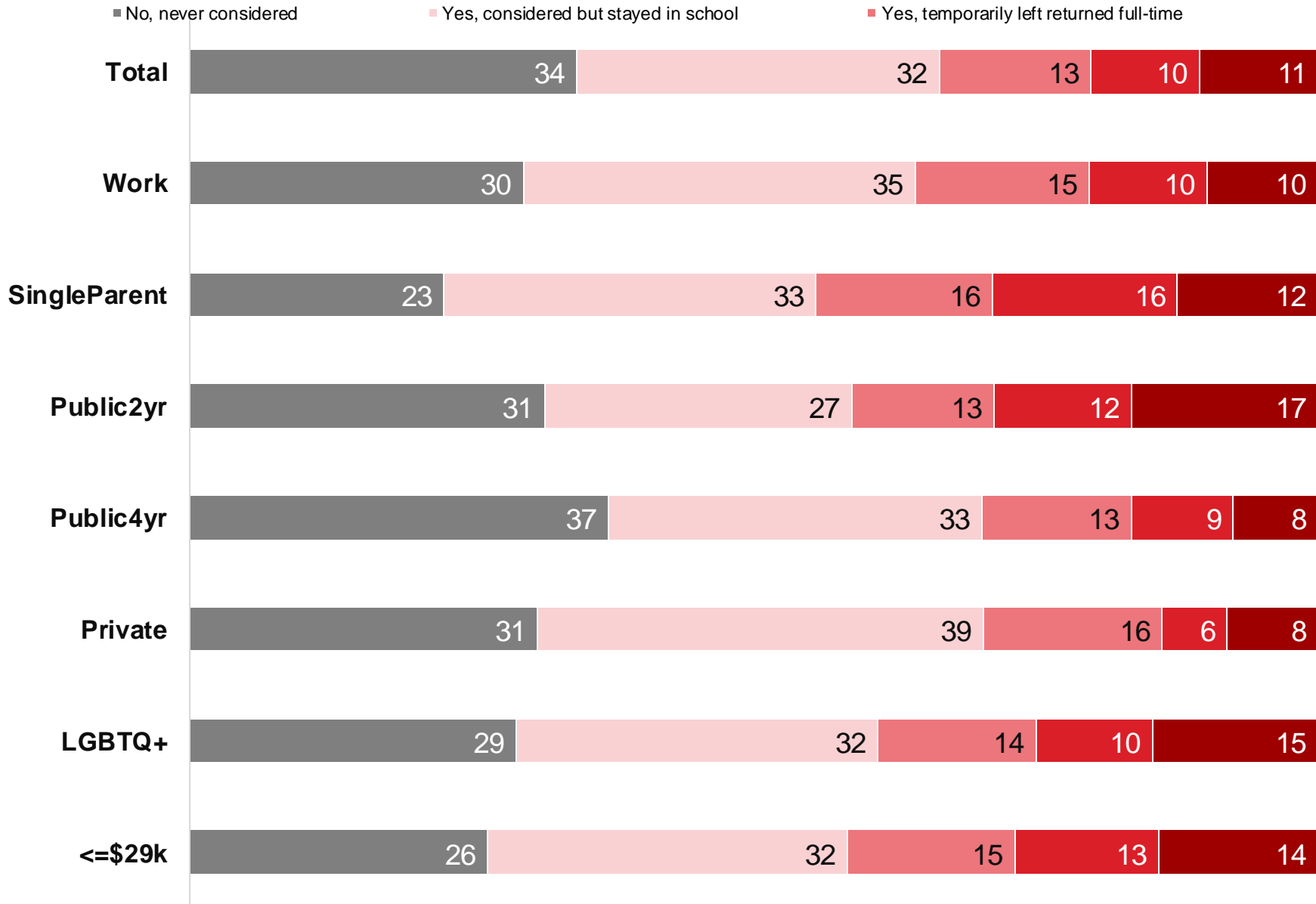
# Two-thirds of Latino college students considered leaving school

Have you/did you ever consider temporarily or permanently leaving school before completing your degree?

