

Survey Shows Support for Postsecondary Education: Using Data to Tell Your Story

National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities

PR Academy

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Building a Data-Driven World™

Outline

- Civis Analytics Background
- The problem: Perceptions of higher education are changing
- How do we know: Methodology and Survey Challenges
- Survey: Perceptions of Higher Education
 - Perceived impact of the value of higher education attainment
 - Two-year and four-year higher education program satisfaction
- What can we do about it?
 - Testing your messages and Issue Salience



Civis Analytics Background

FIND TRUTH AND GUIDE ACTION

We revolutionized the presidential campaign process. Now we're revolutionizing data science for organizations in the private and public sectors.

- Founded in 2013, Civis Analytics is a 150-person data science technology and advisory company with offices in Chicago and Washington, D.C.
- We invented technology to operationalize data science for our consultants and our clients' internal data science teams.
- Today, Civis is the premier data science platform and provides world-renowned applied data science consulting and survey science.





We are people scientists

Our Core Competency

Building individual-level predictions that help you find and communicate with exactly the people you're looking for. This is what we do best:

Building the Data

Unify and enrich individual level data

Automating

Empower organizations by automating the data science workflow through technology

Prediction

Predict an individual's future behavior (& identify how to change this behavior)

Survey

Poll accurately



The Problem

Changing Views on Higher Education

Grade Point • Perspective

Americans love higher education, just not their universities

JULY 20, 2017



Republicans skeptical of colleges' impact on U.S., but most see benefits for workforce preparation

BY HANNAH FINGERHUT



How Do We Know?

Methodology

- Civis Analytics surveyed 5647 members of the general public using an online survey from August through September 2017
- All results are weighted to the US population.
- The margin of error for these weighted survey results is about +/- 2.0 percentage points overall and +/- 3-4 percentage points for breakouts of those dissatisfied with college education.

Survey Methodology – The Questions We Asked

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

- Higher education Job Prospects:
“It’s easier to get a good job with an education after high school – like a college degree or trade certificate – than it is to get a good job without one.”
- College Degree Investment:
“For most high school students today, pursuing a college degree is not a worthwhile investment because it will lead to student debt with little chance of finding a good paying job”
- Secondary Education Pursuit
“Most high school students should pursue [career or technical/vocational], community college programs and Associate’s degrees programs, OR a four-year college degree after they graduate high school.”

College satisfaction

- Would you say you are [satisfied or dissatisfied] with the job [community and two-year colleges/ four-year colleges] are doing in America today?
- Which of the following best describes why you are dissatisfied with four-year colleges and universities? (Select 2)
 - They cost too much to attend
 - They don't prepare students with useful real-world skills
 - They coddle students too much
 - They don't focus on useful subject matter
 - They push students to a particular political viewpoint

Survey Challenges

- **Response rates are falling**
- **People picking up the phone aren't representative**
 - Older white women are more than 25X as likely to pick up the phone as young Hispanic men
 - Survey respondents, even when adjusting for demographics such as age and race, are often more than 20% more likely to vote than the overall population
- **People on web panels are even less representative!**
 - More than 2X as likely to be office workers. Construction workers, miners, truck drivers, retail workers heavily under-represented
 - Unusually agreeable, cosmopolitan, open to new experiences
 - Obviously, much much more likely to use the internet
 - 2.5X over-representation of lgbt-identifying men, under-representation of lgbt-identifying women
- **How does Civis Analytics deal with these problems?**



What Did We Learn from the Survey?

Key findings

Most Americans see higher education as worthwhile

A large majority of Americans (86%) and teachers (92%) feel that higher education after high school enhances job prospects. Unsurprisingly, most (89%; 91%) also think high school students should pursue some form of higher ed. after graduation, regardless of whether “vocational training” or “career and technical training” were listed along with two- and four-year programs.

A majority of Americans (53%) and teachers (65%) view college degrees as worthwhile investments.

However, a third of respondents in the general population “somewhat agree” that college degrees lead to student debt and don’t lead to good paying jobs.

Satisfaction with college is lower among Republicans; Dems concerned about cost

The general public is generally satisfied with community college (63%) and four-year colleges (52%), as are teachers (83% and 75%). Republicans, white individuals, and those without a college degree have the lowest satisfaction with four-year programs.

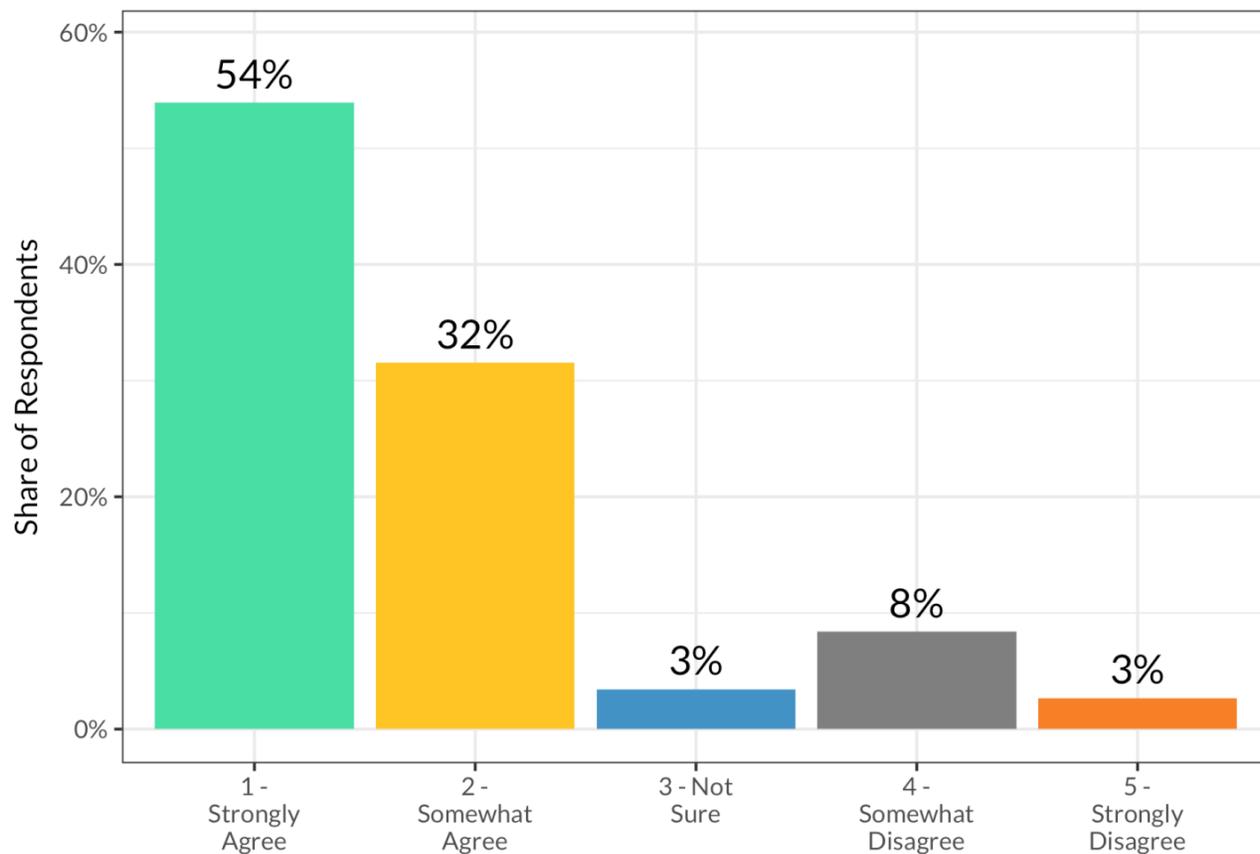
The cost of four-year college is a leading concern (39%), selected disproportionately by Democrats, younger individuals, and people of color.

We do see strong partisan differences in causes of dissatisfaction, with concerns about schools imposing a political viewpoint much more salient among Republicans and those in counties that had more 2016 votes for Trump than Clinton.

Americans agree higher education leads to stronger job prospects

'It's easier to get a good job with an education after high school – like a college degree or trade certificate – than it is to get a good job without one.' (n = 5647)

Effect of Higher Education on Job Prospects (General Public)



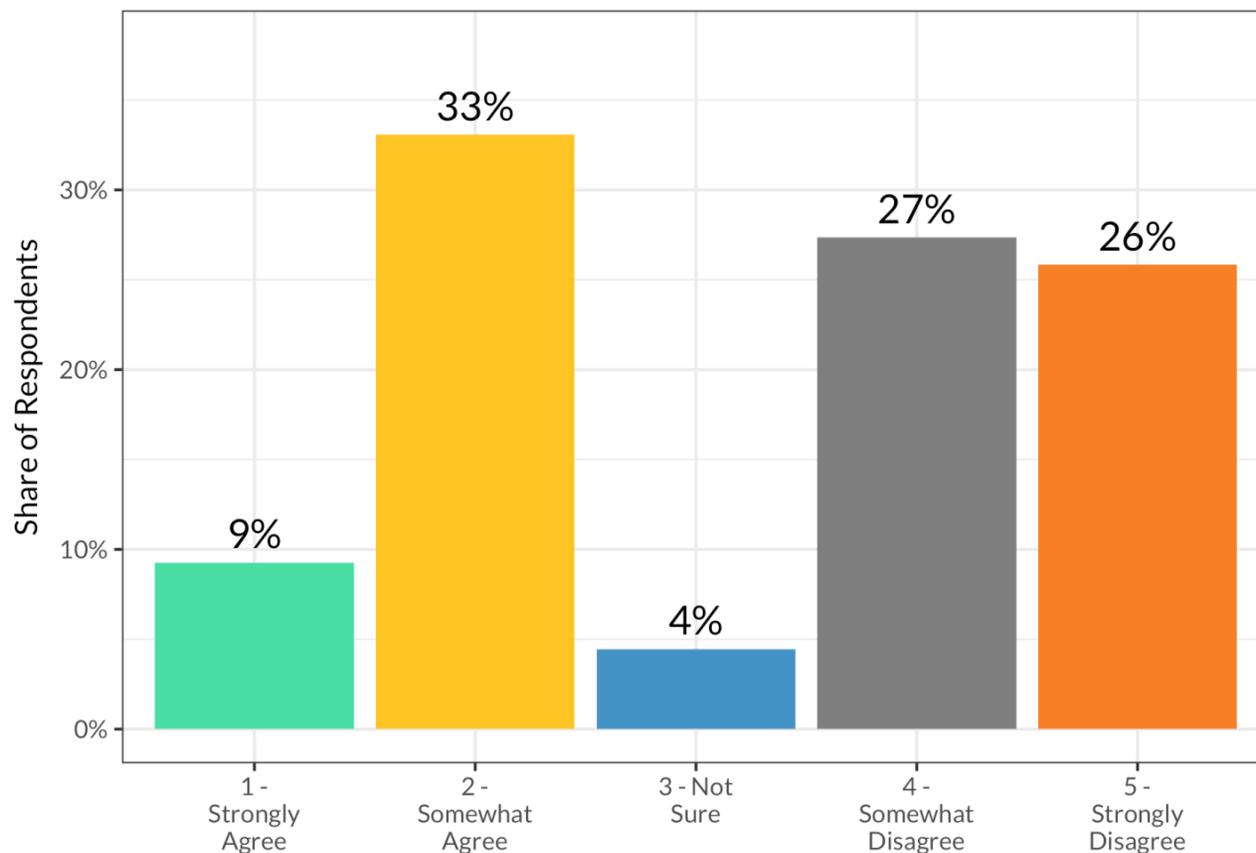
Takeaways

The vast majority of Americans (86%) see the value of some form of higher education in the job market

College degrees are generally seen as worthwhile investments

“For most high school students today, pursuing a college degree is **not** a worthwhile investment because it will lead to student debt with little chance of finding a good paying job.” (n = 5647)

Belief that Higher Education is not Good Investment (General Public)



Takeaways

The **majority** of Americans (53%) say college degrees **are worthwhile investments overall**

