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Latino Students' Higher Education Experiences

Strategic findings from a national survey

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Methodology

Online survey of 1,566 Latinos aged 18 to 35 who are current college students or who have been within the past four years

- Fielded in English and Spanish, September 3-17, 2026
- Oversamples in Arizona, California, Florida, and Texas
- Confidence interval ± 3.04 percentage points

NOTES:

- Oversamples were weighted down to reflect their actual proportion of the full universe.
- Due to rounding, not all numbers will add to 100. When totaled responses differ from individual responses, totaled responses are more precise.

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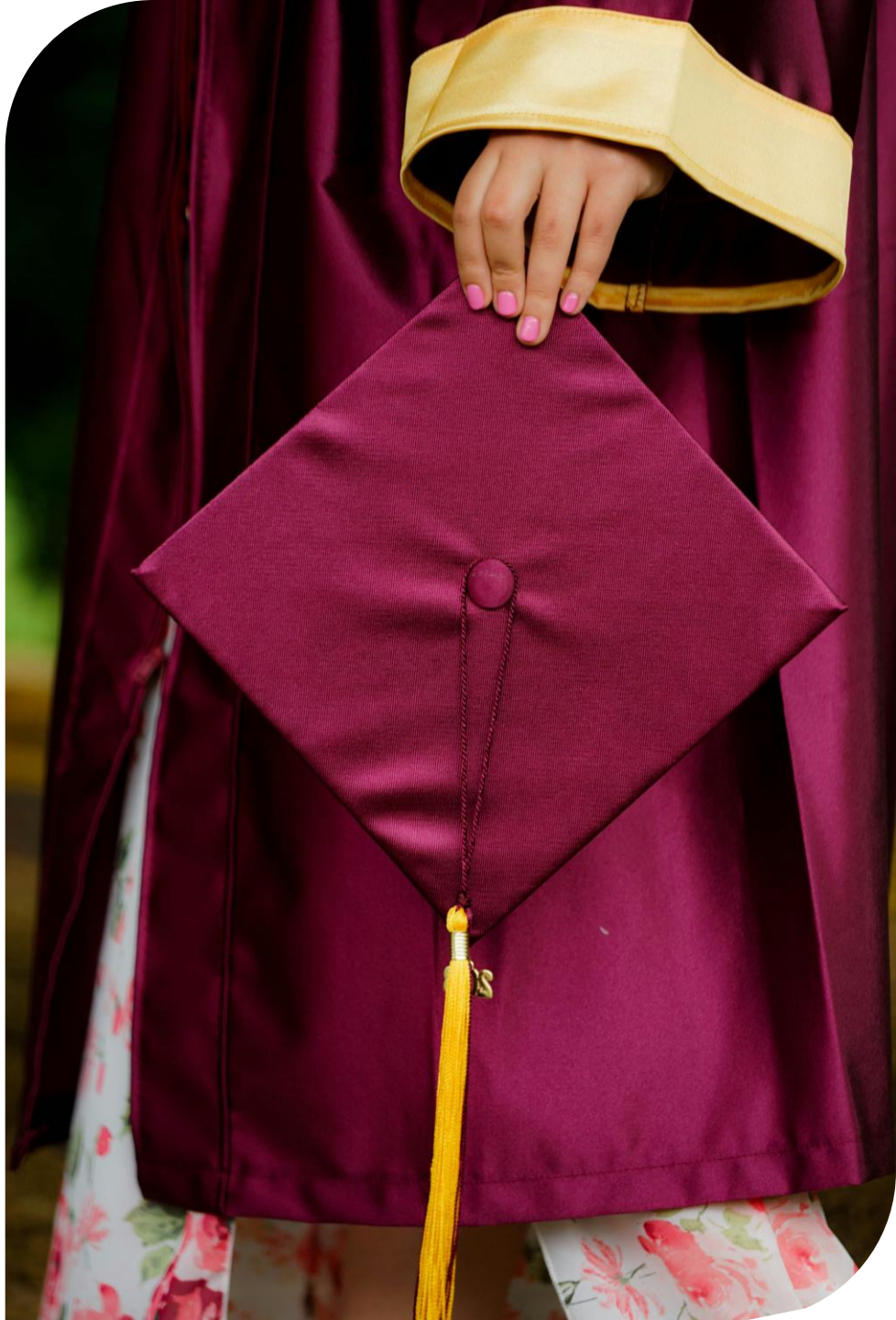
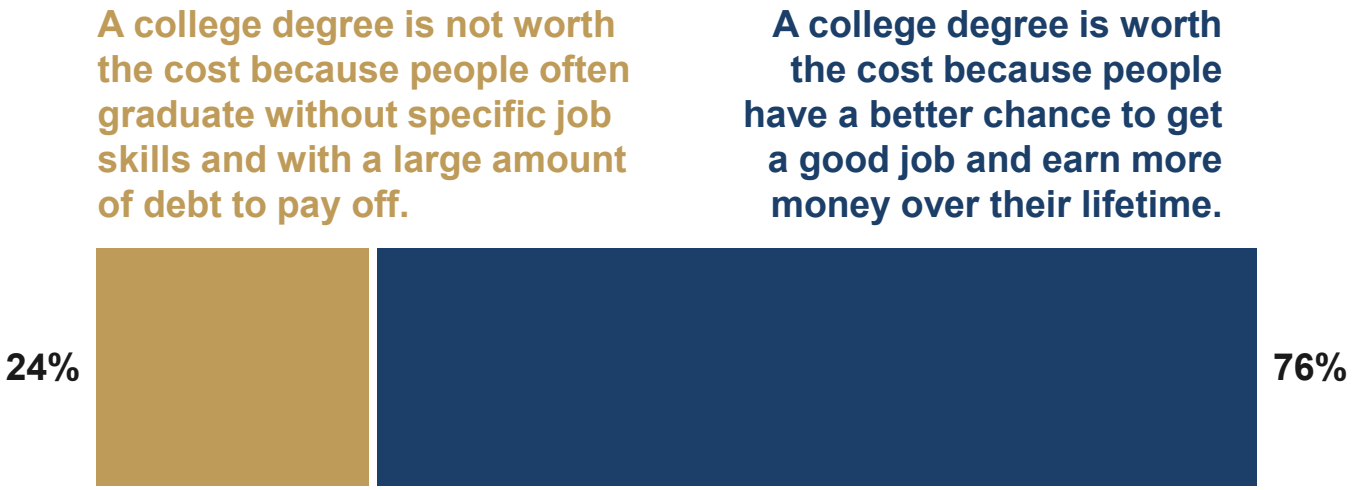


College Motivations

Three in four Latino students believe that a college degree is worth the cost.

Which of the following statements comes closer to your point of view?



	Not worth the cost %	Worth the cost %
2-year students	35	67
4-year students	19	81
Continuous enrollment	18	82
Stopped and returned	31	69
Stopped and did not return	47	53

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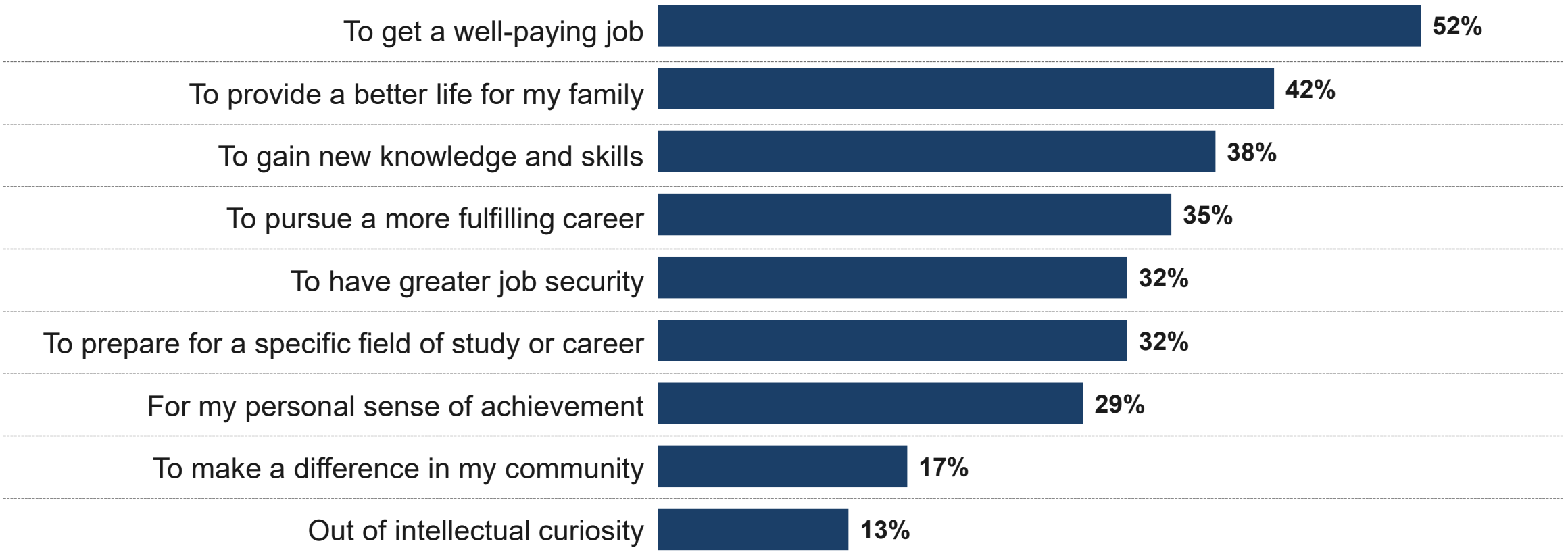
Economic outcomes are the primary motivation to attend college.