In total, 66% of Latino college students considered leaving school at some point during their college career, and 34% actually did leave:

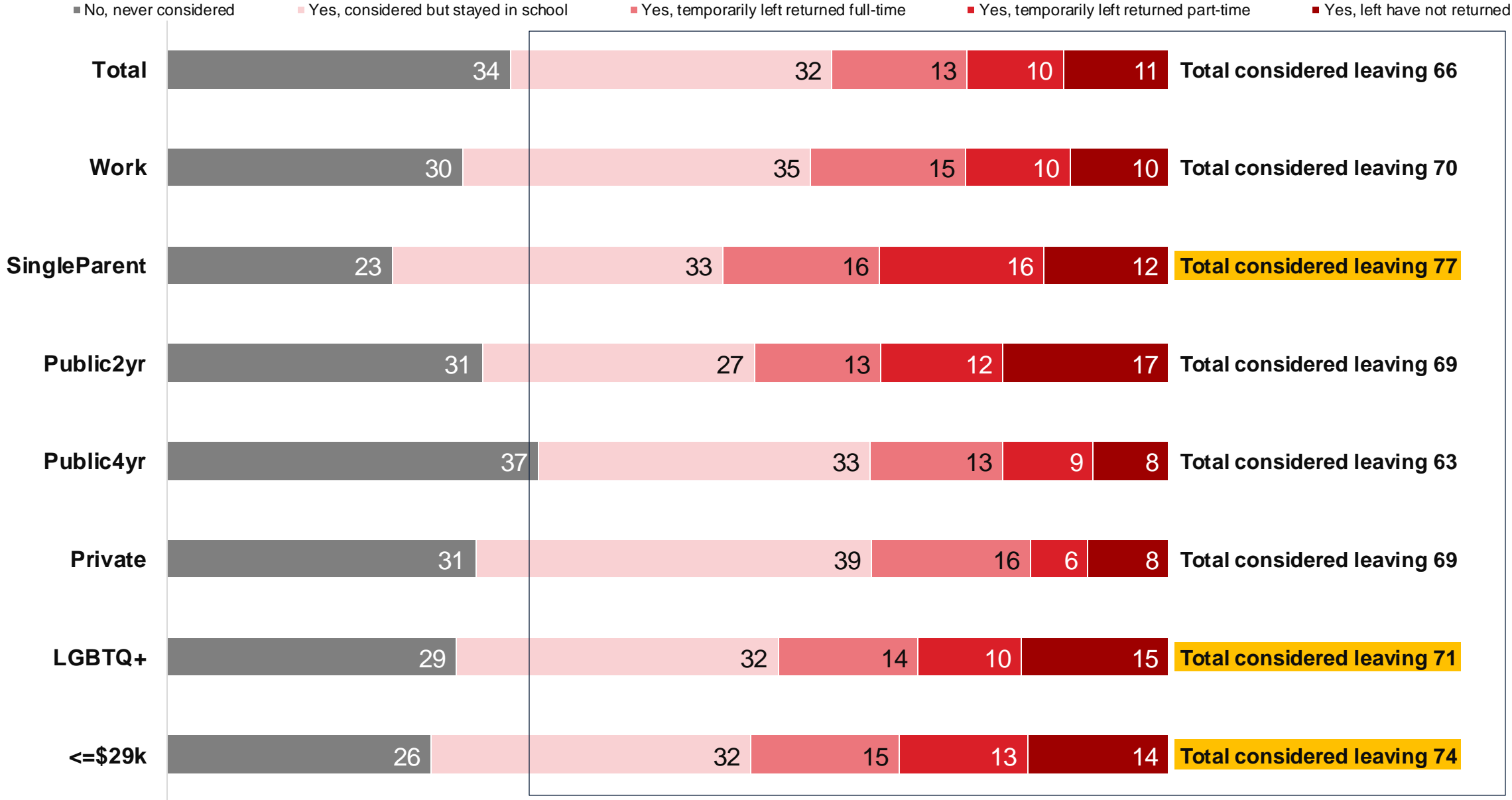
- Considered didn't leave 32%
- Left and returned full time 13%
- Left and returned part time 10%
- Left and did not return 11%

These high rates are fairly consistent across demographic groups but even more pronounced among low-income students, LGBTQ+ students, and single parents.