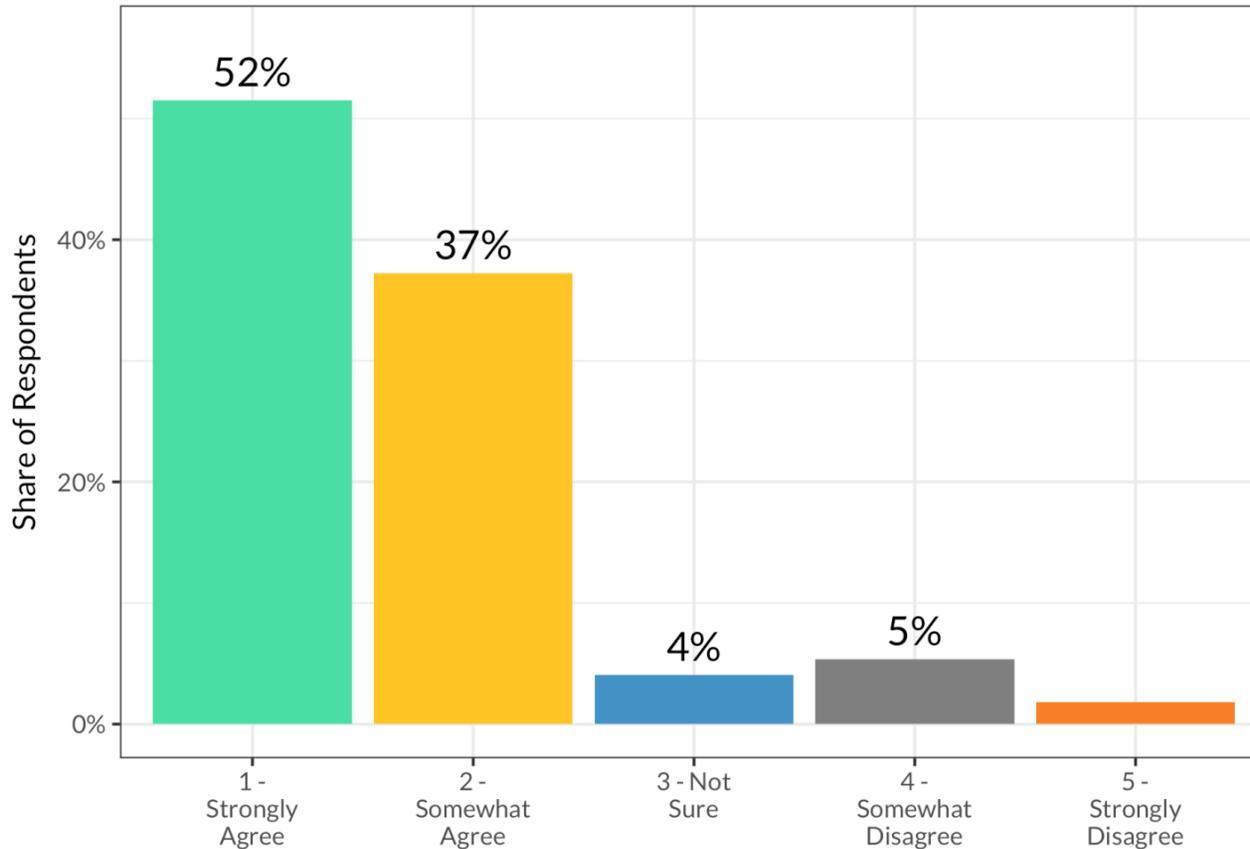
However, **a third** of respondents somewhat agree that college degrees lead to student debt and don't lead to good paying jobs

General Population

Most Americans say students should pursue higher education

“Most high school students should pursue [career or technical training / vocational training], community college programs and Associate’s degrees programs, OR a four-year college degree after they graduate high school.” (n = 5647)

Students Should Pursue Post-HS Education (General Public)



Takeaways

Americans are fairly uniform in their support of higher education in general.

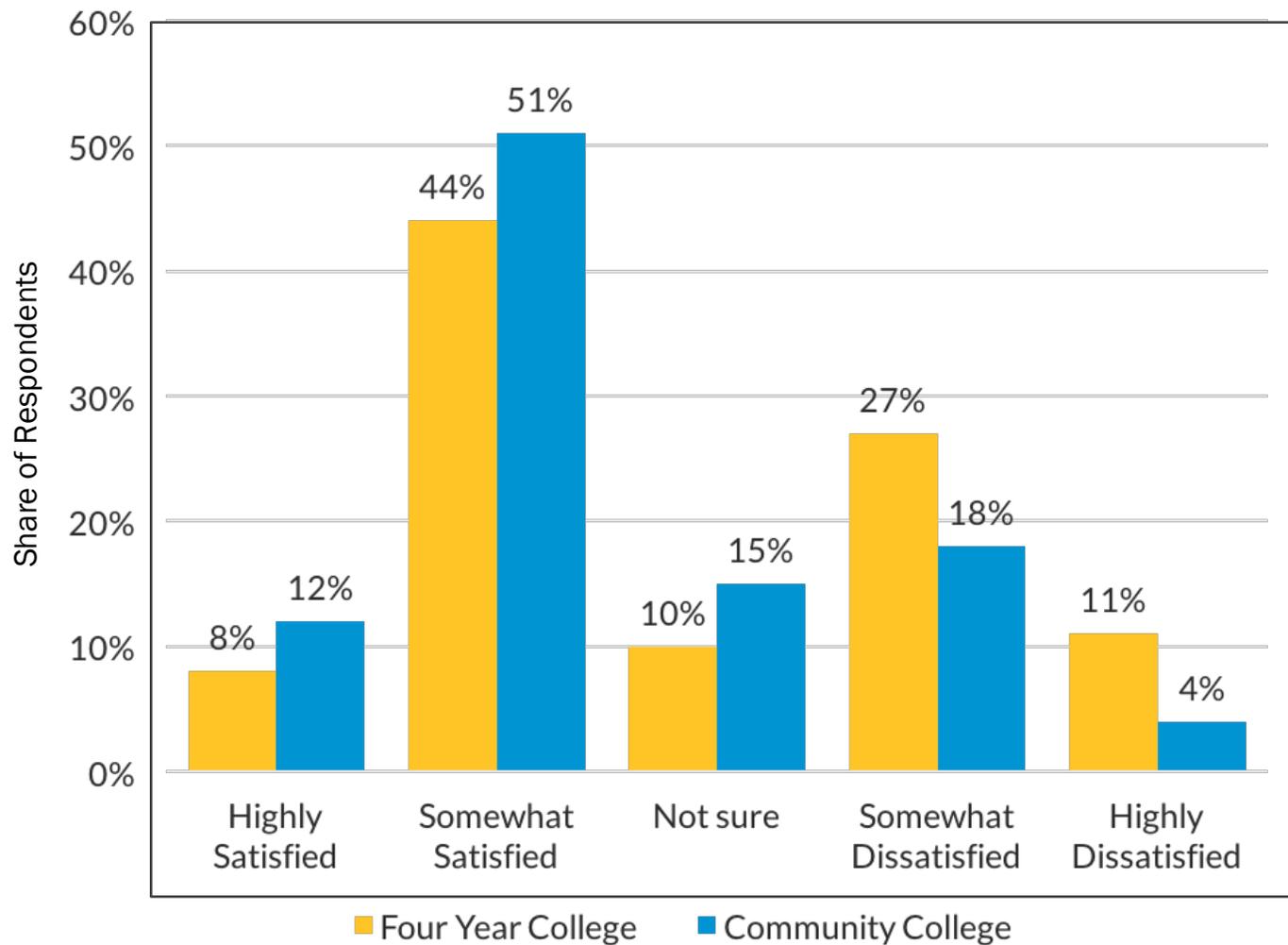
Numbers shown are for the “career or technical training” split in the question.

Support of higher education was consistent across both “career or technical training” and “vocational training”

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Not sure	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
“Most high school students should pursue career or technical training , community college programs and Associate’s degrees programs, OR a four-year college degree after they graduate high school.”	52%	37%	4%	5%	2%
“Most high school students should pursue vocational training , community college programs and Associate’s degrees programs, OR a four-year college degree after they graduate high school.”	52%	35%	4%	7%	2%
Difference	0%	-2%	0%	+2%	0%

The general public is somewhat (+11pp) more satisfied with community colleges, with a 7pp gap in strong dissatisfaction

Satisfaction with Higher Ed. (General Public)



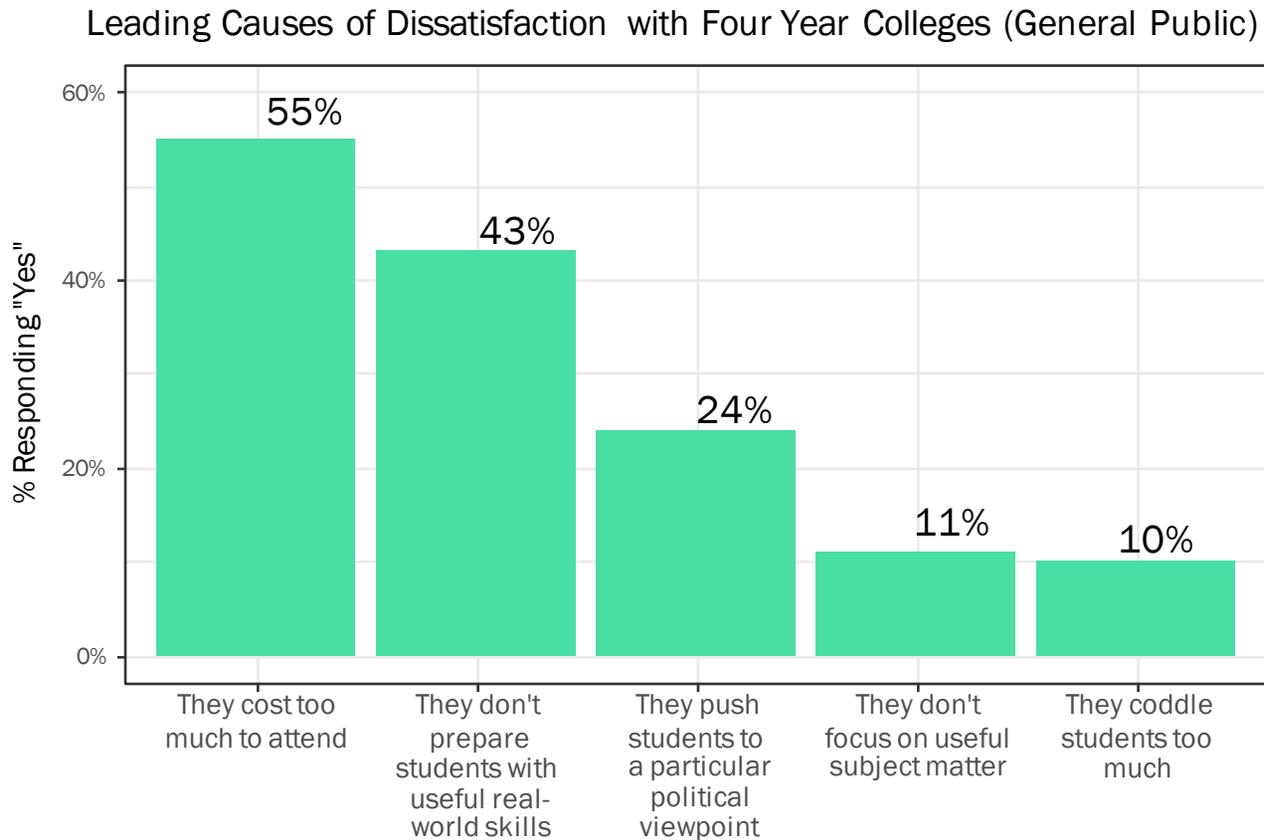
Takeaways

The general population is generally satisfied with the state of four year college and universities (approximately 52% satisfaction overall)

Americans are less satisfied with four year colleges and universities (~52%) than with community college and two year programs (~63%)

General Population

The leading cause of dissatisfaction with four year colleges was cost, held by 55% of those who are dissatisfied



Takeaways

Respondents were only asked about their reasons for dissatisfaction if they indicated they were somewhat or highly dissatisfied with four-year colleges, a response selected by 38%.



Demographic Crosstabs

Republicans, young people, those with lower educational attainment feel less optimistic about the value of higher ed

While most Americans feel positive on the whole about the value of higher education, we do see some key differences by demographics.

Partisanship is a major point of difference when it comes to four-year college support, but socio-economic status is a larger distinguishing factor when it comes to perceptions of education's value overall.

Partisanship: The main salient difference by partisanship is four-year college satisfaction: nearly a third of Democrats are satisfied (60%) compared to under half of Republicans (49%).

Education: People with at least a Bachelor's degree are generally more favorable toward higher education, reporting higher satisfaction with four-year college and more positive effects of higher education on job prospects. Non-college Republicans differ from college-educated Republicans in the same ways that college and non-college Democrats differ.

Age, Race, and Income: In general, we see greater levels of satisfaction and positivity about the impact of higher education among individuals who are older, white, and wealthier.

Reasons for dissatisfaction vary by demographics and party

Causes for dissatisfaction with four year colleges and universities vary significantly by partisanship

- More Republicans overall are dissatisfied with four-year colleges
- While dissatisfied Democrats disproportionately express cost concerns, dissatisfied Republicans express concerns with political pressures in four-year programs

Dissatisfied parents express cost and real-world applicability concerns about four year programs