What [are/were] the most important reasons you decided to go to college? (Top 3)



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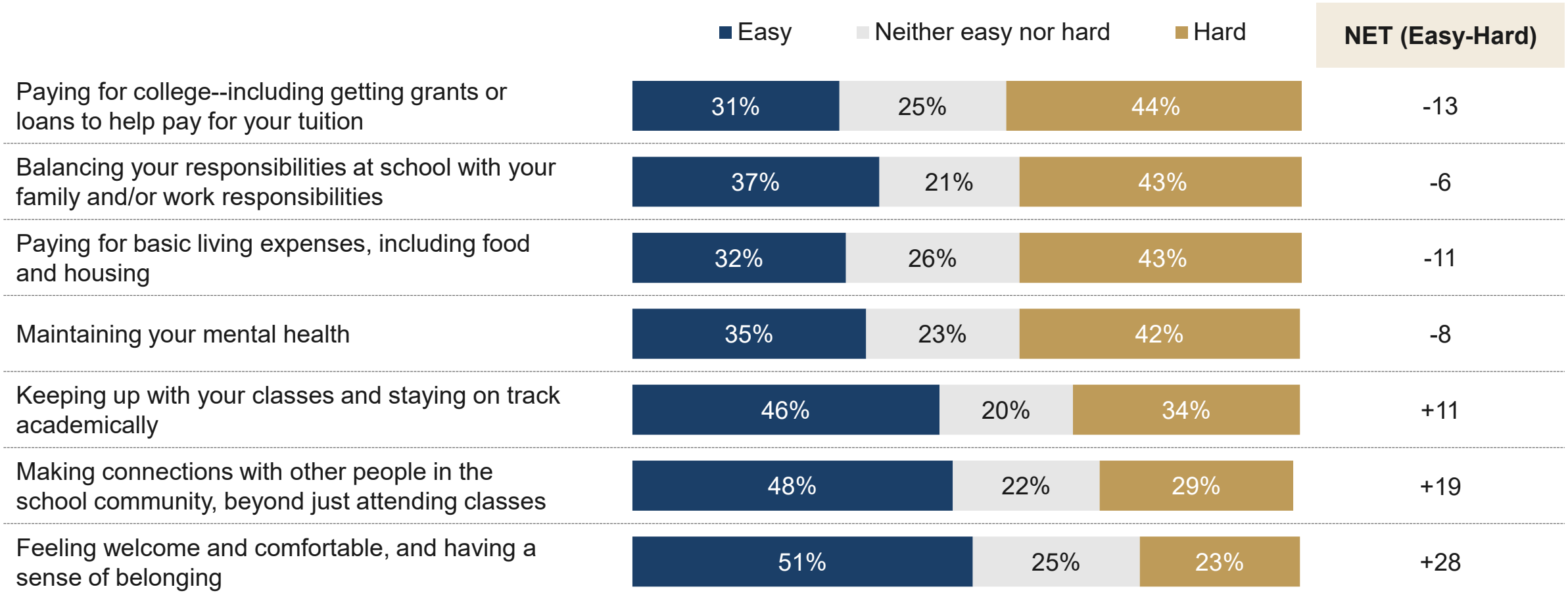
College Experiences

Substantial numbers of students find it hard to pay for college and basic living expenses.

During your time in college, how easy or hard [are/were] each of the following things?



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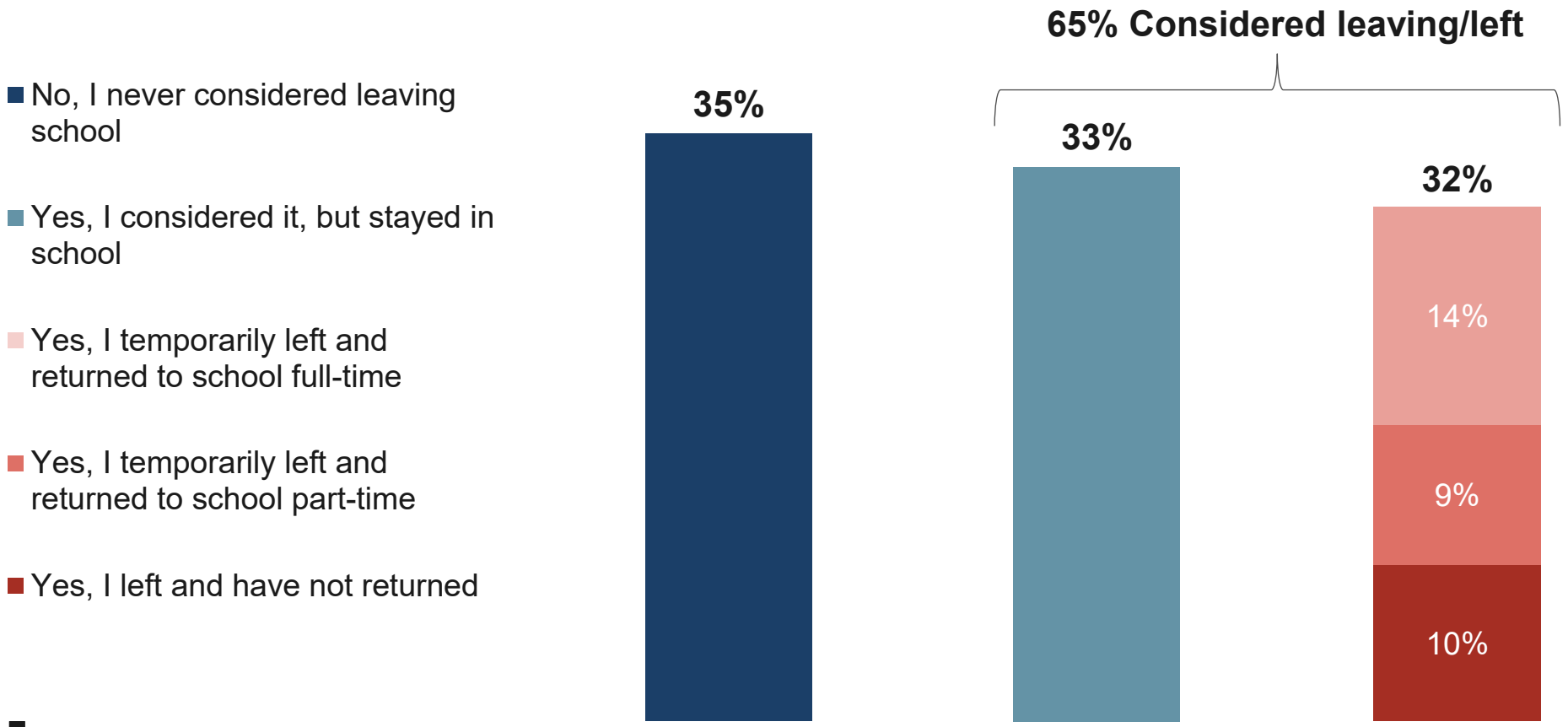
Two-in-three Latino students have considered leaving college, and one in three did leave at some point.

Have you considered or have you ever temporarily or permanently left school before completing your degree?