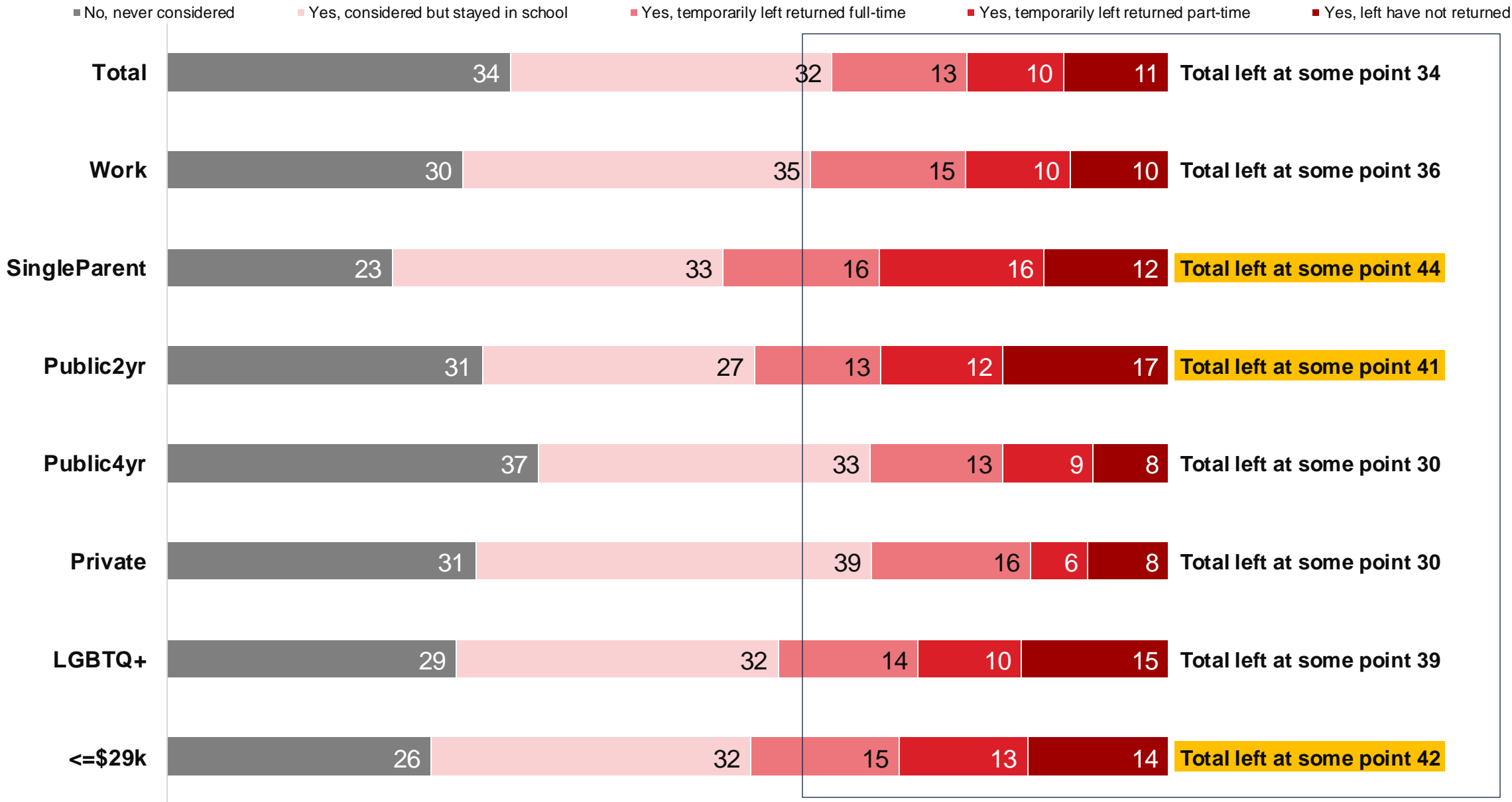
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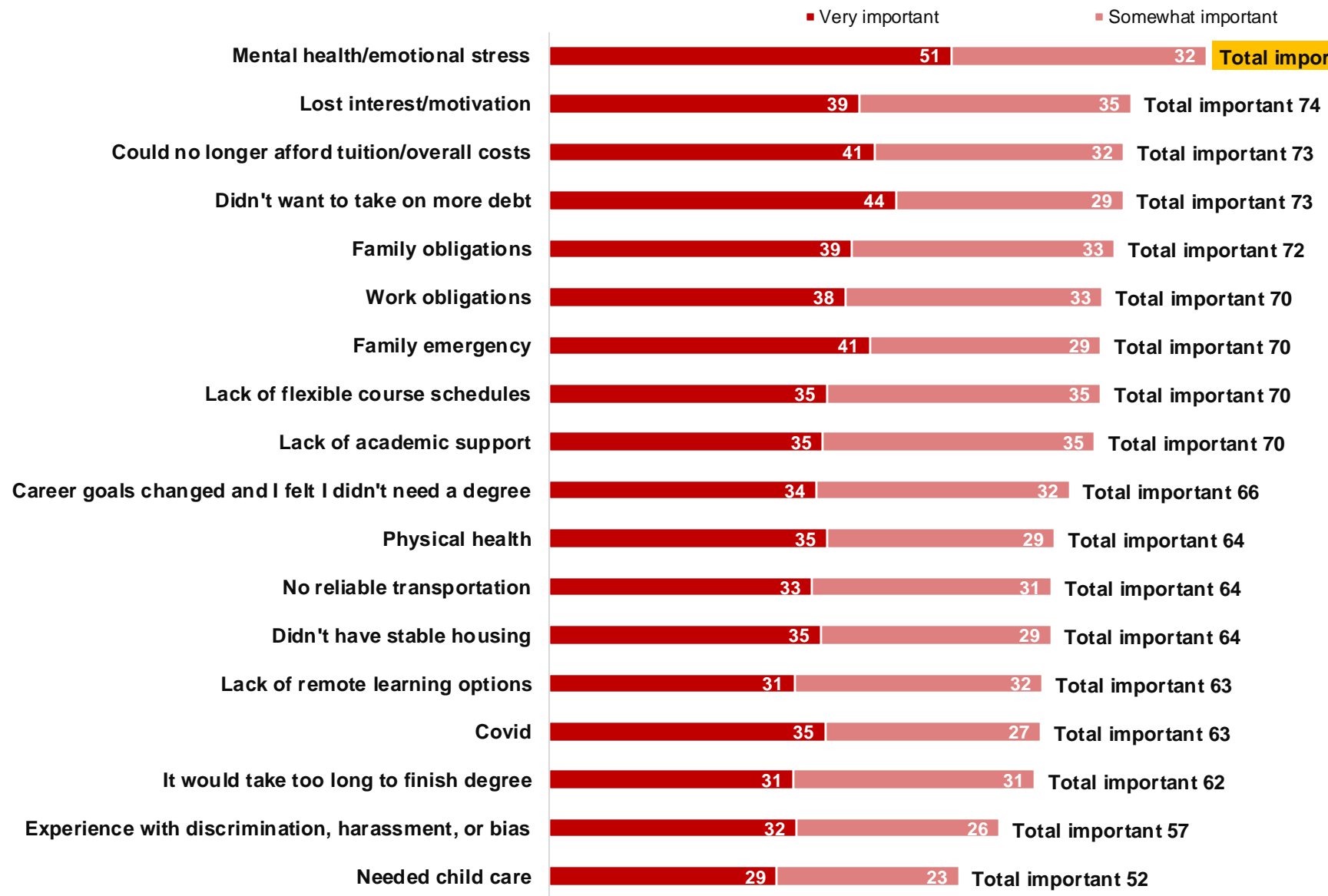
# Two-thirds of Latino college students considered leaving school, and one-third left at some point