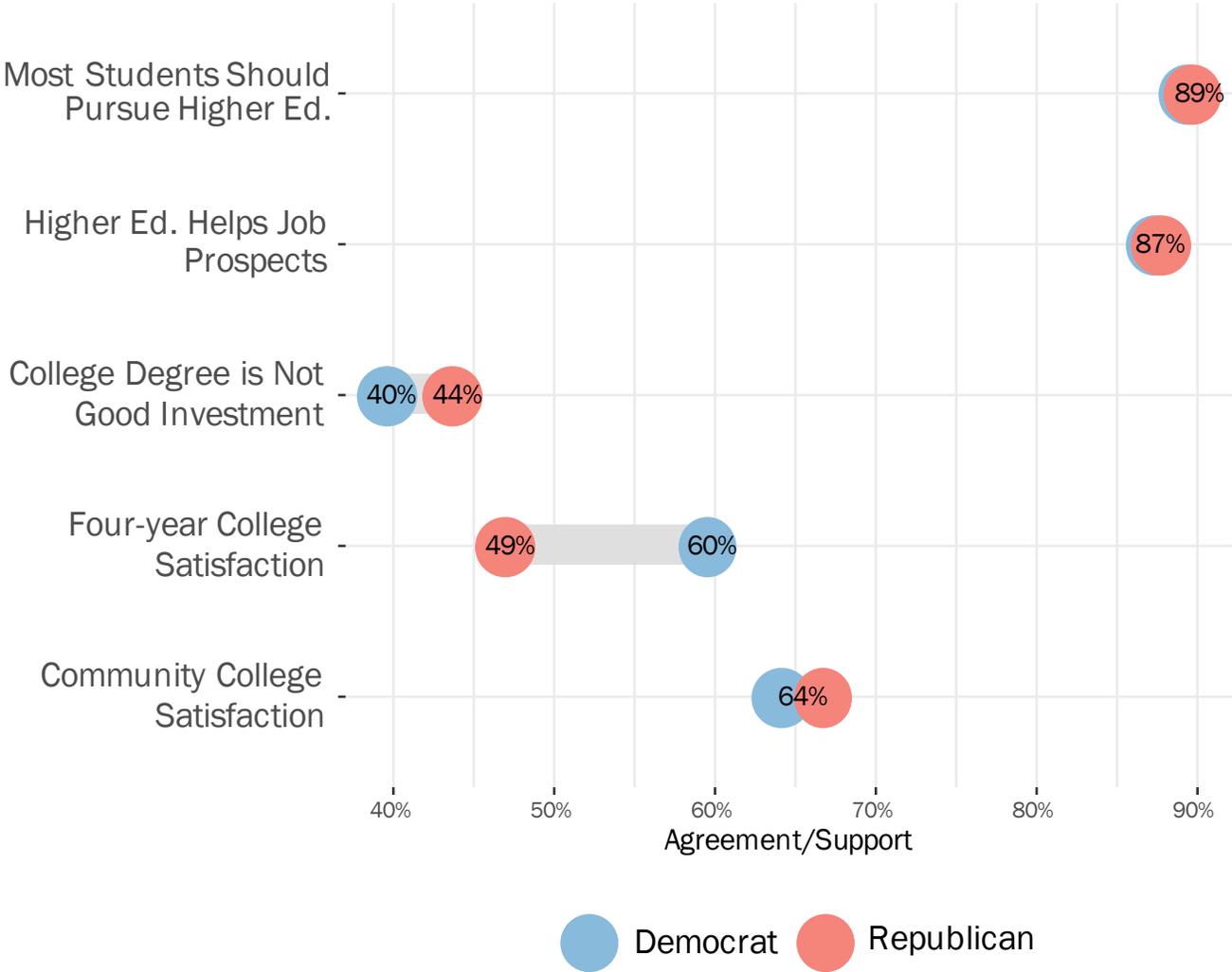
- While dissatisfied parents indicate concerns with the cost of four-year programs, non-parents express concerns with political pressures in four-year programs

College degree attainment also impacts the reasons why individuals are dissatisfied with four year programs.

- Relative to those without a college degree, dissatisfied Republicans with a college degree are:
 - more likely to say four-year programs coddle students too much
 - slightly less likely to say four year programs cost too much to attend
- Among Democrats who are dissatisfied with four-year degree programs, those with a college degree are slightly more concerned about the real-world preparation four-year programs offer.

Democrats are more likely to be satisfied with four-year colleges and universities

Satisfaction and Agreement by Partisanship



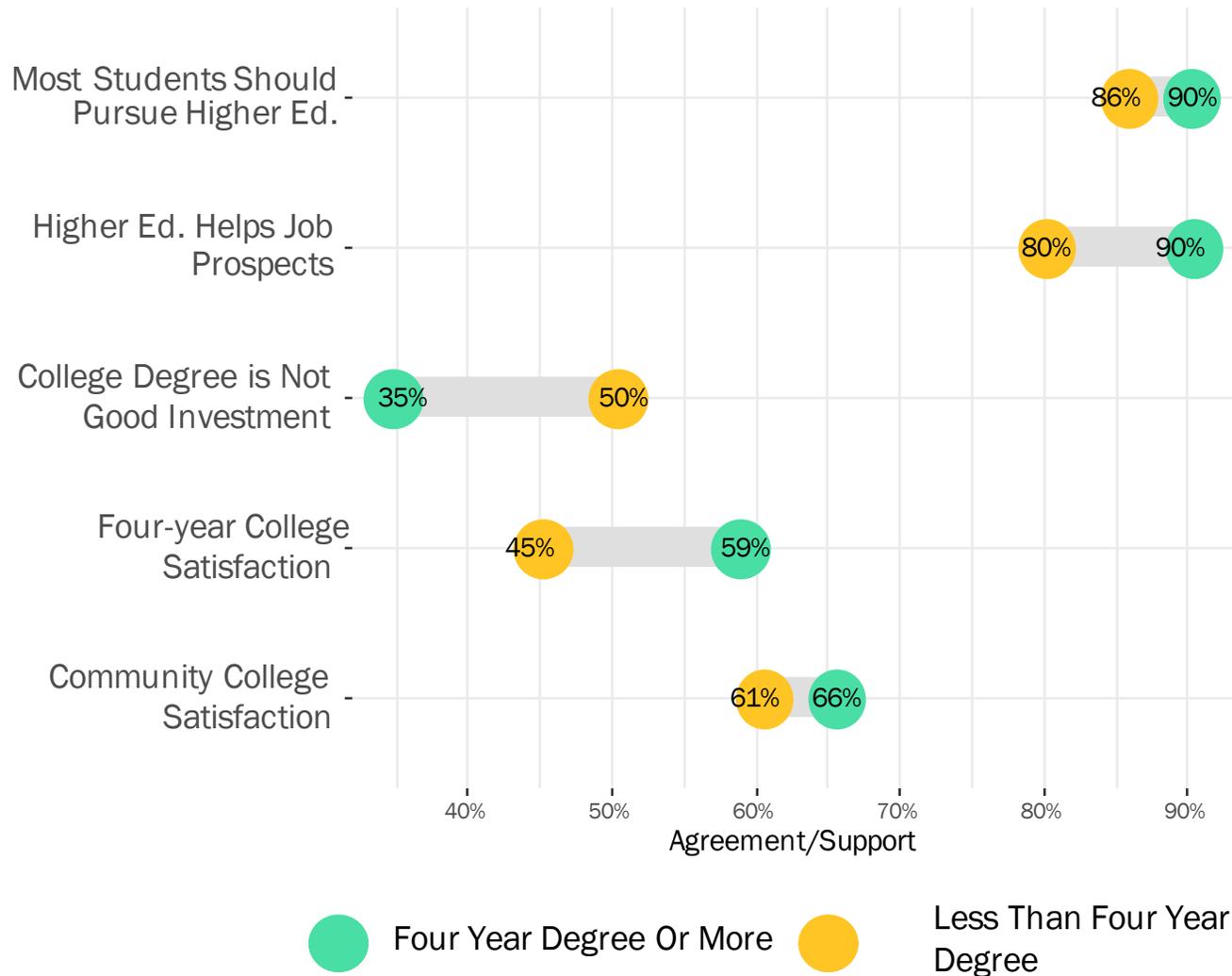
Takeaways

Democrats are more satisfied with four-year colleges and universities

There is no major partisan difference in satisfaction with Community Colleges/two-year degree programs.

College-educated individuals are more likely to be satisfied with the state of higher education in the United States

Satisfaction and Agreement by Personal Education



Takeaways

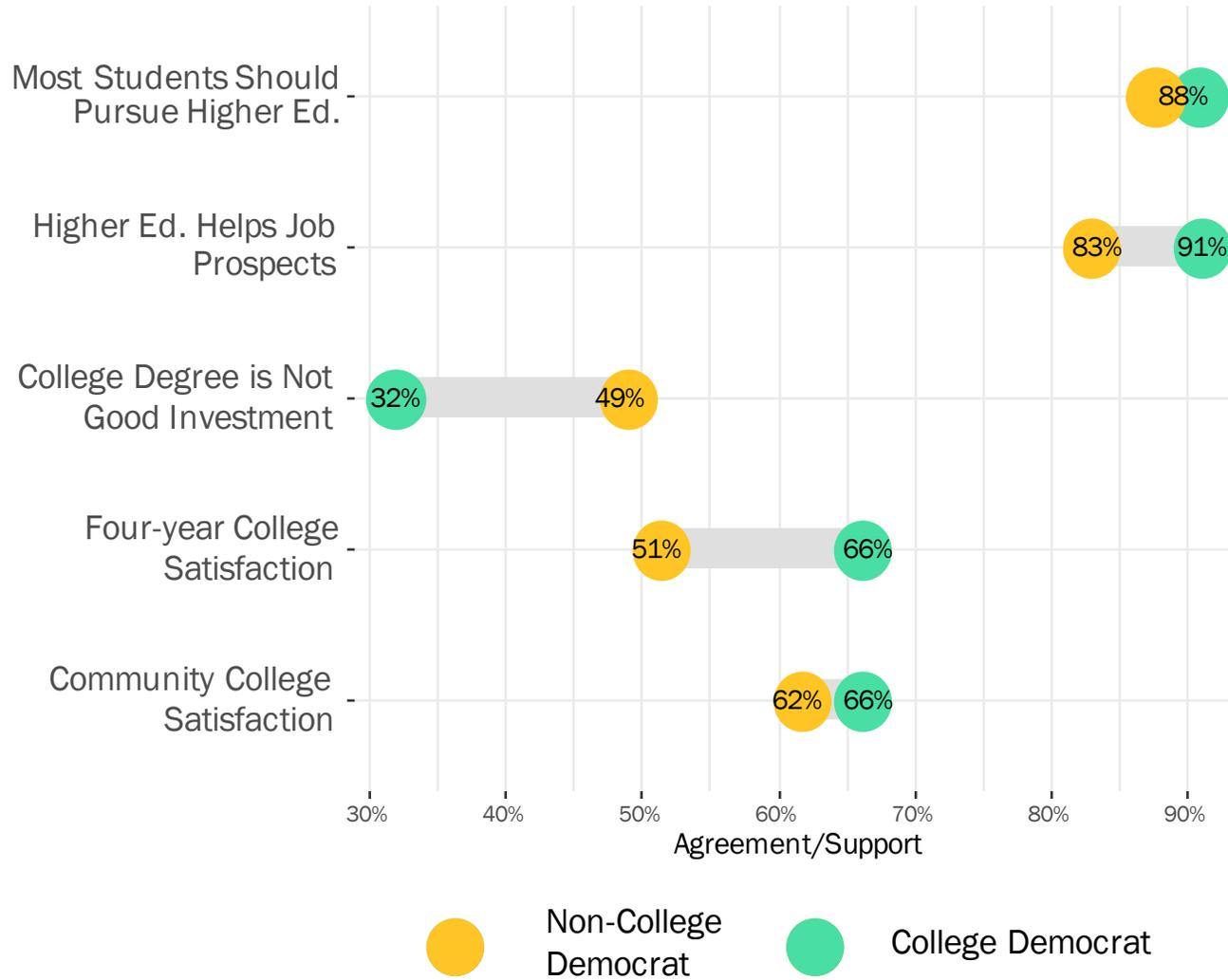
Both Democrats and Republicans are more likely to support higher education **if they have a college degree themselves.**

Specifically, people with four year degrees or more are more likely to:

- say higher education helps job prospects
- be satisfied with four-year programs
- say college degrees are a good investment

Demos have higher four-year college satisfaction, but this is largely driven by Dems with a college degree or higher

Satisfaction and Agreement among Democrats by Personal Education



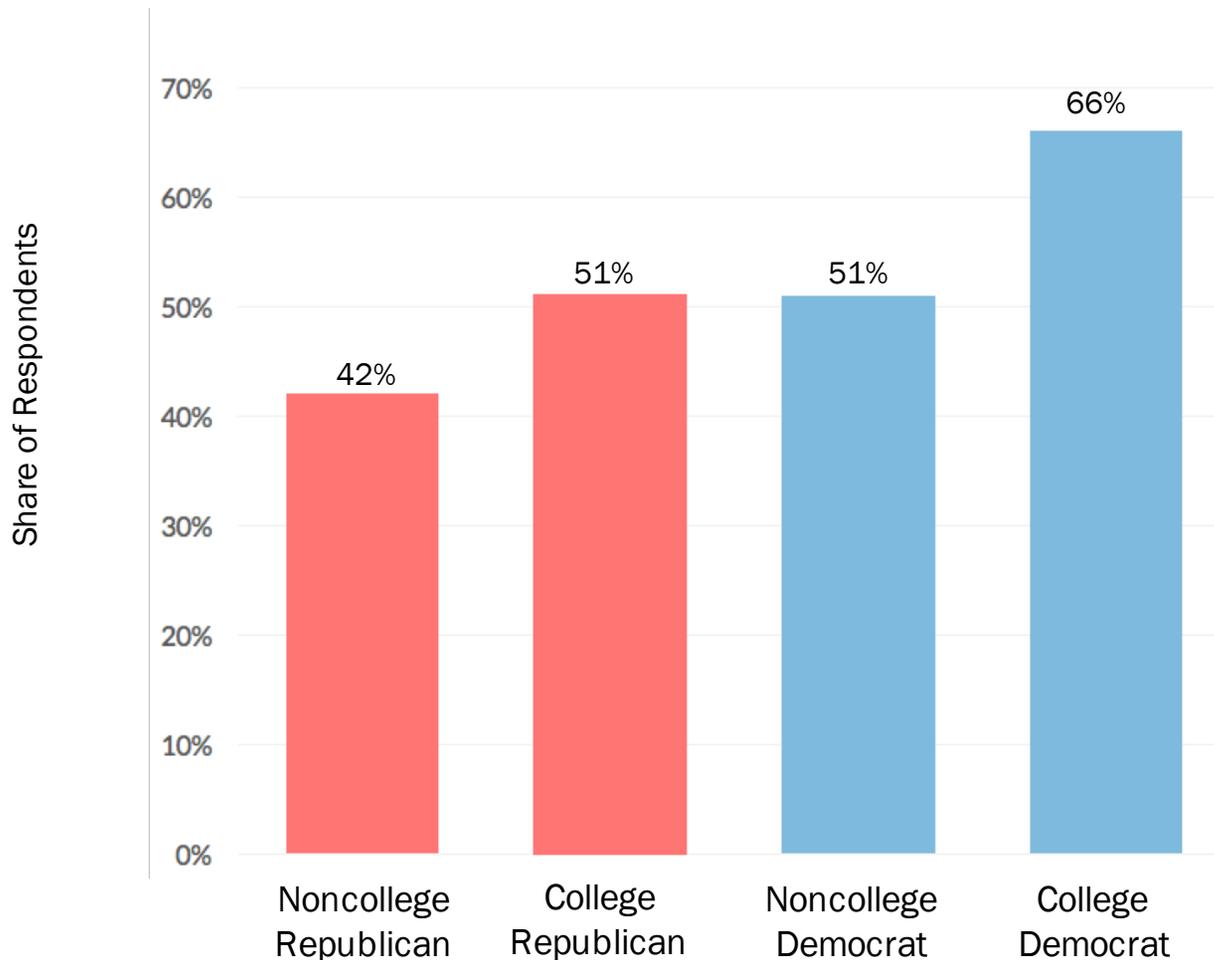
Takeaways

Unsurprisingly, Democrats without a four-year degree are:

- Less likely to say college degrees are a good investment
- Less satisfied with four year colleges and universities
- Less likely to say higher education attainment enhances job prospects

In fact, college-educated Democrats have significantly higher satisfaction than the rest of the population

Satisfaction with Four-year Colleges by Partisanship and Education

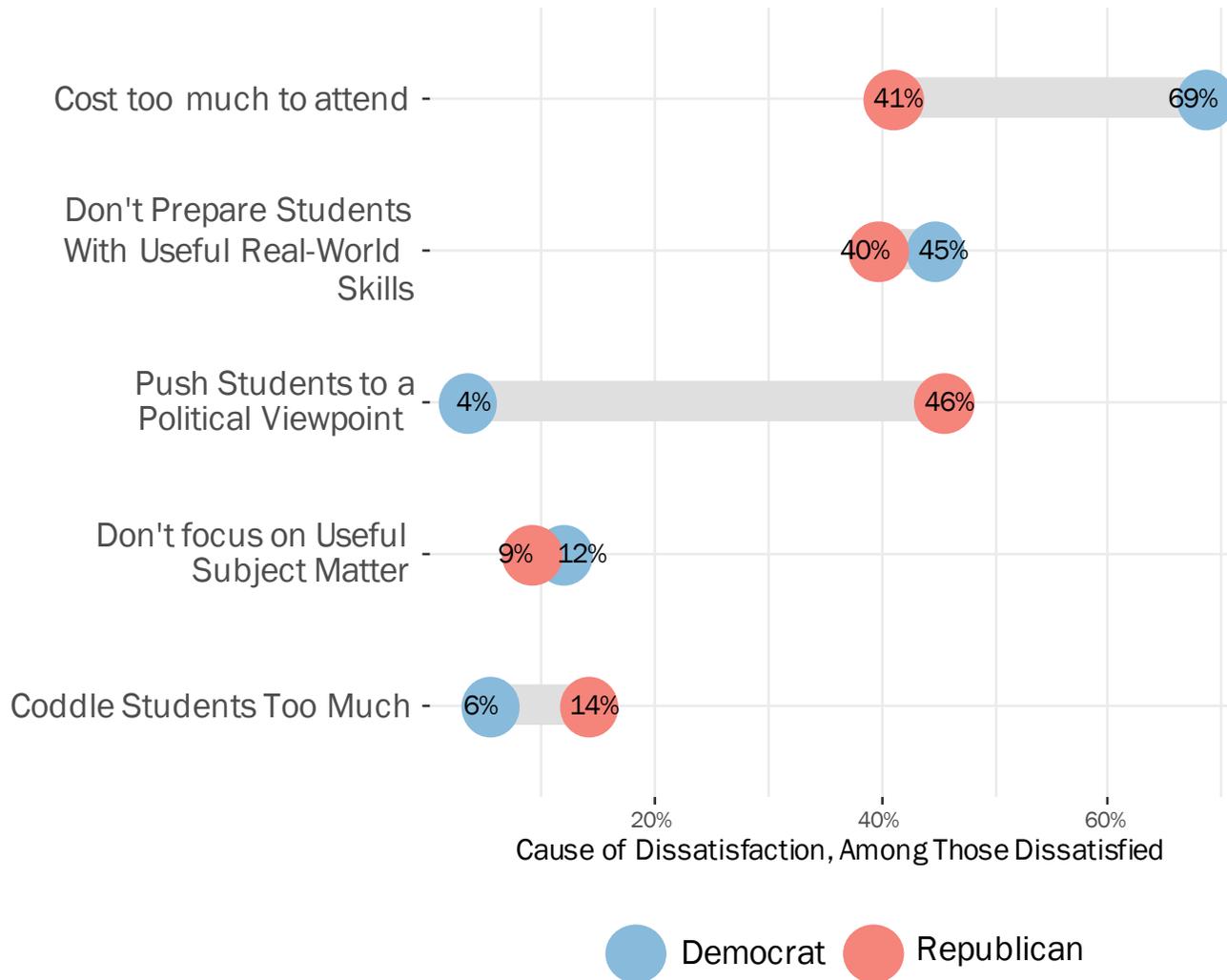


Takeaways

Satisfaction with four-year colleges is primarily a function of partisanship and education. We find that non college-educated Democrats have the same satisfaction (about 50% satisfied) as college-educated Republicans; whereas non college-educated Republicans are the least satisfied.

Dissatisfaction with 4-year colleges among Republicans is disproportionately driven by political pressures

Cause of Dissatisfaction with Four-Year Colleges by Partisanship



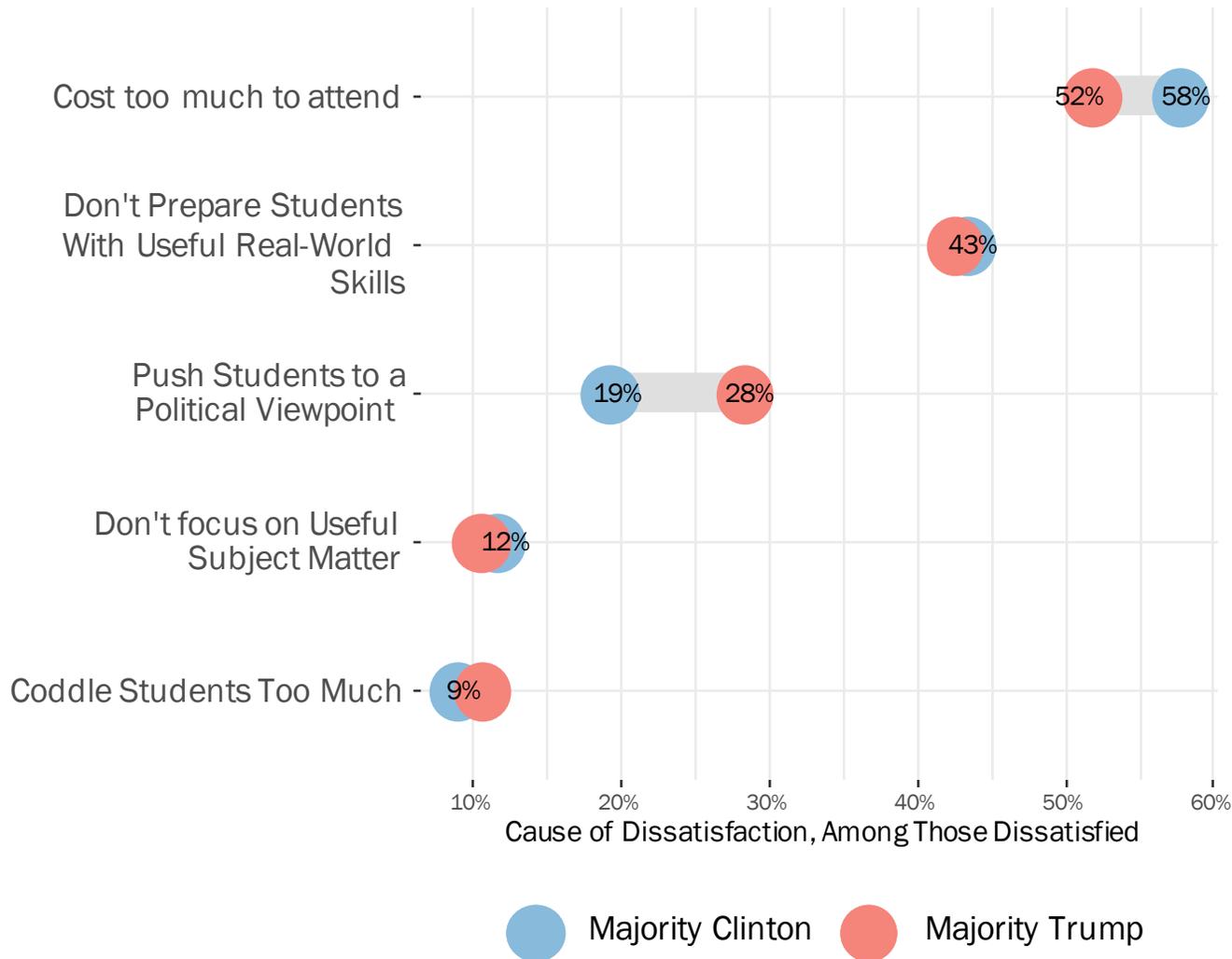
Takeaways

- Dissatisfied Democrats express cost concerns with four-year colleges and universities
- Dissatisfied Republicans express concerns with political pressures in four-year programs

Group	Percent Dissatisfied
Democrat	32%
Republican	46%

These partisan splits are also evident by 2016 county vote share

Cause of Dissatisfaction with Four-Year Colleges by Vote Share



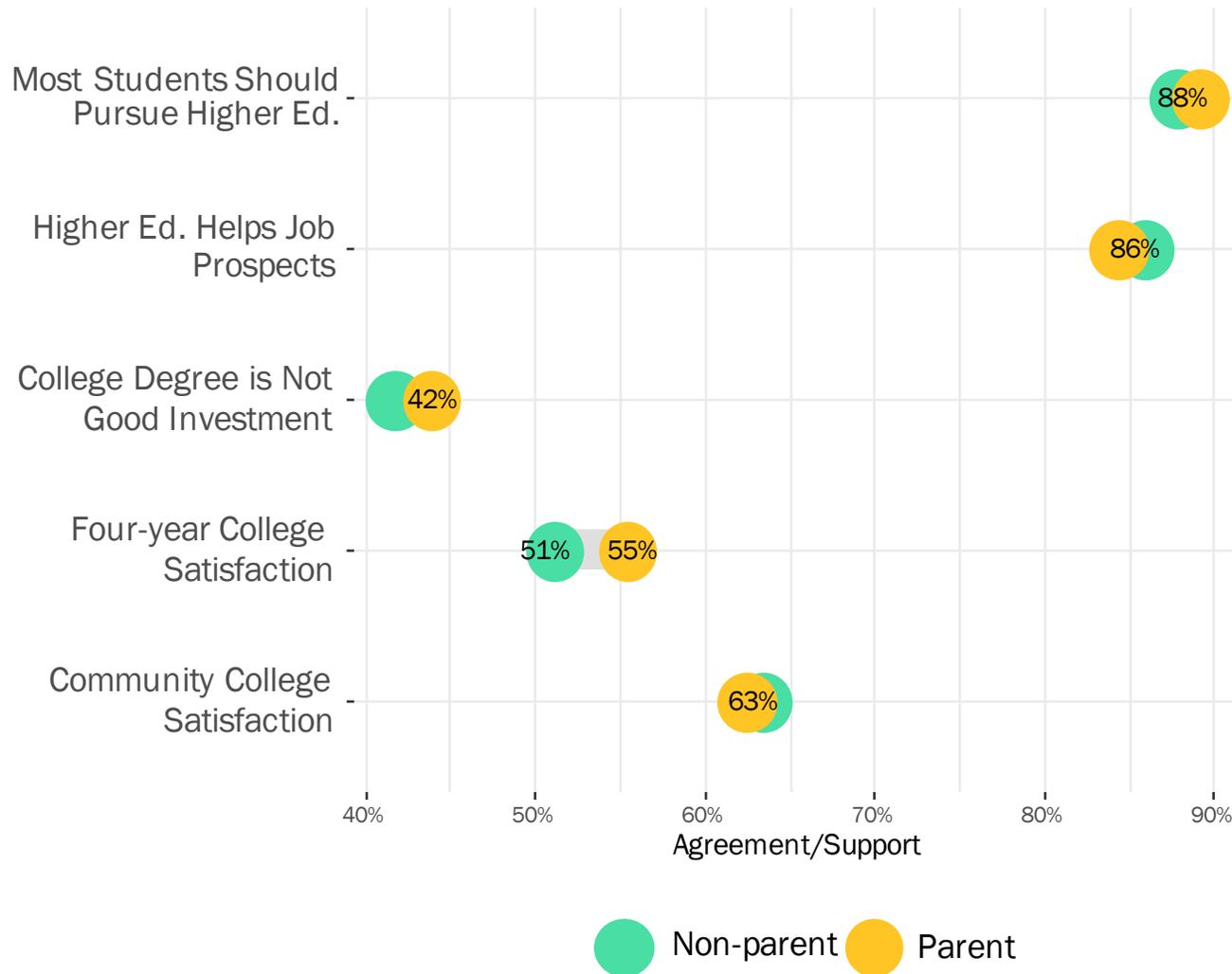
Takeaways

Part of the variation is driven by personal educational attainment: we find that 55% of individuals in majority Clinton counties have at least a Bachelor's degree, compared to 48% among majority Trump counties.