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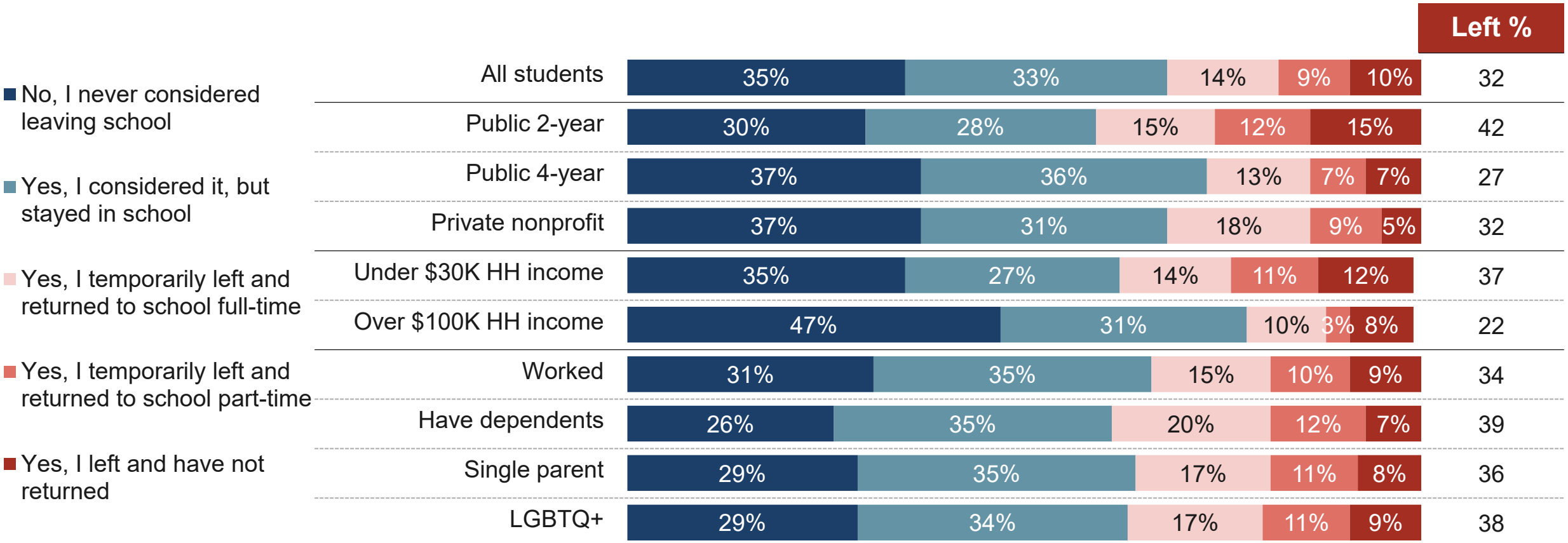
Students at two-year colleges and with lower incomes are most likely to have left college at least temporarily.

Have you considered or have you ever temporarily or permanently left school before completing your degree?



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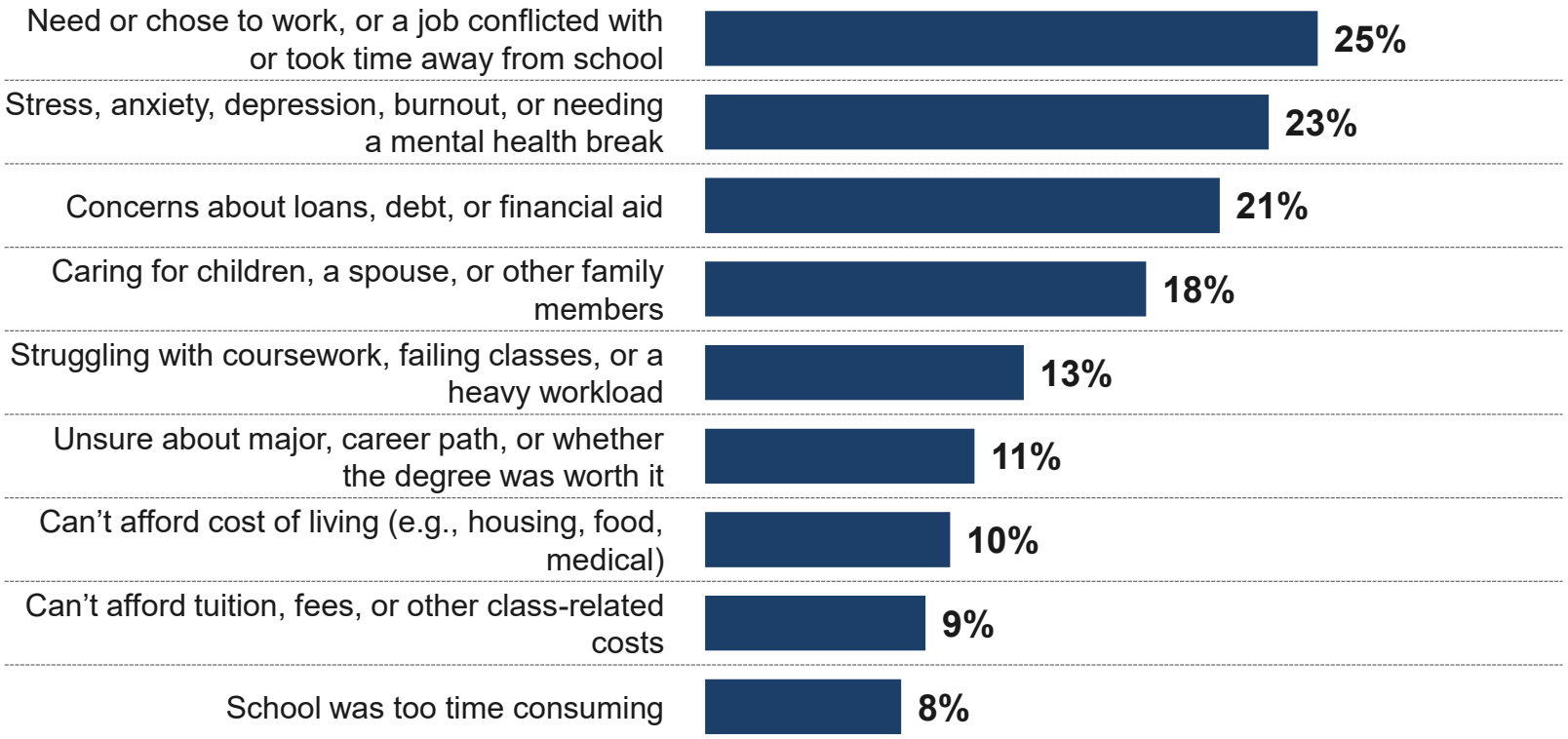
Students who left and did not return struggled more than others on several key dimensions of the college experience.

NET (Easy-Hard)

	All students	Never considered	Considered but stayed	Left and returned	Left and did not return
Paying for college--including getting grants or loans to help pay for your tuition	-13	-6	-15	-12	-38
Balancing your responsibilities at school with your family and/or work responsibilities	-6	+6	-14	-5	-25
Paying for basic living expenses, including food and housing	-11	-1	-14	-12	-37
Maintaining your mental health	-8	+2	-11	-8	-29
Keeping up with your classes and staying on track academically	+11	+24	+6	+11	-17
Making connections with other people in the school community, beyond just attending classes	+19	+22	+26	+15	-10
Feeling welcome and comfortable, and having a sense of belonging	+28	+38	+31	+13	+14

In their own words, students cite financial and mental health concerns as top reasons for considering stopping out.