Have you/did you ever consider temporarily or permanently leaving school before completing your degree?



# Mental health and economic stressors are the biggest factors driving Latinos to consider leaving school

If considered or left school] How important were each of the following reasons to you leaving, or considering leaving, school?



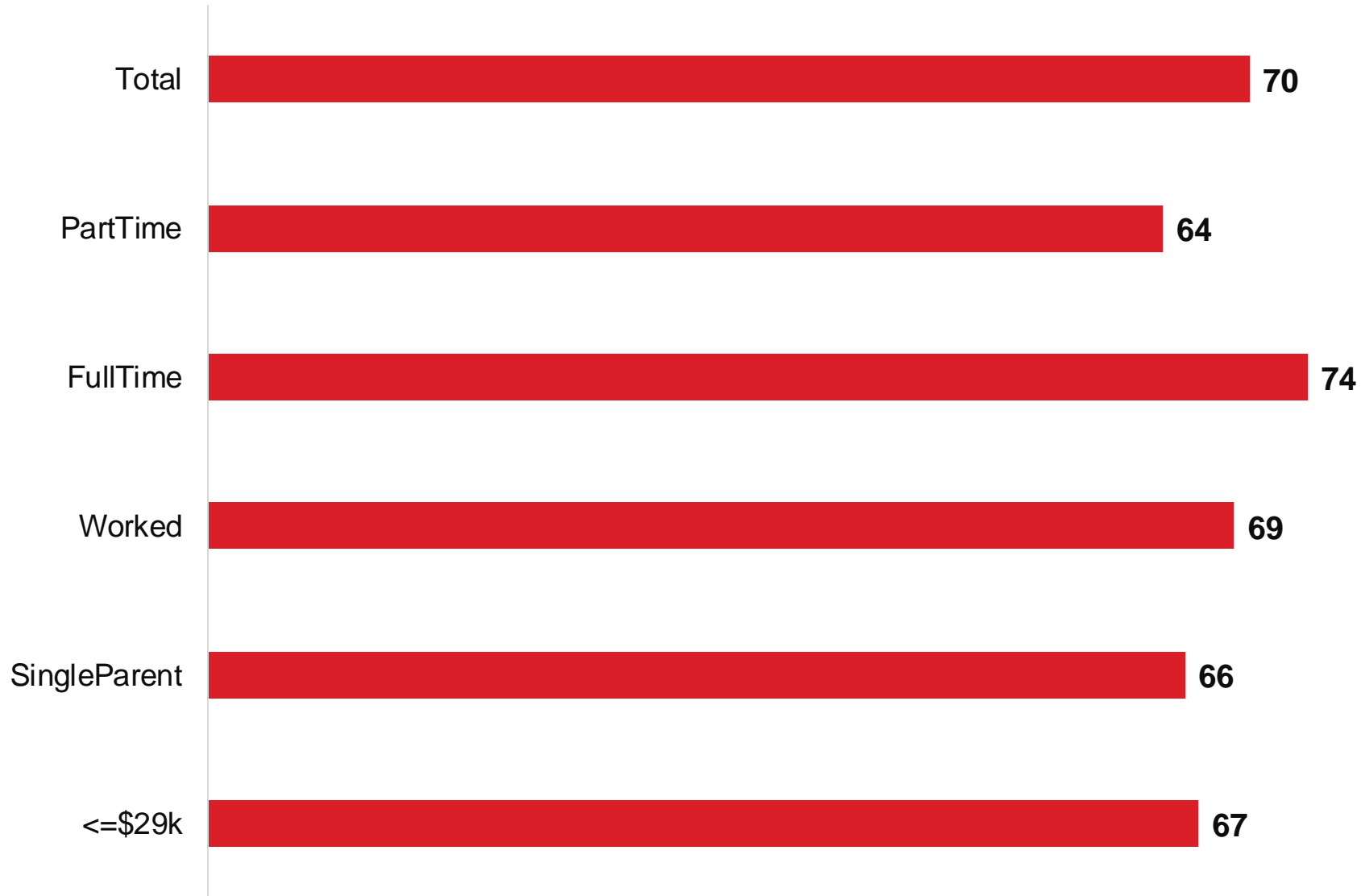
Mental health is the single biggest reason Latino college students cite for considering or leaving college, with 84% saying it was an important reason (51% very important).

Relatedly, loss of interest or motivation is a factor for 74% of respondents.

Inability to afford school and wanting to avoid more debt also rate among the top reasons for leaving, or considering leaving school.