Group	Percent Dissatisfied
Majority Clinton	36%
Majority Trump	40%

Overall support of and satisfaction with higher education is similar among parents and non-parents...

Satisfaction and Agreement by Parent Status

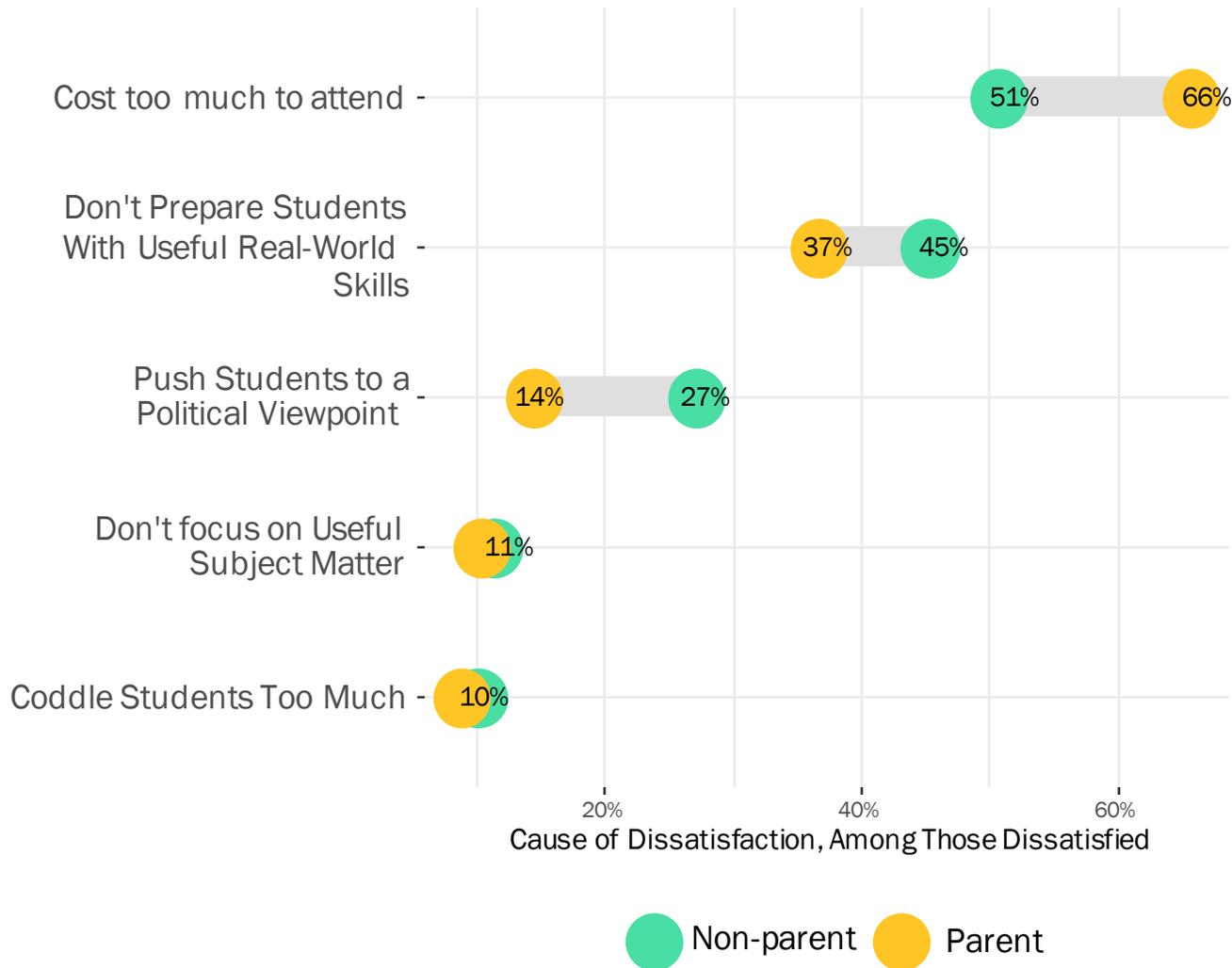


Takeaways

Unlike other questions we've researched in the past, parents and non-parents generally align on questions around higher education

... but reasons for dissatisfaction differ, with parents more concerned about costs

Cause of Dissatisfaction with Four-Year Colleges by Parent Status



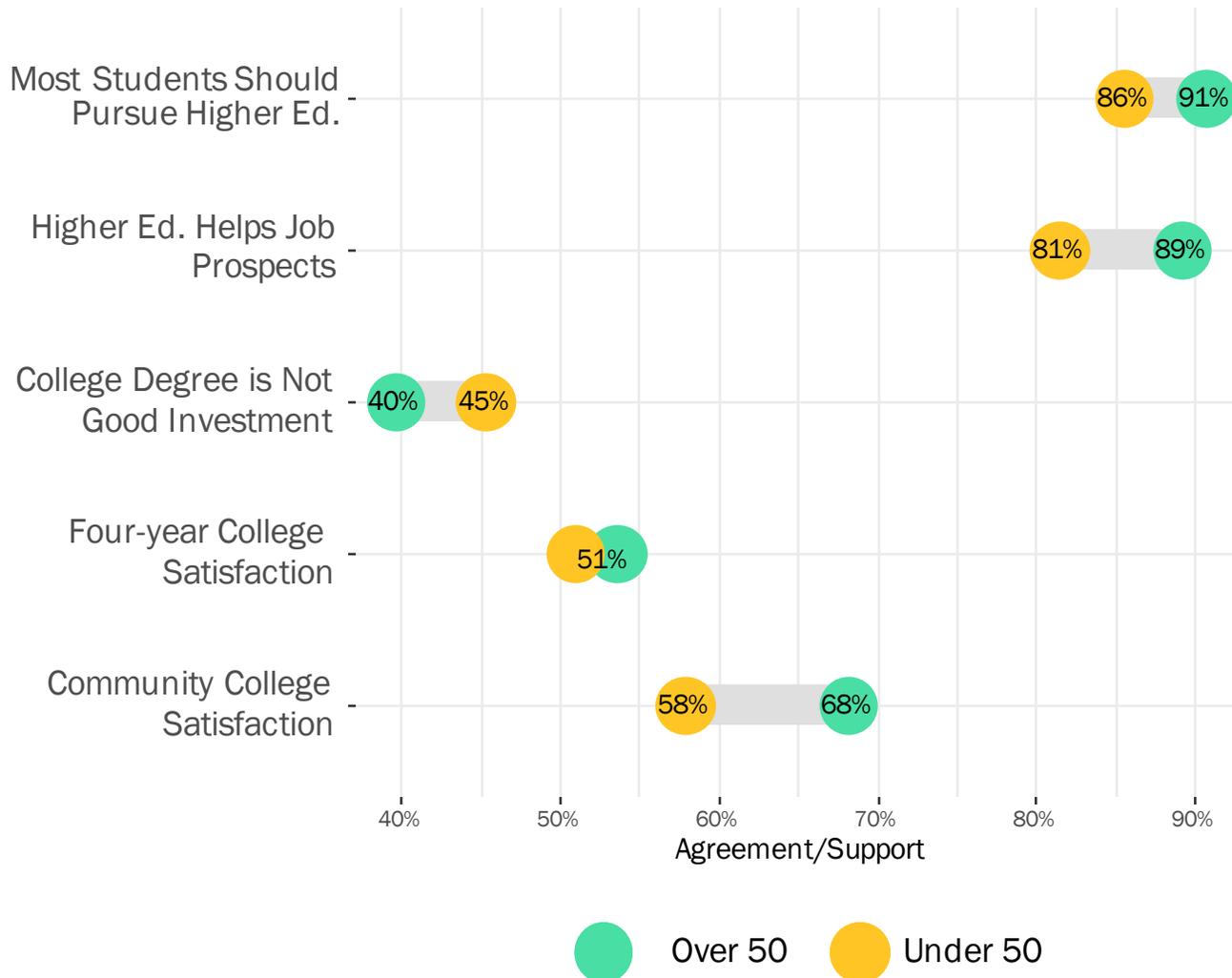
Takeaways

While dissatisfied parents indicate more concerns with the cost of four year programs, non-parents express concerns with political pressures in four-year programs

Group	Percent Dissatisfied
Parent	37%
Non-parent	39%

Older adults are more likely to say students should pursue higher education and more likely to say it's good investment

Satisfaction and Agreement by Age



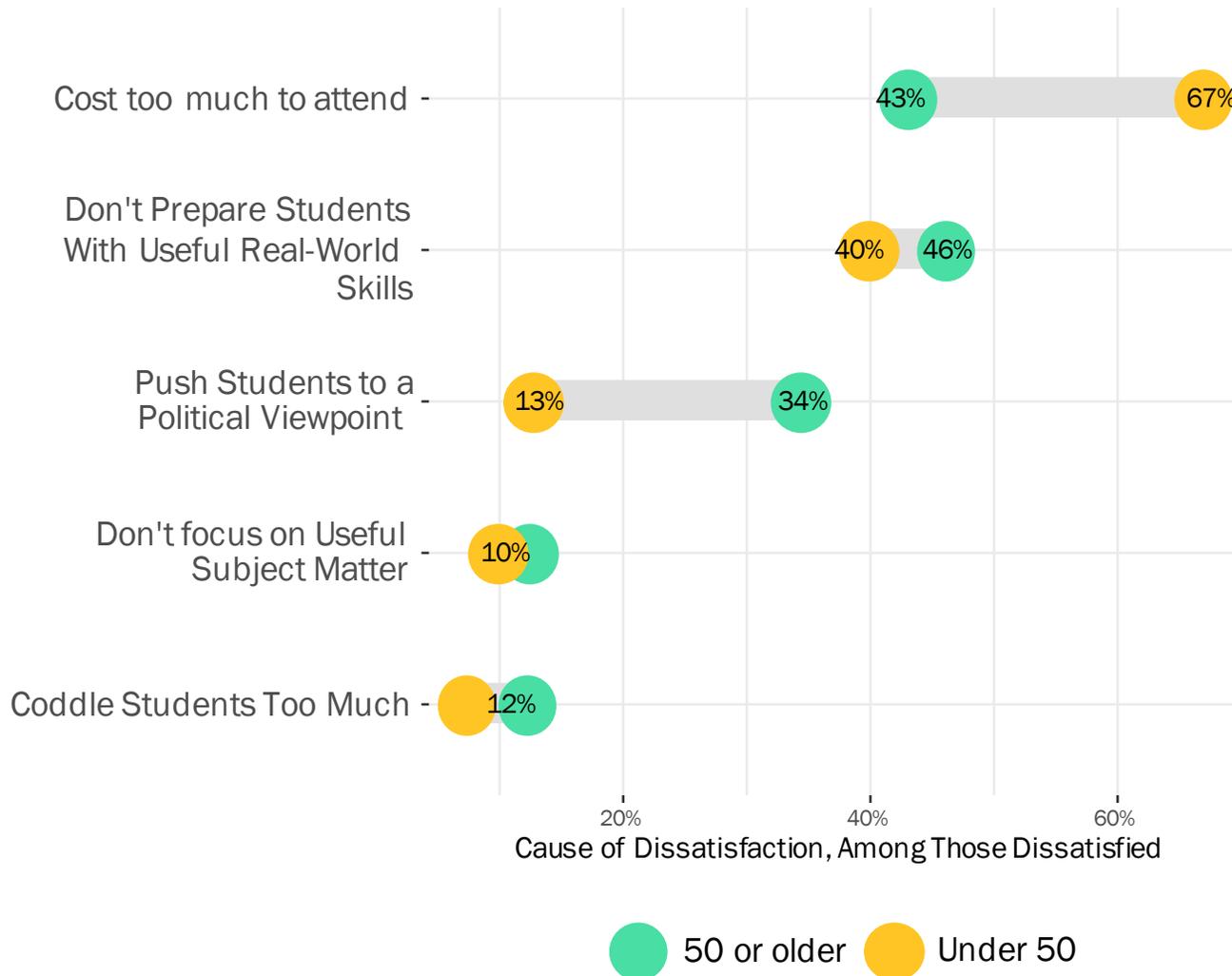
Takeaways

In general, we see increasing satisfaction with education by age, with youngest individuals least likely to say higher education improves job prospects.