What are some reasons why you considered leaving or did leave school before completing your degree?
(aggregated volunteered responses among students who considered or did stop out)



"One reason I have considered leaving school is the financial and time commitment that comes with getting a degree. Balancing school with work and other responsibilities can sometimes feel overwhelming, especially when I have to think about how many years I still have left. There have also been times when I questioned whether continuing was worth the stress, especially when classes became difficult or I felt burned out."
– Current 4-year public university student

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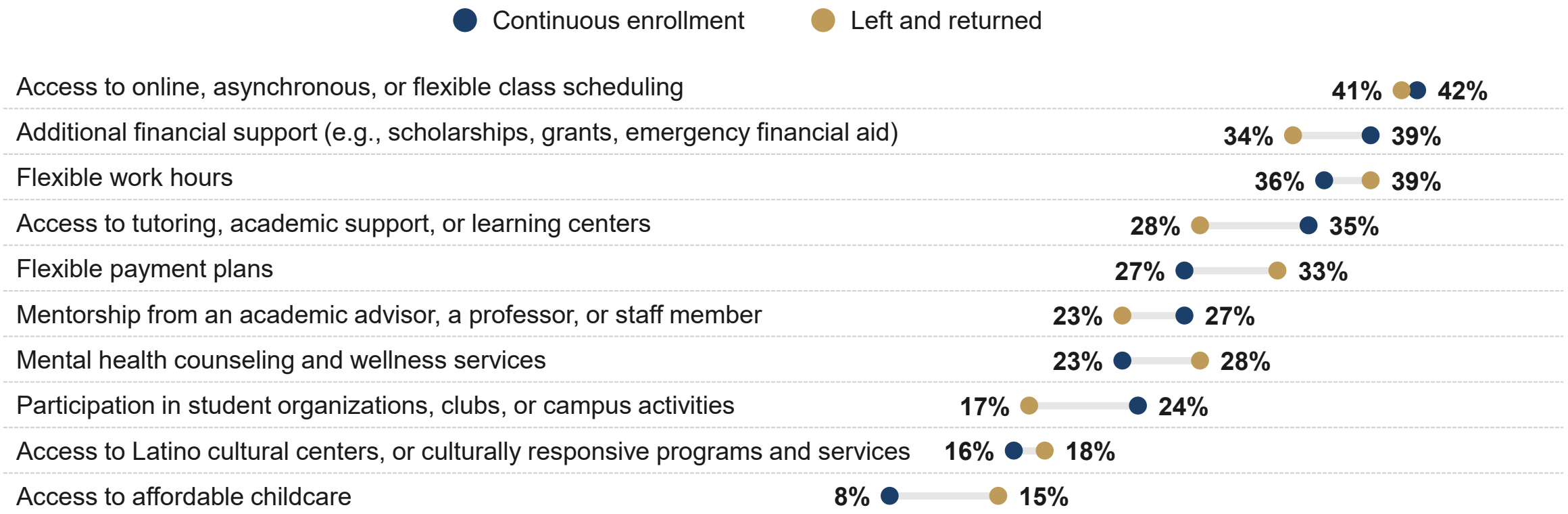
Flexibility and financial support are the most important factors in helping students return to school.

What [are/were] the most important reasons you stayed in or returned to school? (Top 3)
(asked of students who temporarily stopped out of school, considered stopping, or did not consider)



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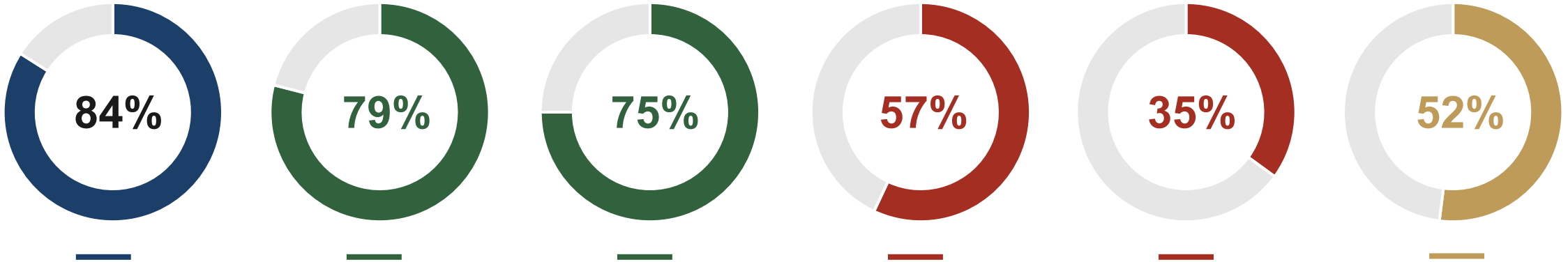
Family considerations are a very important aspect of Latino students' college experiences.

[Do/did] any of the following apply to you during your time in college?



Family plays a role in degree completion: those who left or considered leaving college are more likely to cite family needs while those who stay report feeling more supported by family.

[Do/did] any of the following apply to you during your time in college?

	All students %	Never considered %	Considered but stayed %	Left and returned %	Left and did not return %
I [feel/felt] a sense of responsibility to succeed academically to honor my parents' sacrifices	84	**87**	**85**	**81**	74
My family [understands/understood] what I [need/needed] to do to succeed academically	79	**85**	**82**	**72**	59
My family's emotional support [helps/helped] me succeed academically	75	**80**	**78**	**72**	53
I [feel/felt] a sense of guilt when schoolwork [keeps/kept] me from supporting my family	57	**45**	**64**	**66**	52
My family's needs [take/took] away from my ability to prioritize my education	35	23	**40**	**41**	**48**

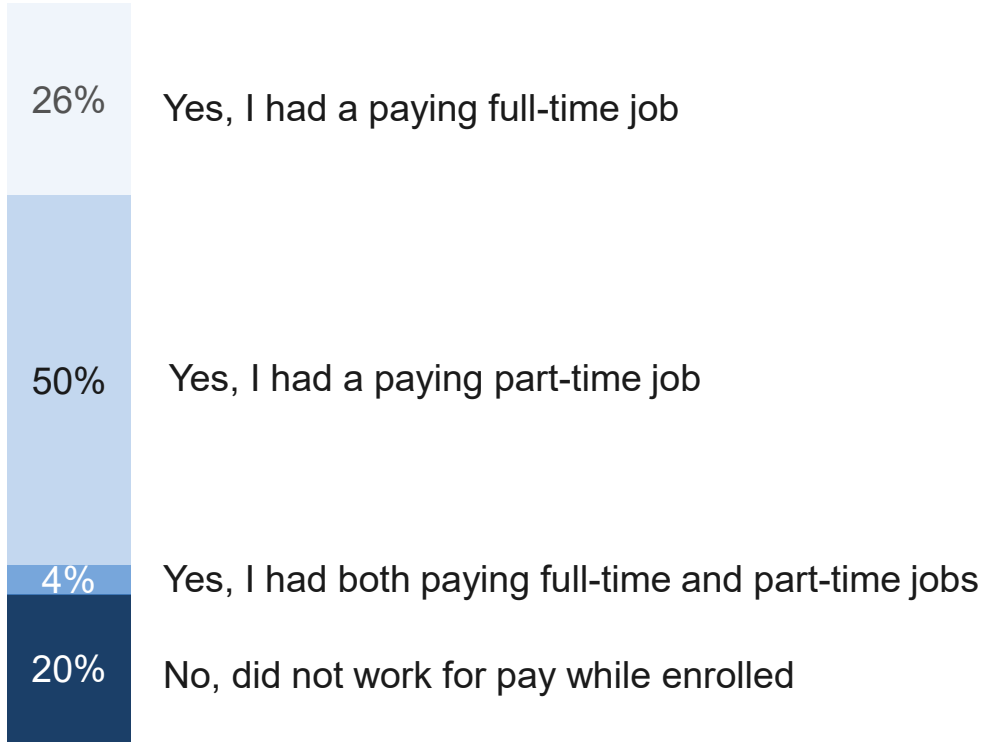
College Finances

Working during college is the norm.

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

Total yes: 80%

Among those with a job: over one in three had a work-study job



- 41% of those with private loans had full-time jobs, compared to 30% of those with public loans.
- 38% of those aged 26-35 had full-time jobs while in school, compared to 18% who are aged 18-22.

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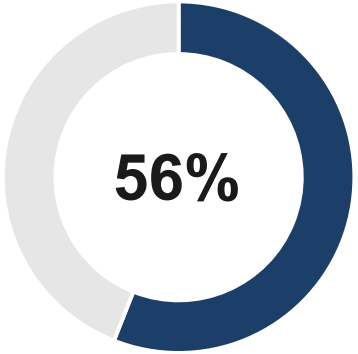
For many students, working while attending school negatively impacts their academic experience.

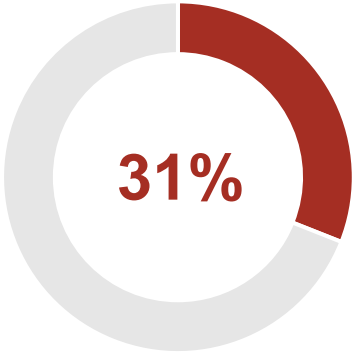
At any time you were enrolled in college, [has/had] your job [impact/impacted] your college academic experience in any of the following ways?