# Most Latinos attending 2-year colleges plan to pursue a 4-year degree

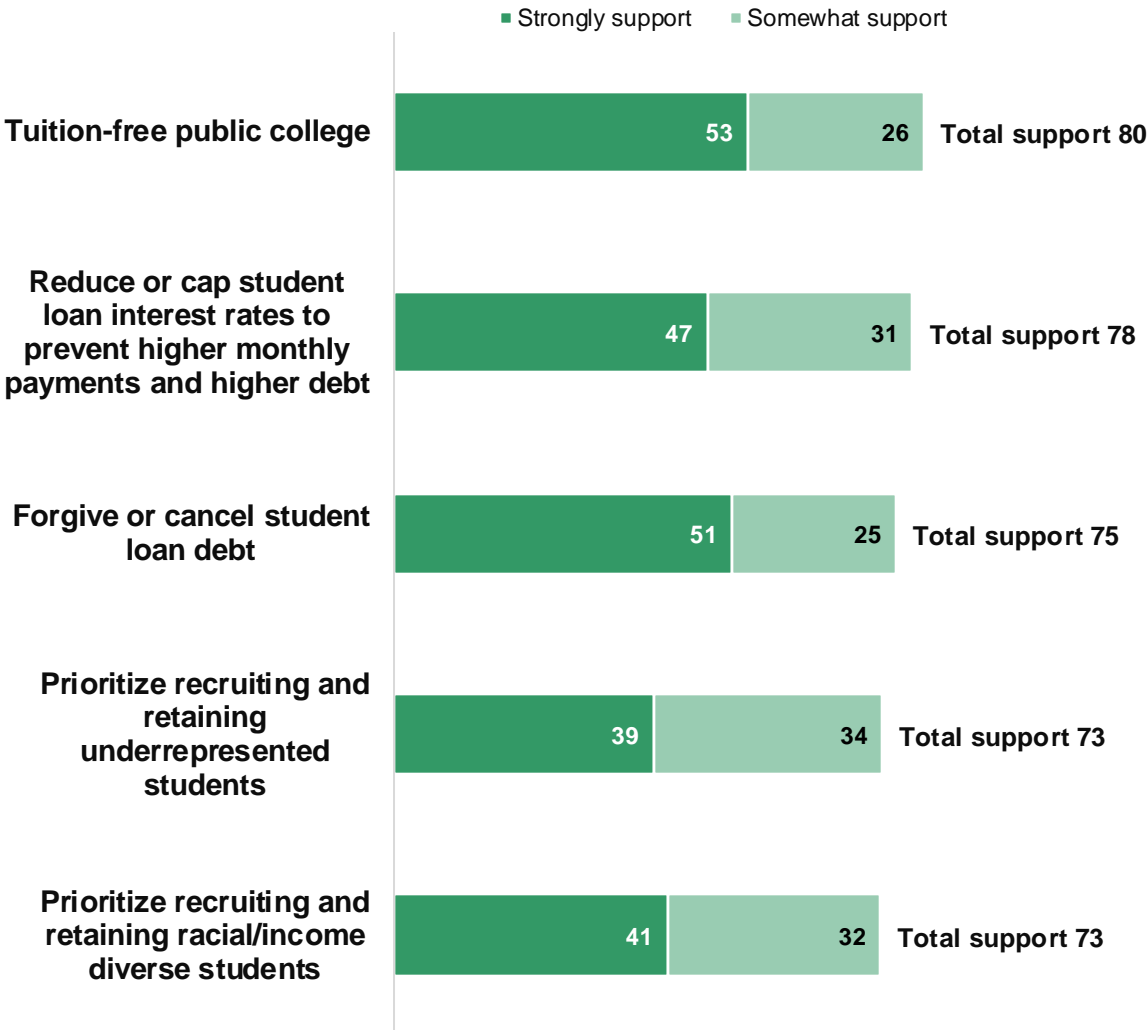
[If attend 2-year school] Have you considered, or do you have plans to pursue a 4-year degree, (bachelor's degree), or attend/transfer to a four-year university or complete a 4-year degree? (percent yes illustrated)