Age	% Agree
Under 30	76%
30-45	82%
45-65	86%
65+	93%

Dissatisfied individuals under age 50 are especially likely to be concerned about cost, much less concerned about viewpoint

Cause of Dissatisfaction with Four-Year Colleges by Age



Takeaways

These differences are driven by partisanship: 61% of those who are 50+ and Democrats are concerned about cost, compared to only 32% of those 50+ who are Republicans. On political pressure, the split is 4% for Dems, 55% for Reps who are age 50+

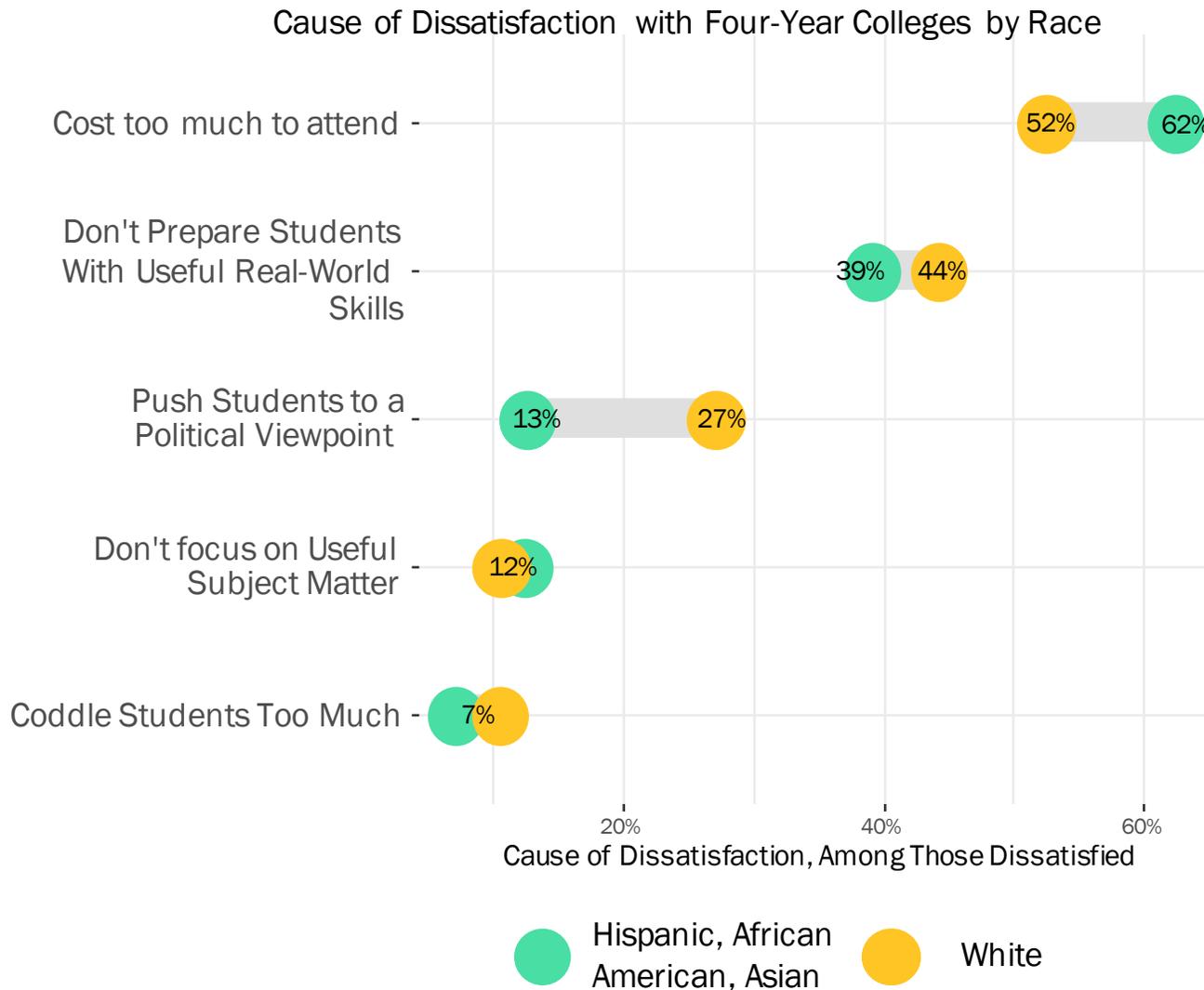
Group	Percent Dissatisfied
Under 50	39%
Over 50	37%

White individuals who are dissatisfied with four year colleges are more concerned about undue political influence

Takeaways

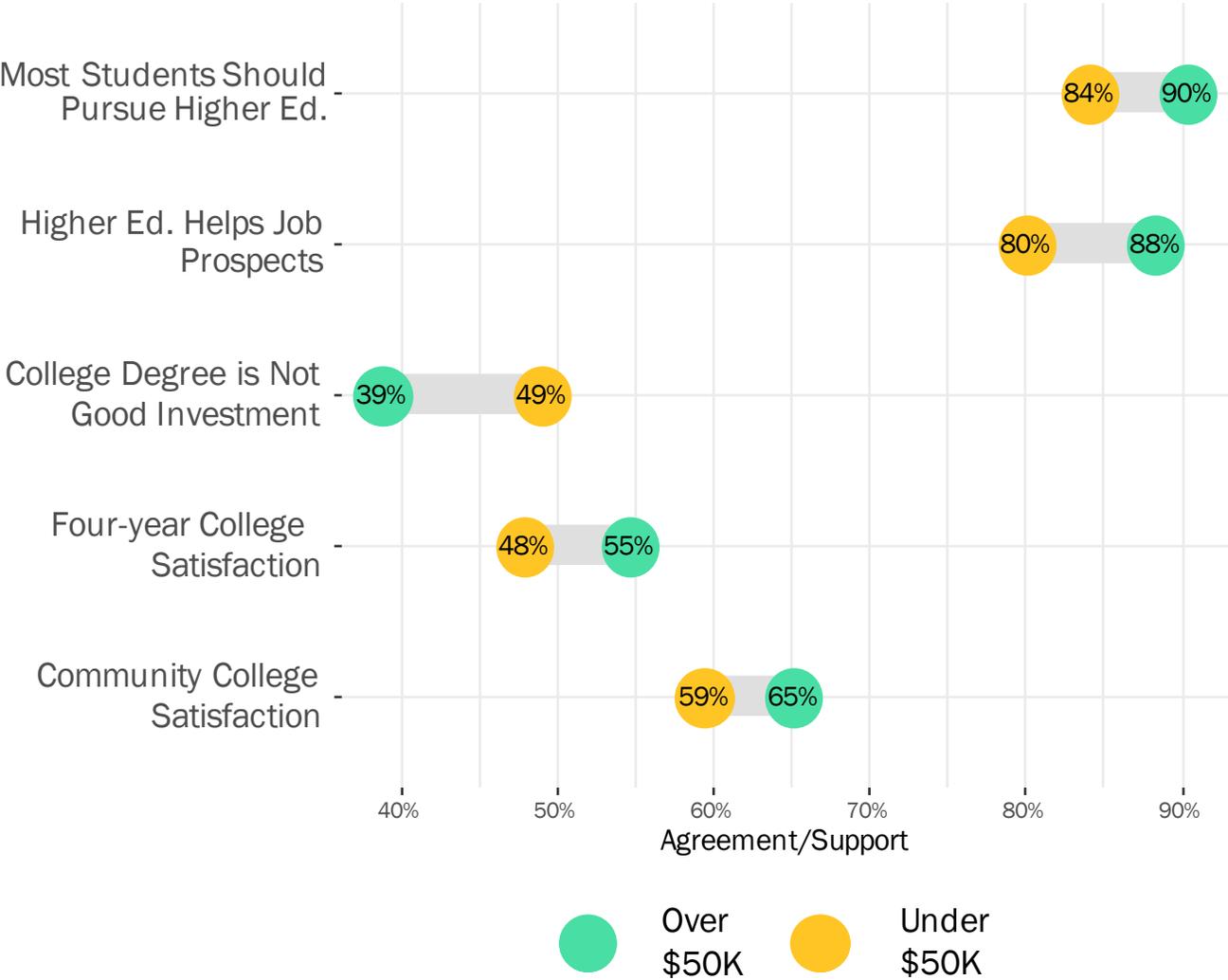
We find that White individuals are less likely to say they are satisfied with four year education (52%) than Hispanic (53%), African American (55%) or Asian (56%) individuals.

This is different from what we see for community college satisfaction: White individuals are most satisfied (65%) followed by African Americans (62%), Hispanics (60%) and Asians (50%).



Higher income individuals are more supportive of higher education

Gaps in Opinion, by Household Income

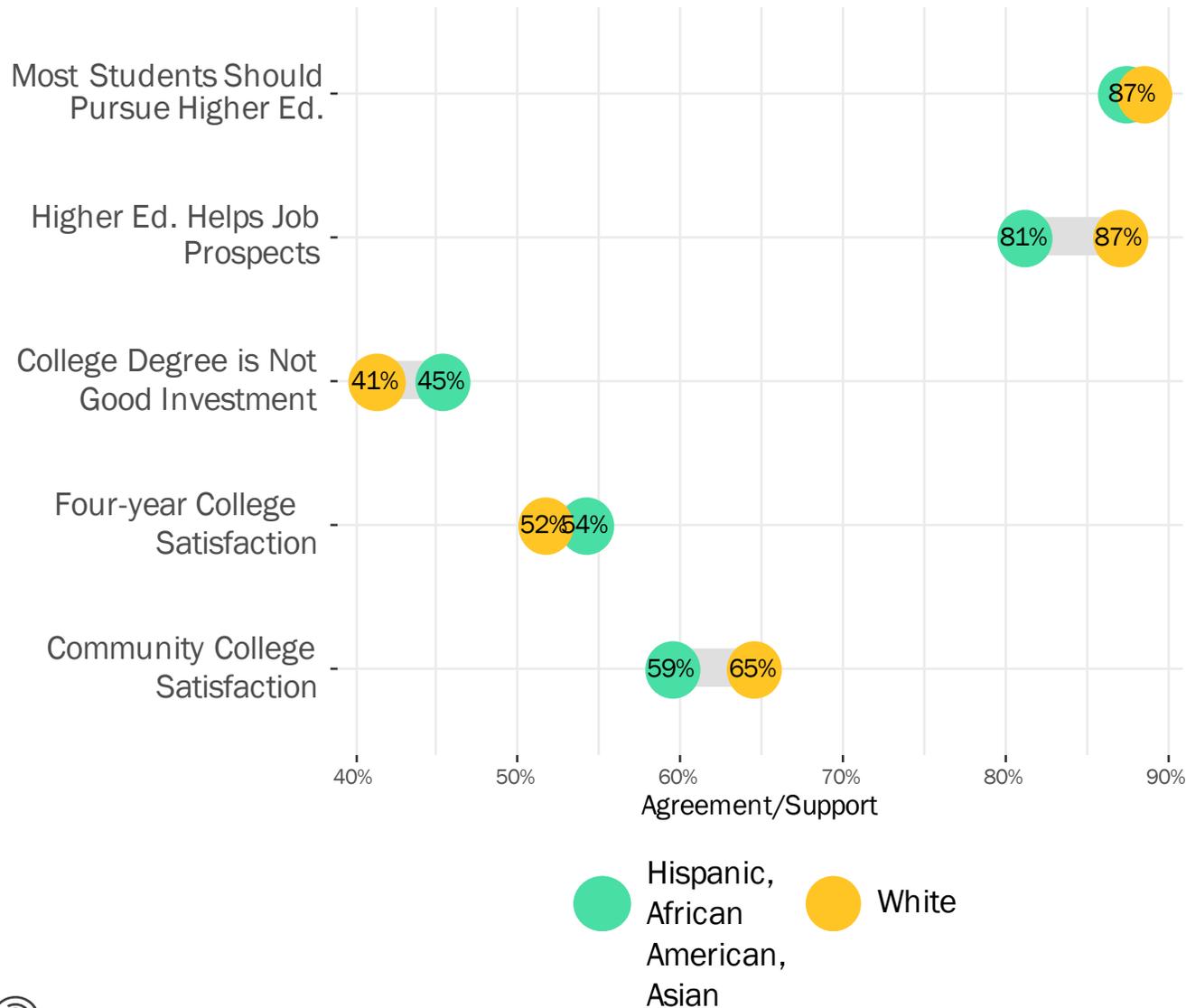


> Takeaways

Across the board, higher income individuals are more satisfied with the state of higher education in the United States.

Similarly, white individuals are more supportive of higher education

Gaps in Opinion, by Race



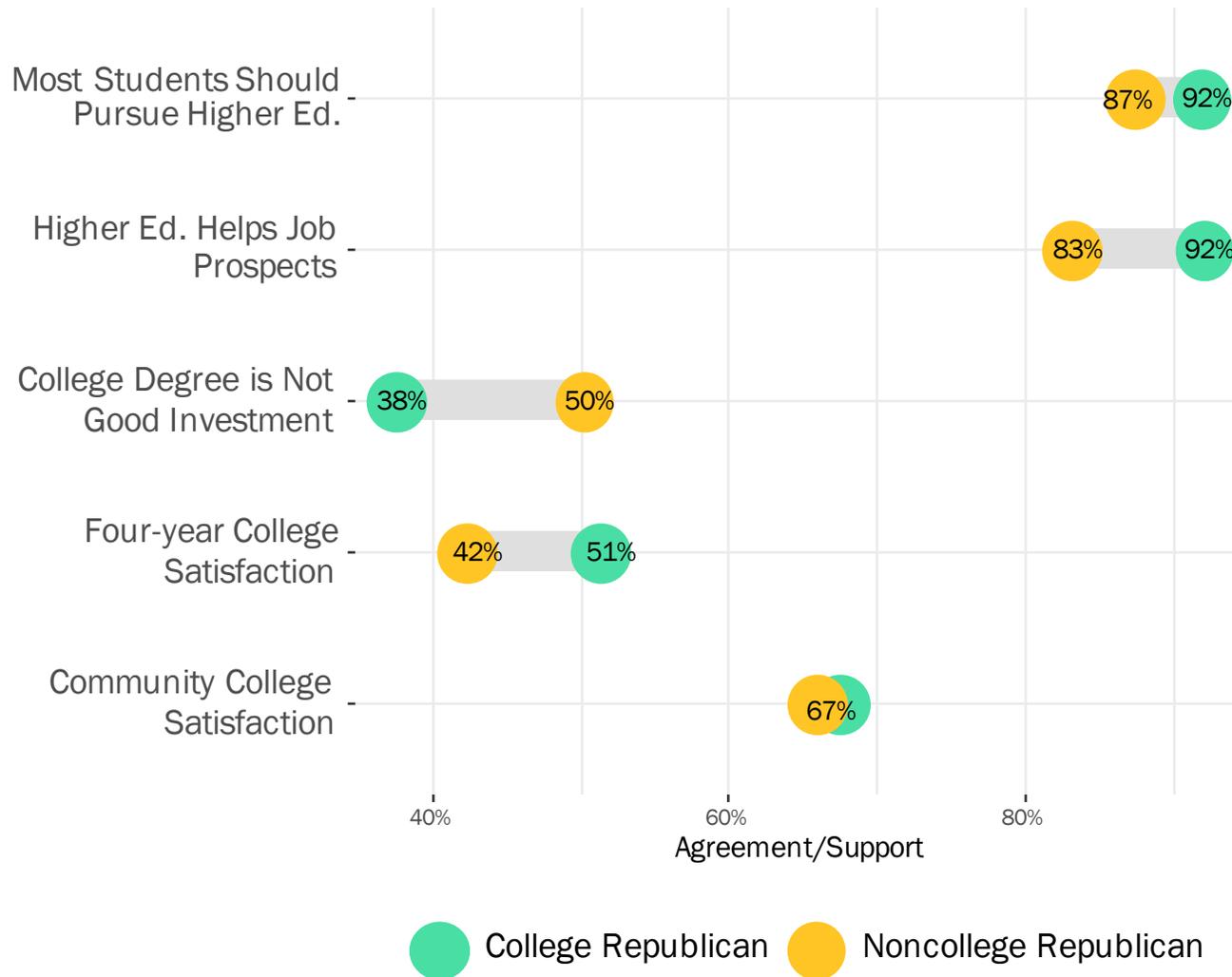
Takeaways

White individuals are significantly more likely to say:

- Higher education enhances job prospects
- College degrees are good investments
- They are satisfied with Community and two year colleges

College-educated GOP are more favorable toward higher ed.