(asked of students who had a paying job while attending college)

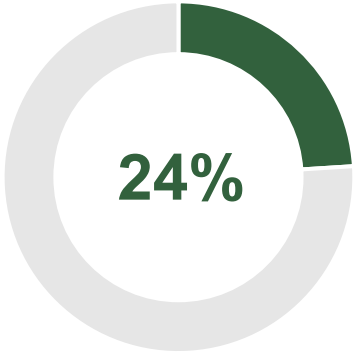
80% said their job impacted their academic experience in at least one of these ways



Had less time to study



Took fewer classes



Could not take jobs, internships, or other positions related to my field of study or intended career

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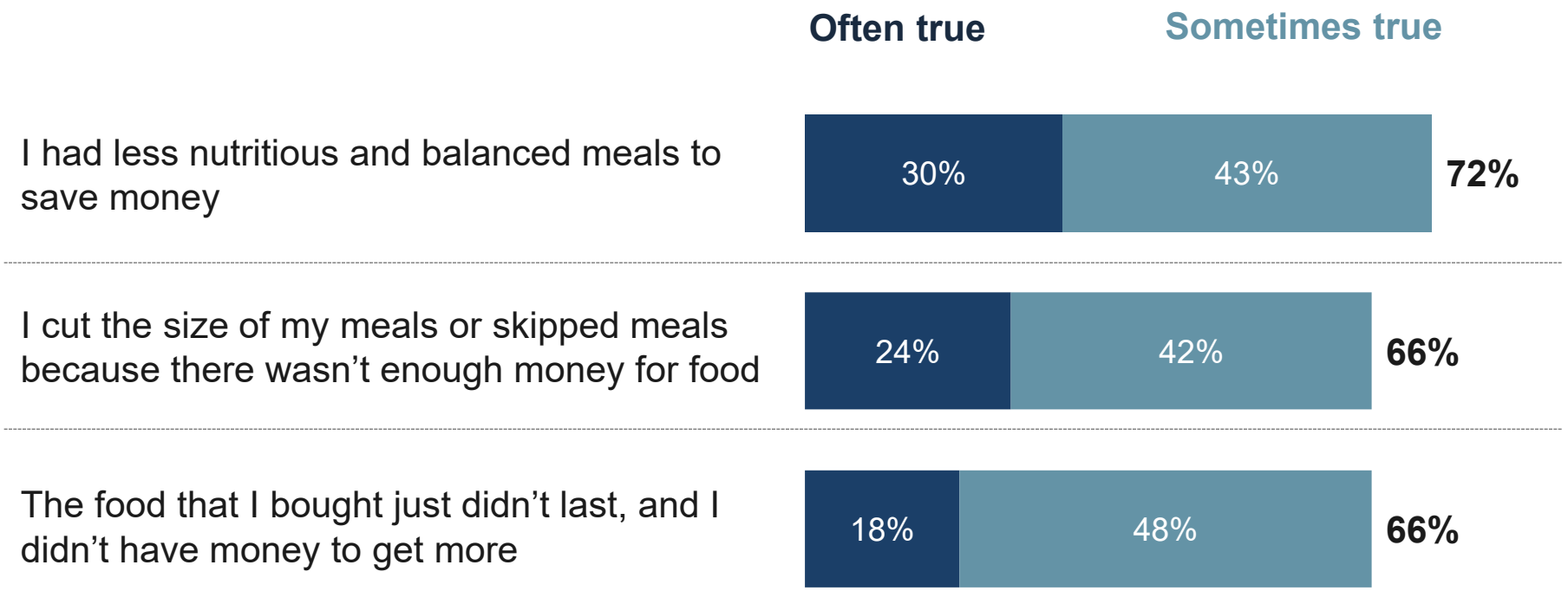
Food insecurity manifests in a variety of ways and touches most students.

During your time in college…?



- 82% said at least one of these was often/sometimes true
- 43% high food insecurity (said at least one of these was *often* true)

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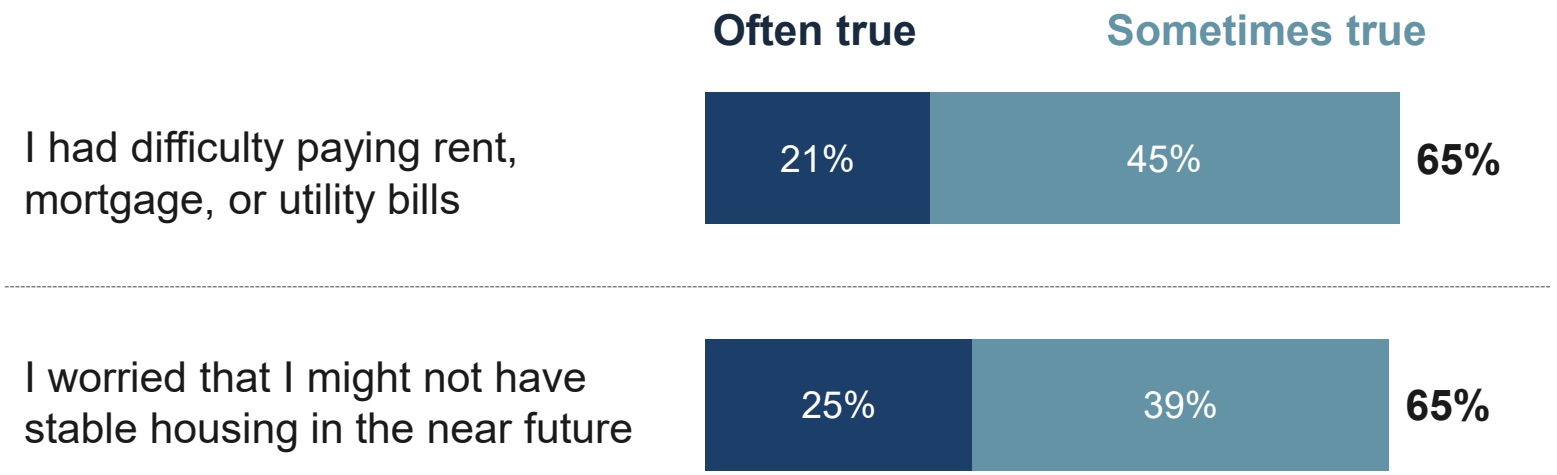
The large majority of students face some degree of housing instability.

During your time in college…?

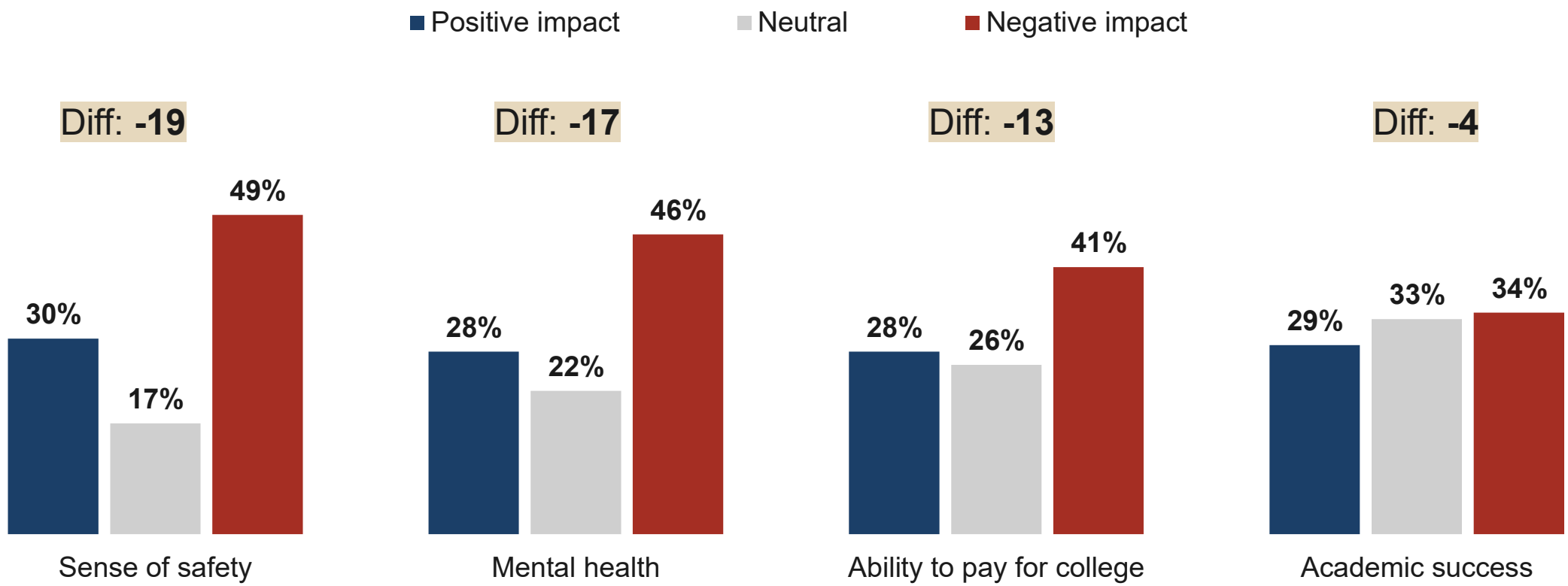


- 77% said at least one of these was often/sometimes true
- 34% high housing instability (said at least one of these was *often* true)

Trump Administration Policies

The Trump administration's immigration policies and enforcement actions negatively impact half of Latino students' sense of safety.