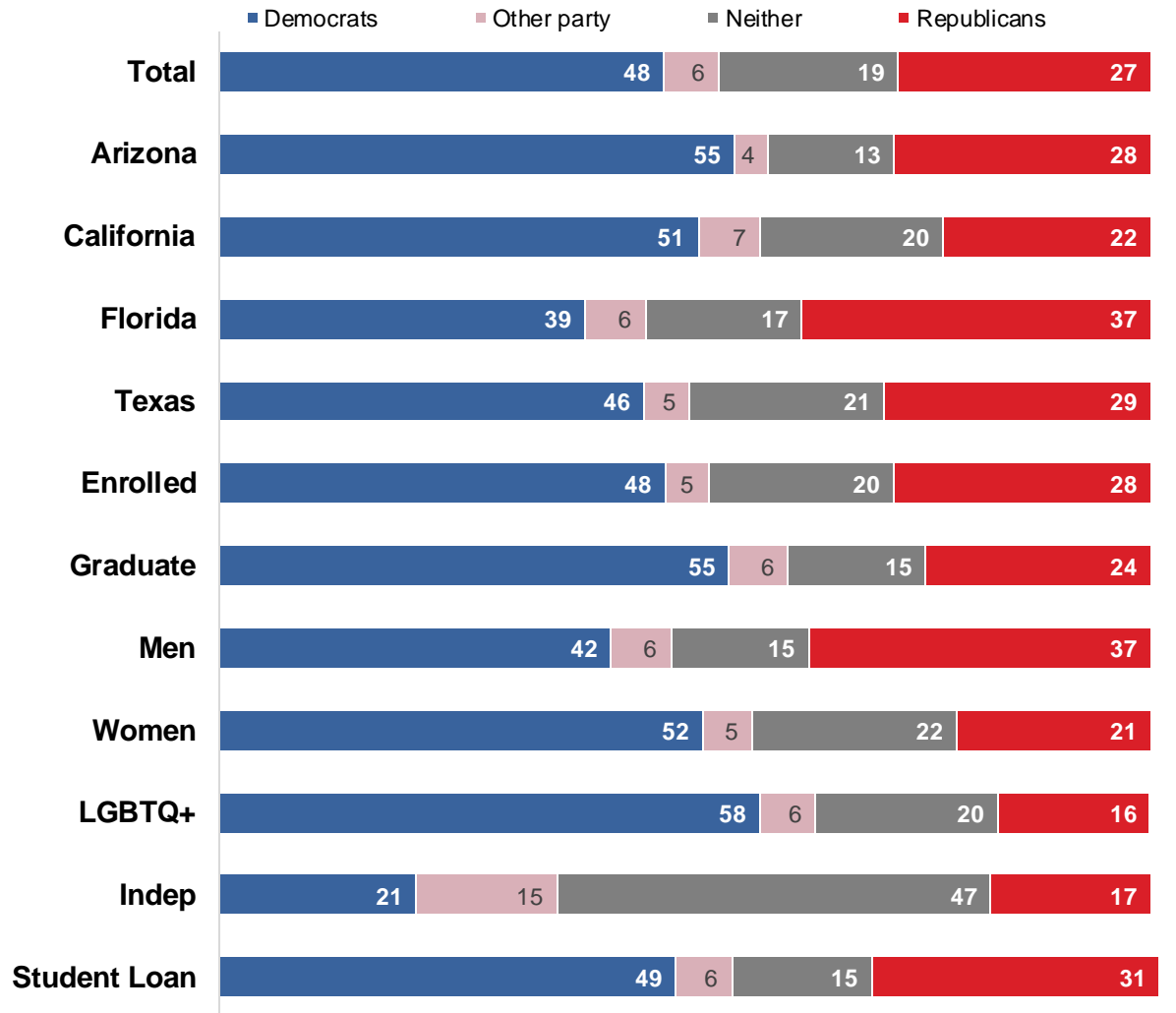
While most Latinos attending 2-year schools plan to pursue a 4-year degree (70%), that share is smaller for those who are part-time students (64%), single parents (66%), and lower income households (67% among those with household income <=\$39k).

# Latino college students strongly support free tuition, loan forgiveness, and student loan interest rate caps. And generally believe Democrats are better on addressing these issues.

When considering policies college administrators and policymakers could address, state your support for the following proposals.



Which political party do you think can best address these important issues facing college students?



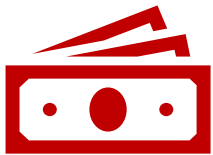


# Policy Takeaways



## Accountability

Higher Education remains a **highly valued economic proposition** for Latino postsecondary students that **policymakers must safeguard**.



## Affordability

Unlocking the **full value of a college degree** for Latinos requires postsecondary education to be **financially accessible and affordable**.



## Retention and Completion

Closing the **completion gap** requires **comprehensive wraparound support services**.

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**Questions?**

# Contact



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**Thank you!**