Satisfaction and Agreement among Republicans by Personal Education

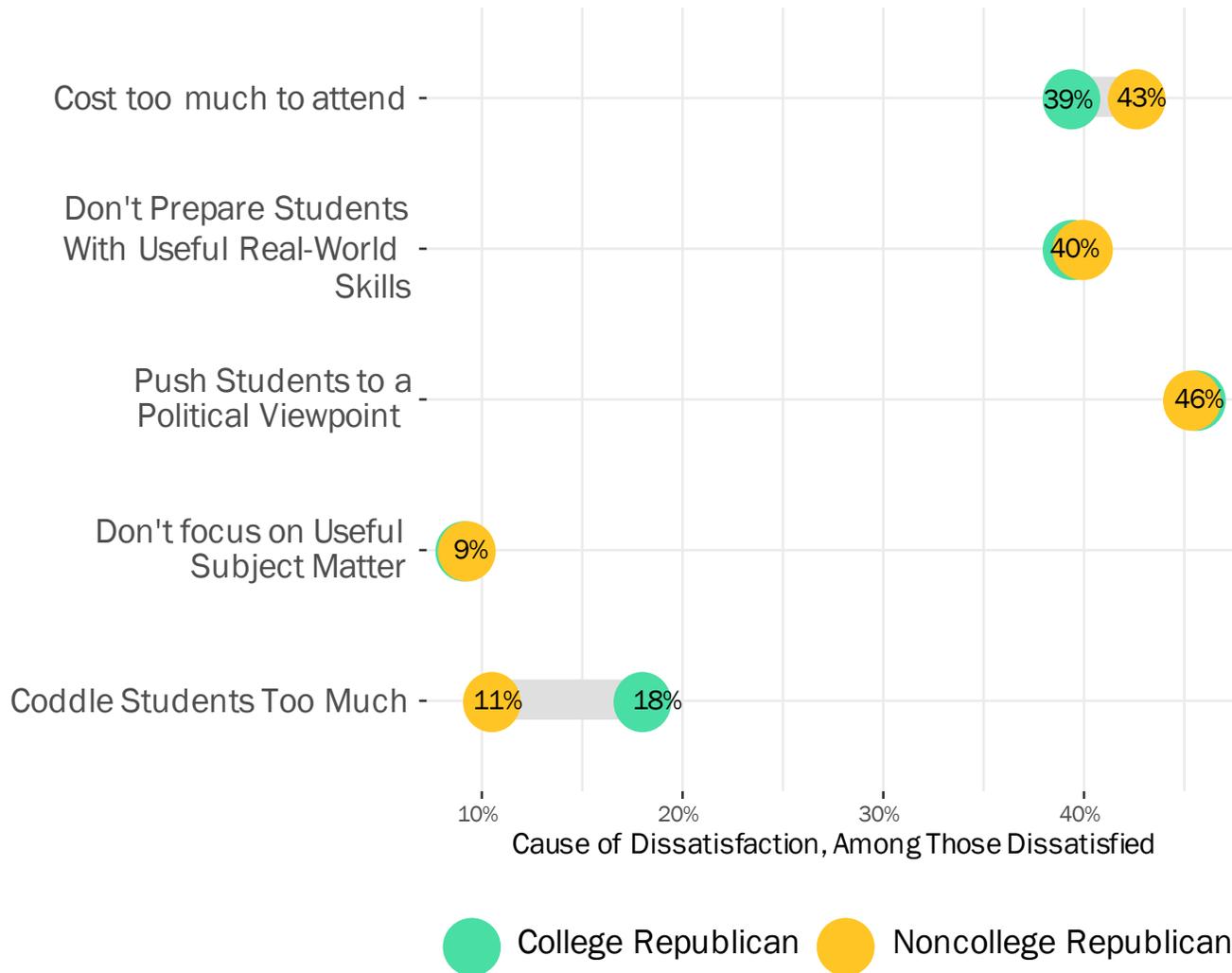


Takeaways

Specifically, we see that college-educated individuals tend to be more likely to say higher education improves job prospects, is a good investment, and should be pursued by most students.

Dissatisfied Republicans are more likely to say four-year programs coddle students if they have a college degree

Cause of Dissatisfaction with Four-Year Colleges by Partisanship



Takeaways

Republicans with a college degree are:

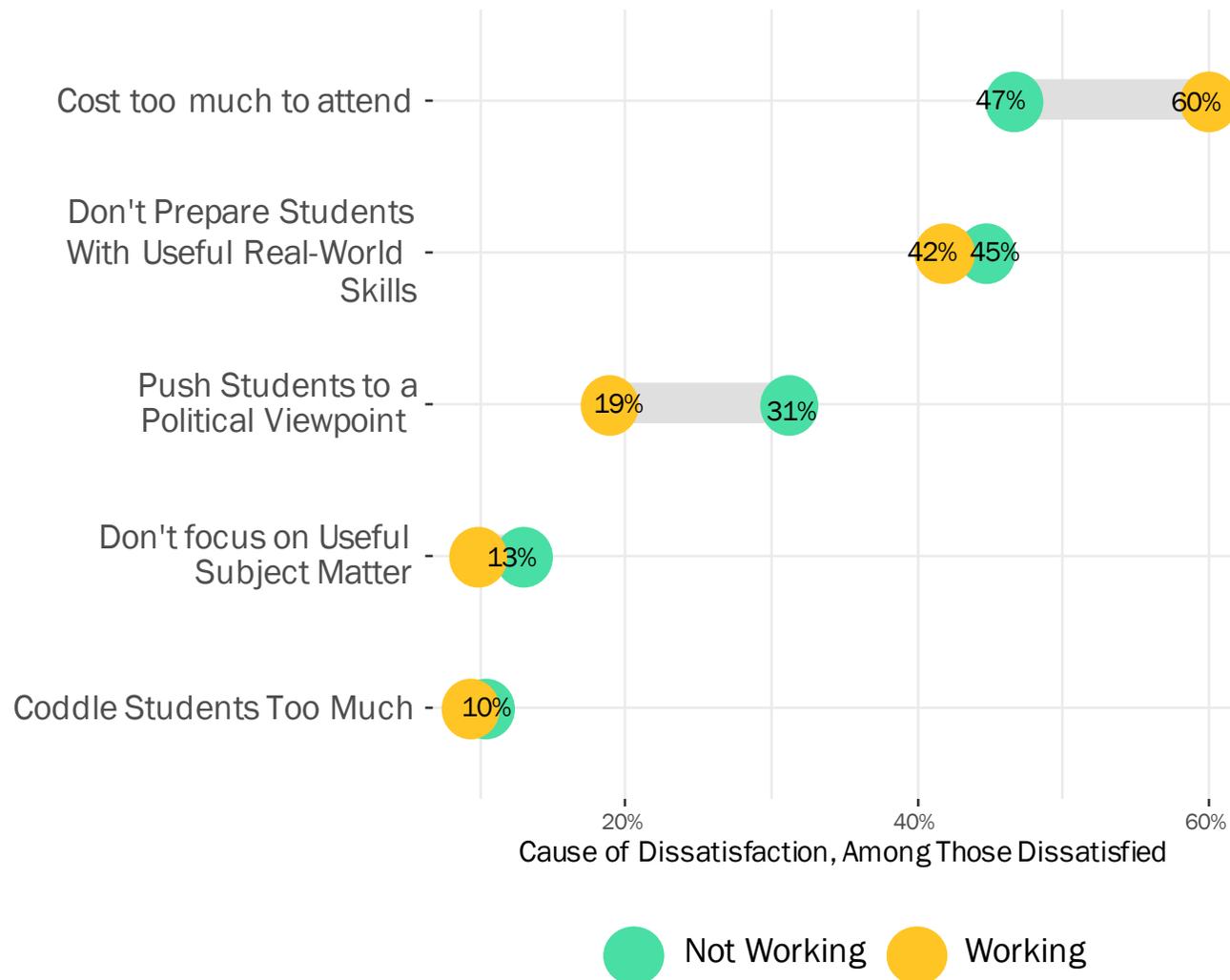
- more likely to say four-year programs coddle students
- slightly less likely to say four year programs cost too much to attend

We don't see this separation between college and non-college Dems

Group	Percent Dissatisfied
College Republican	45%
Noncollege Republican	48%

Those currently employed are more concerned about the cost of four-year college, less about political viewpoints

Cause of Dissatisfaction with Four-Year Colleges by Work Status



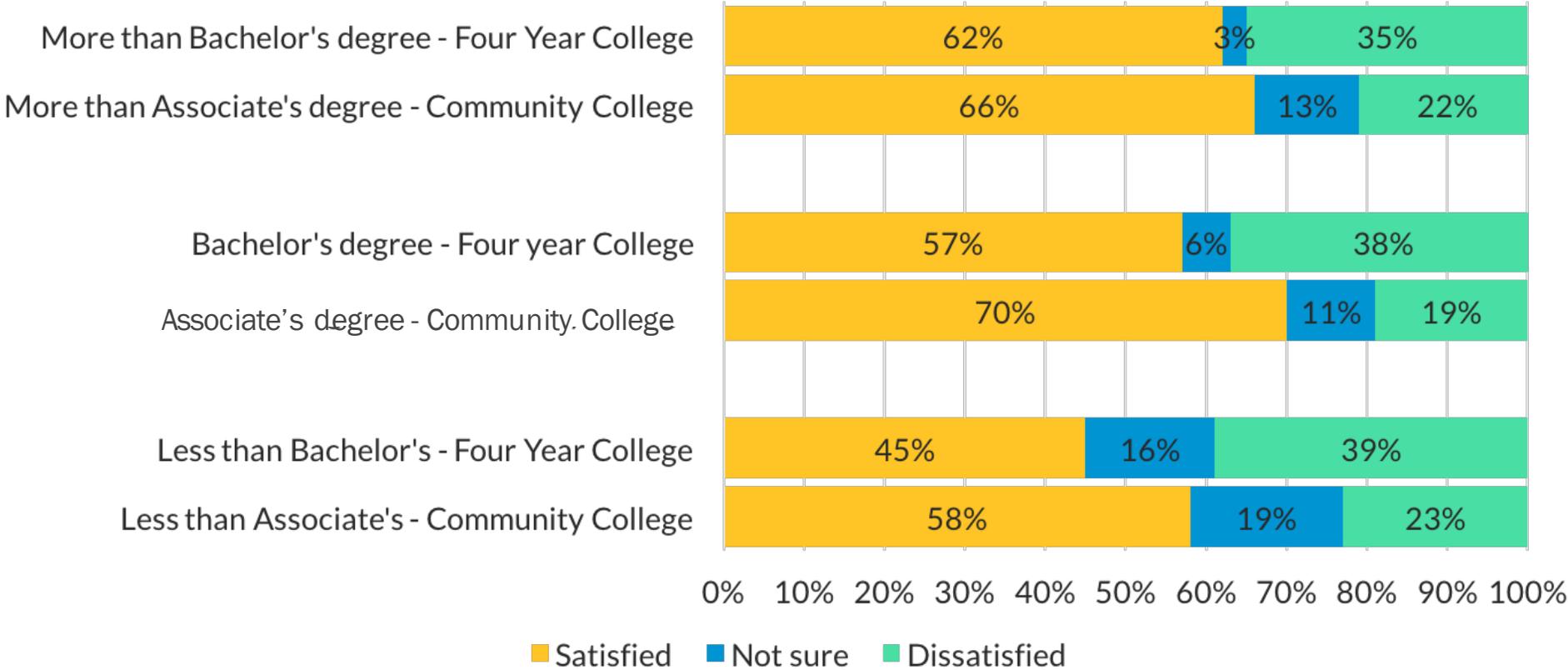
Takeaways

Working includes both those who are at full time and part time jobs. We see similar trends when comparing full time workers to those not working full time.

Group	Percent Dissatisfied
Working	38%
Not Working	38%

People with Associate’s degrees are the most satisfied with community college. Four-year college satisfaction is lower overall and highest among those with more than a four year degree.