In which of the following ways have you been personally impacted by the Trump administration's immigration policies and enforcement actions?



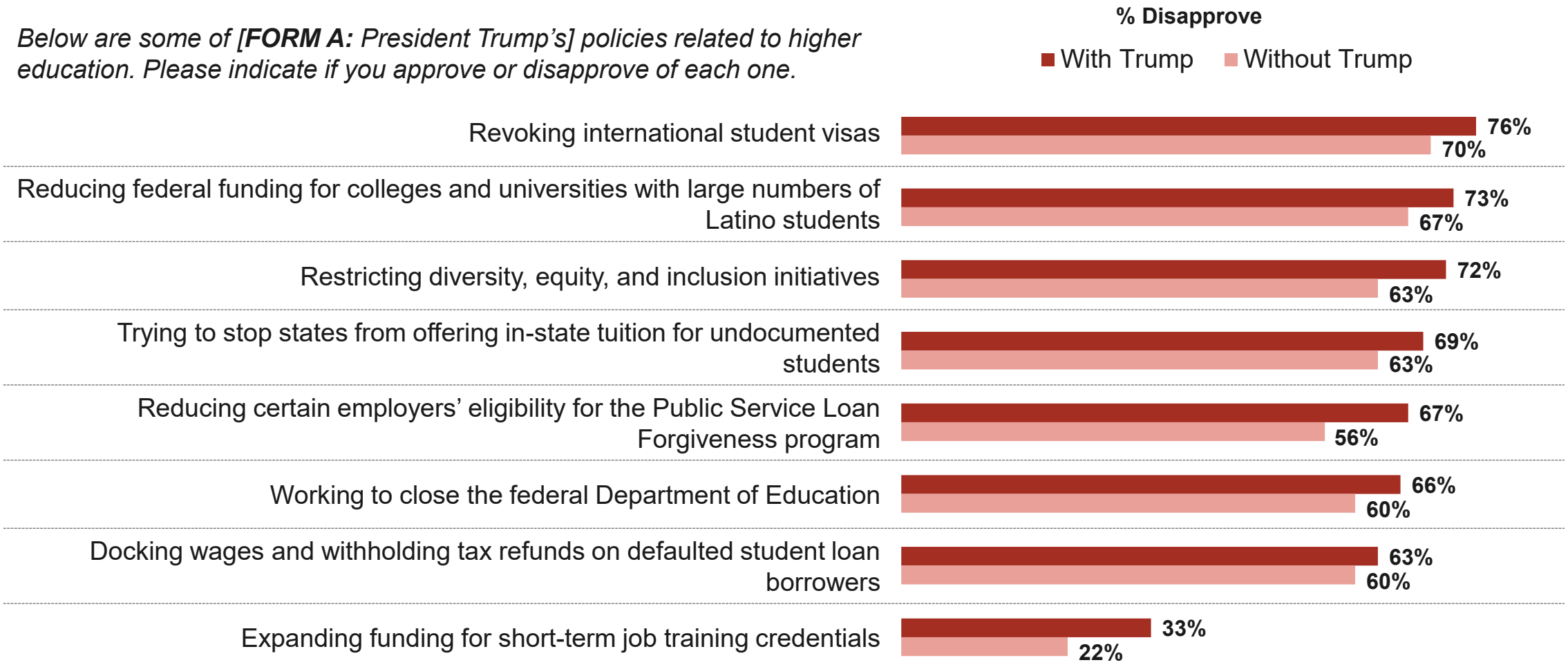
Trump's policies have a disproportionately negative impact on some segments of Latino students.

NET POSITIVE (Positive impact-Negative impact)

	Sense of safety	Mental health	Ability to pay for college	Academic success
All students	-19	-17	-13	-4
First-generation students	-28	-26	-21	-12
Not first-generation students	-7	-6	-3	+6
Primary language is English	-6	-5	0	+9
Mixed language or primary is Spanish	-26	-25	-21	-12
Parents both born in the US	+7	-2	+5	+11
One or both parents foreign born	-32	-27	-23	-11
Men	+2	+5	+6	+12
Women	-32	-31	-25	-15
Democrats	-44	-39	-36	-25
Independents	-14	-14	-11	-2
Republicans	+46	+41	+49	+53

Identifying education policy changes with the Trump administration increases disapproval of these actions.

*Below are some of [**FORM A:** President Trump's] policies related to higher education. Please indicate if you approve or disapprove of each one.*



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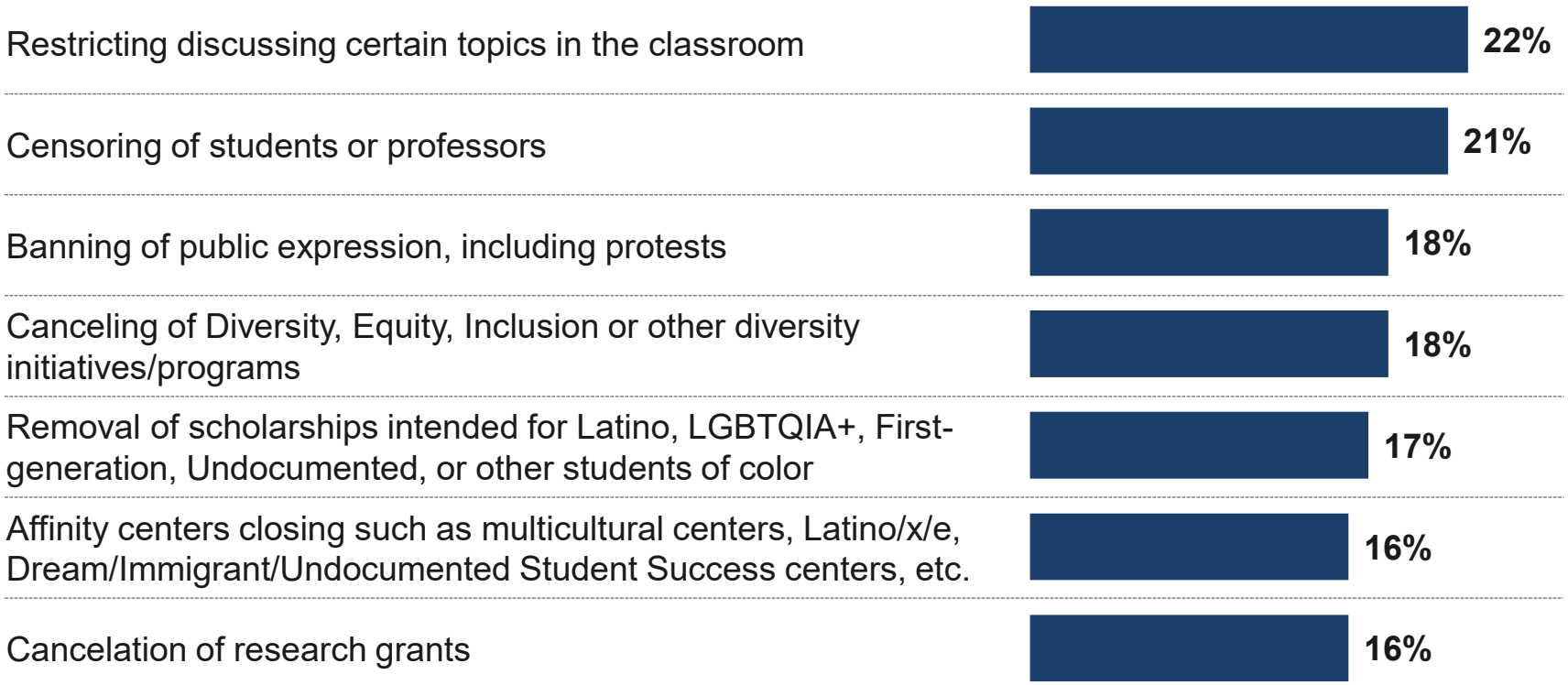
While a majority of students have heard about at least one of Trump's policies impacting their campus, no single one is observed by many.

Have you heard about any of the following happening at YOUR college or university?



- 57% of students have heard of at least one of these things happening at their school; 43% have not heard of any.
- Across the board, students at 4-year colleges have heard about these things to a greater extent than students at 2-year colleges.

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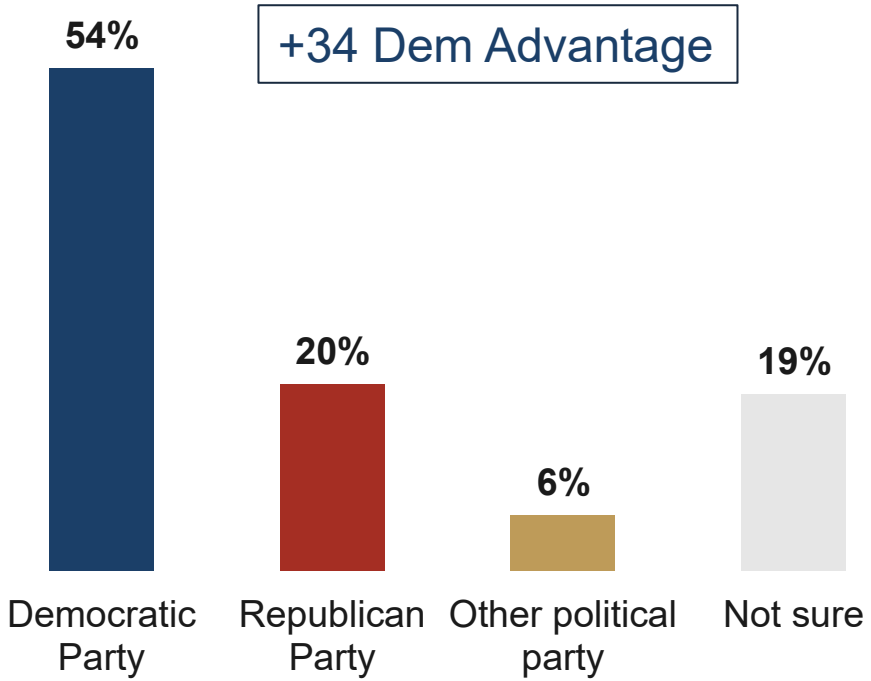
Over half of students believe that Democrats are best suited to address key issues facing college students like them.

Which political party do you think can best address the most important issues facing college students like you?



	DEM %	GOP %	NET DEM ADV
Current student	58	20	+38
Former student	49	21	+28
Full-time student	57	19	+38
Part-time student	48	23	+25
First gen student	57	16	+41
Not first-gen student	51	26	+26
US born student	56	20	+37
PR/Foreign born student	38	23	+16
US born parents	51	29	+22
PR/Foreign born parents	59	15	+44
Men 18-25	46	27	+18
Men 26-35	54	35	+19
Women 18-25	60	14	+46
Women 26-35	54	18	+36

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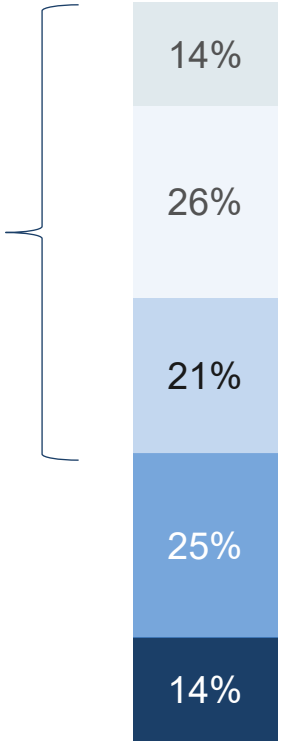
Artificial Intelligence

AI is widely used to support Latino students' coursework, especially among men.

How often do you use artificial intelligence (AI) in your coursework?

Total daily/A few times a week/
A few times a month: 61%



	Total Daily/ Few times week/ Few times month %
Public 2-year	54
Public 4-year	62
Private non-profit	72
Men 18-25	67
Men 26-35	77
Women 18-25	55
Women 26-35	63
First gen student	56
Not first gen student	67

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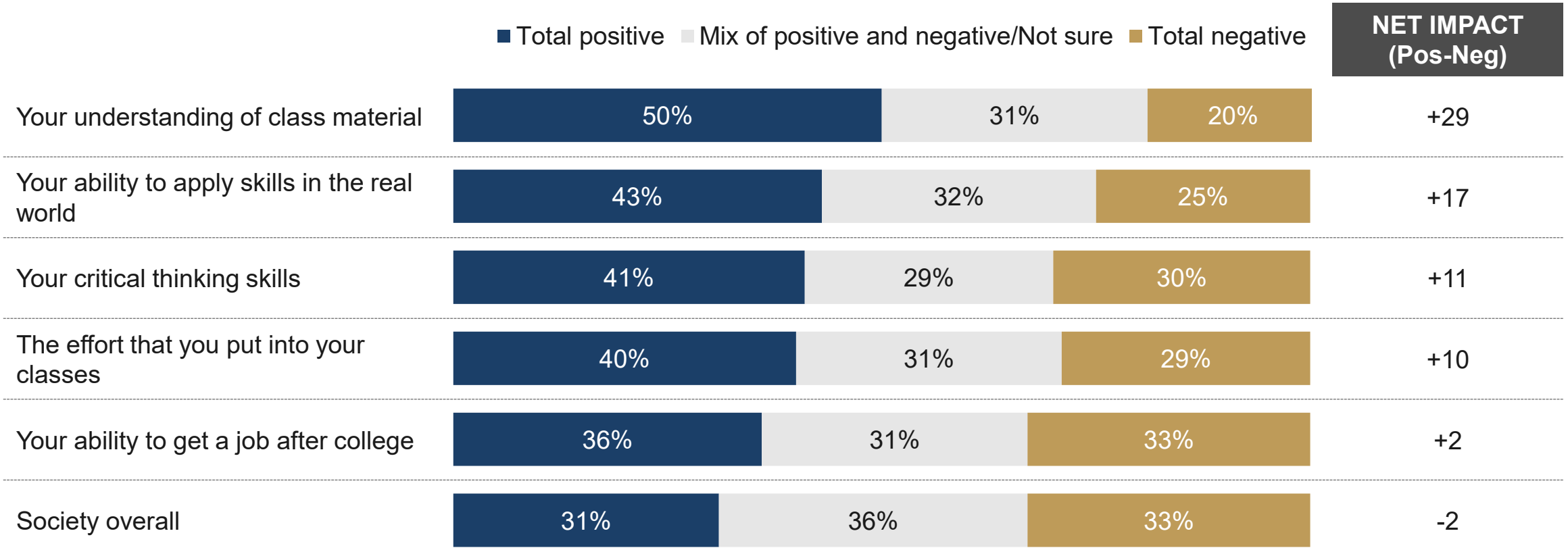
Students view AI as having a net positive impact on educated-related factors, but have mixed views about its impact on their job prospects and society overall.

How would you describe the impact AI is having on…?



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Thank you.

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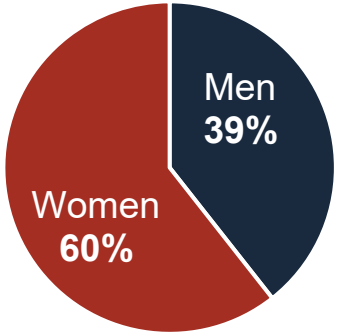
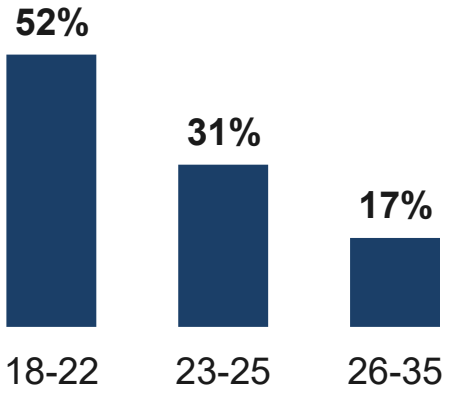
Every voice heard.
Every opinion counted.

Profile of Survey Sample

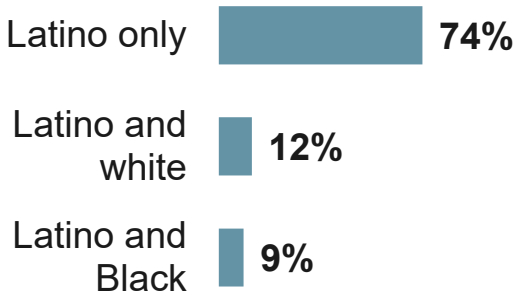
Gender



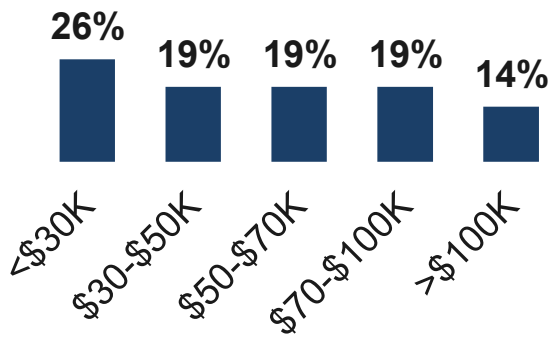
Age



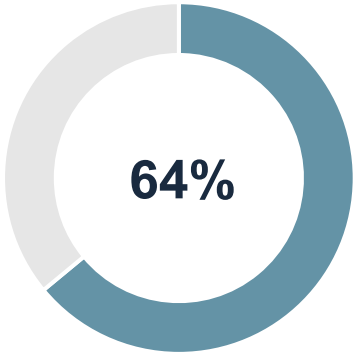
Race



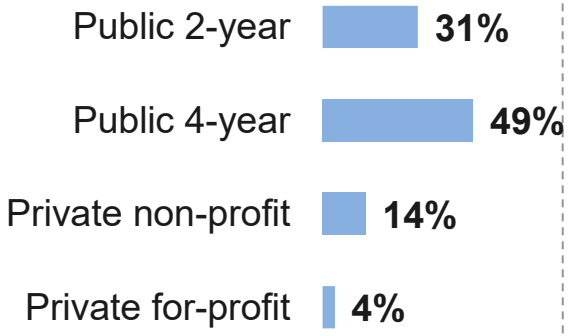
Household Income



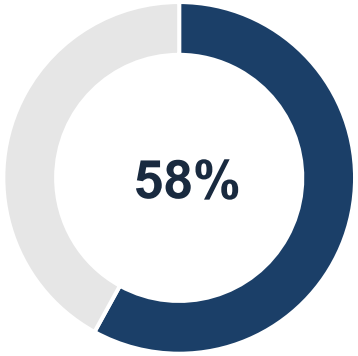
Current Student



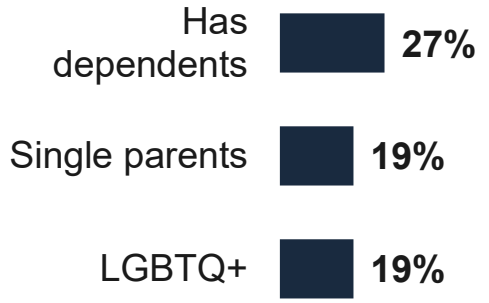
School Type



First-Generation Student



Other Demographics



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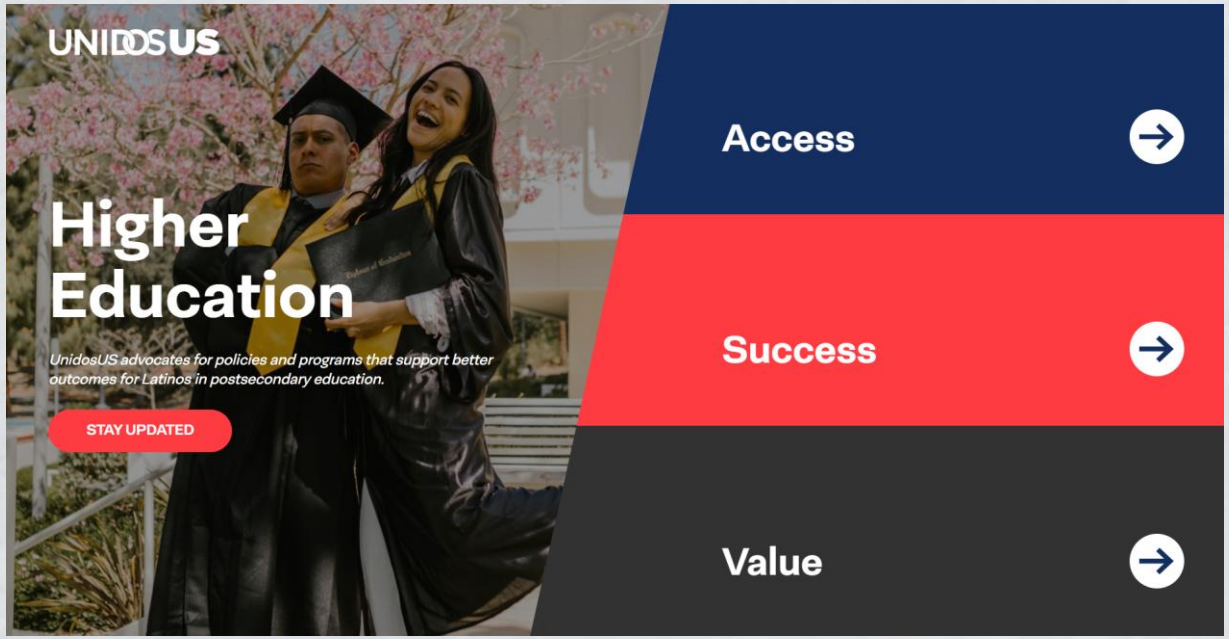

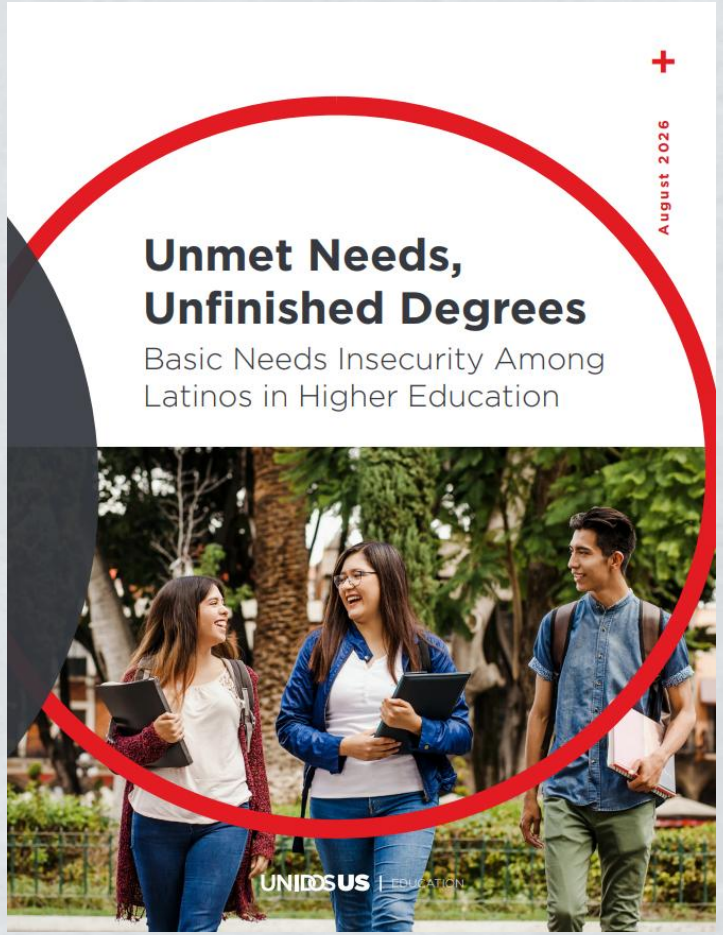

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