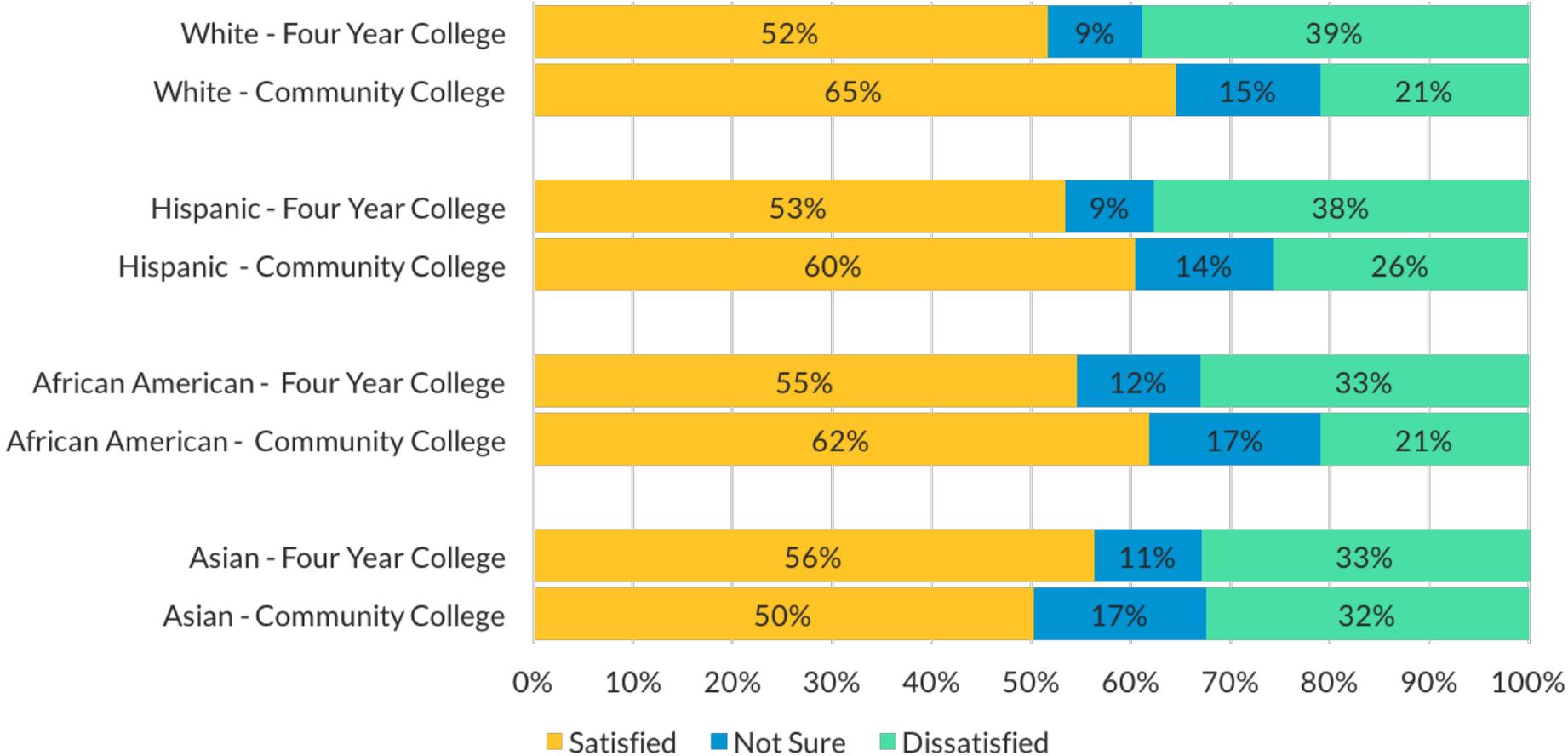
General Public Satisfaction With Higher Education by Personal Education



Individuals without Bachelor’s degrees (including those with Associate’s degrees and those with some college but no degree) are the most dissatisfied with four year colleges (39%)

White Americans have the greatest satisfaction gap between community and four-year colleges; Asian Americans are more satisfied with four year colleges than community colleges

College Satisfaction by Race (General Public)



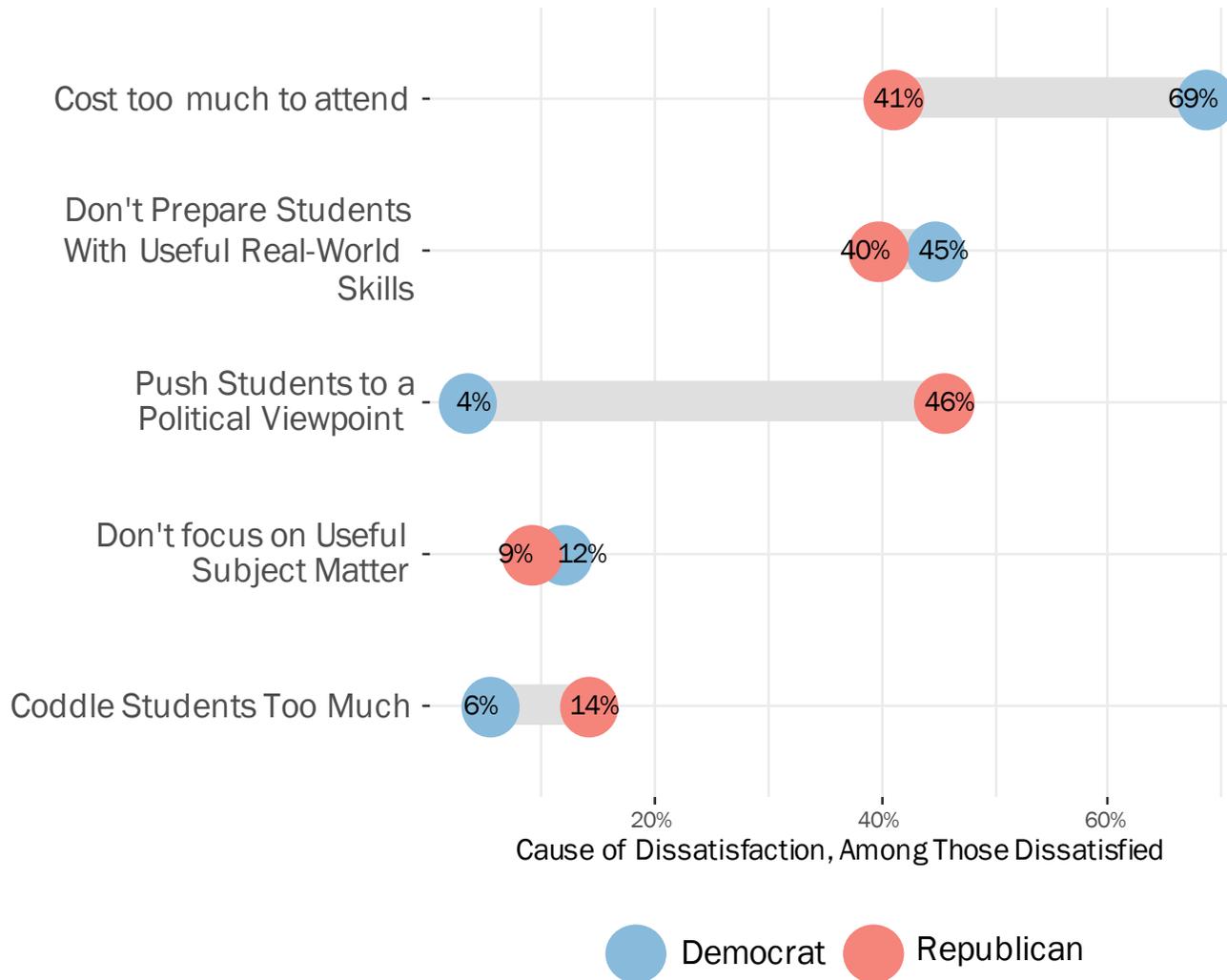
General Population



What Can You Do About It?

Using Data to Improve Outcomes: Know Who You Are Talking To

Cause of Dissatisfaction with Four-Year Colleges by Partisanship



Takeaways

- Remember this one from earlier?
- Wouldn't you want to tailor a different message to these two different groups if they were dissatisfied with colleges?
- Different messages are salient to different populations.

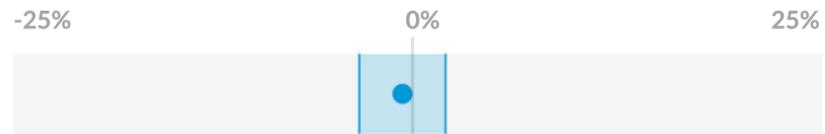
Using Data to Improve Outcomes: Test Your Messages

- Not all advertising or PR messages work. Some may harm your school's brand.
- The Fix: Test on relatively small audiences to determine probability of success and backlash.



Audience: All Respondents

AVERAGE CHANGE IN INTEREST: **-1.2%**



PROBABILITY OF BACKLASH: **62.9%**



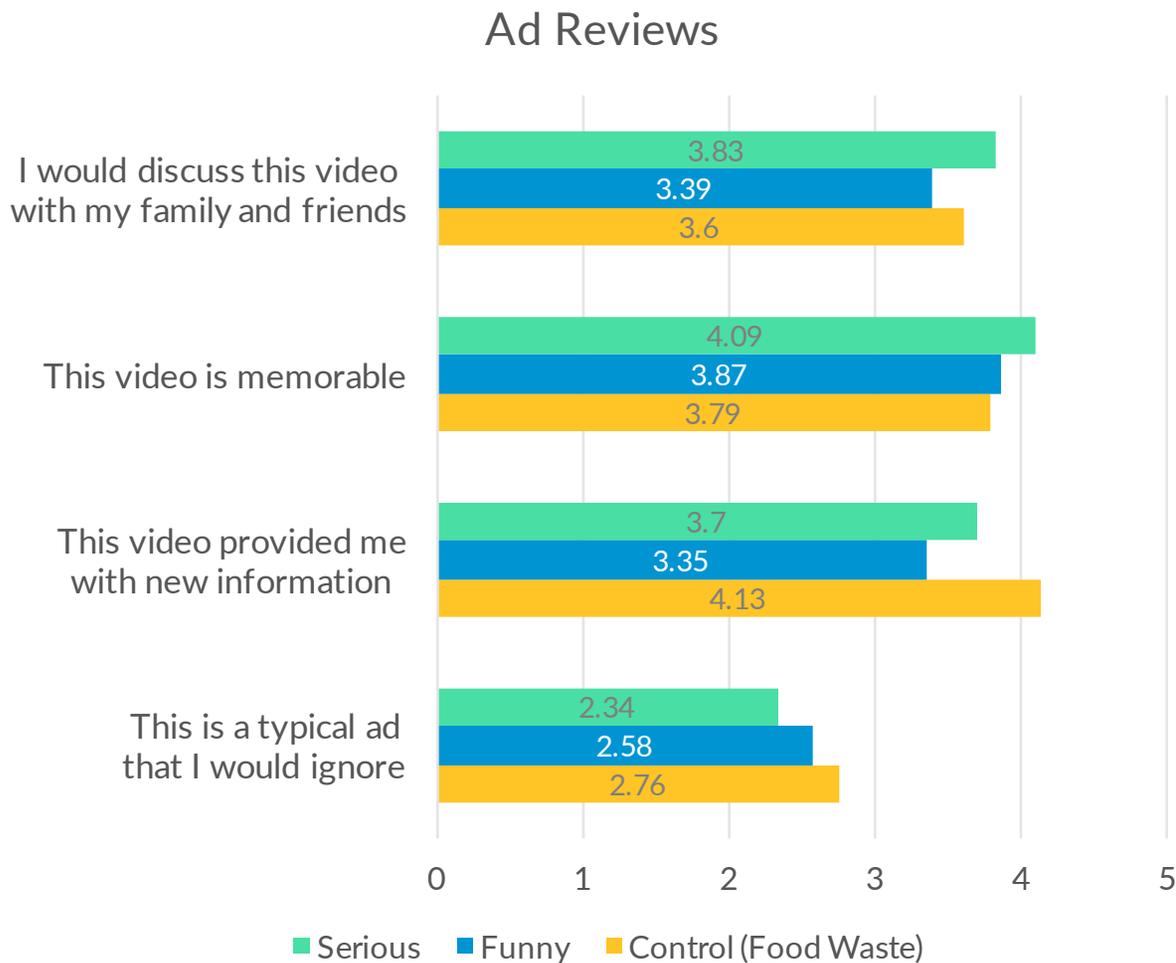
TurboTax in the 2017 Super Bowl, although it increased buzz, this is an example of the risk of backlash.

Message Testing Example 1: Overview

- **Civis Analytics tested two different PSAs for the “It’s On Us” Campaign about sexual assault on college campuses – one was a serious PSA, the other was a funny PSA.**
- **Both PSAs had a significant effect on respondents’ likelihood to say that sexual assault was among the three most important issues on campus today.**
- **The serious ad outperformed “Bear” on select metrics.**
- The serious ad performed best among **all race and age groups, and across both men and women in inspiring advocacy about the issue**
- The serious ad also had a significant impact on views of whether sexual assault is a “very important” issue.
- The serious ad outperformed “Bear” among readers of all media outlets studied – *ESPN, Men’s Health, GQ, Sports Illustrated, Complex, and AskMen.*
 - Readers of *GQ, Complex, and AskMen* were **more receptive than non-readers** to the messages in general

Serious ad gets stronger average reviews from viewers

● Please indicate how well each of the following sentences describes the video you just saw



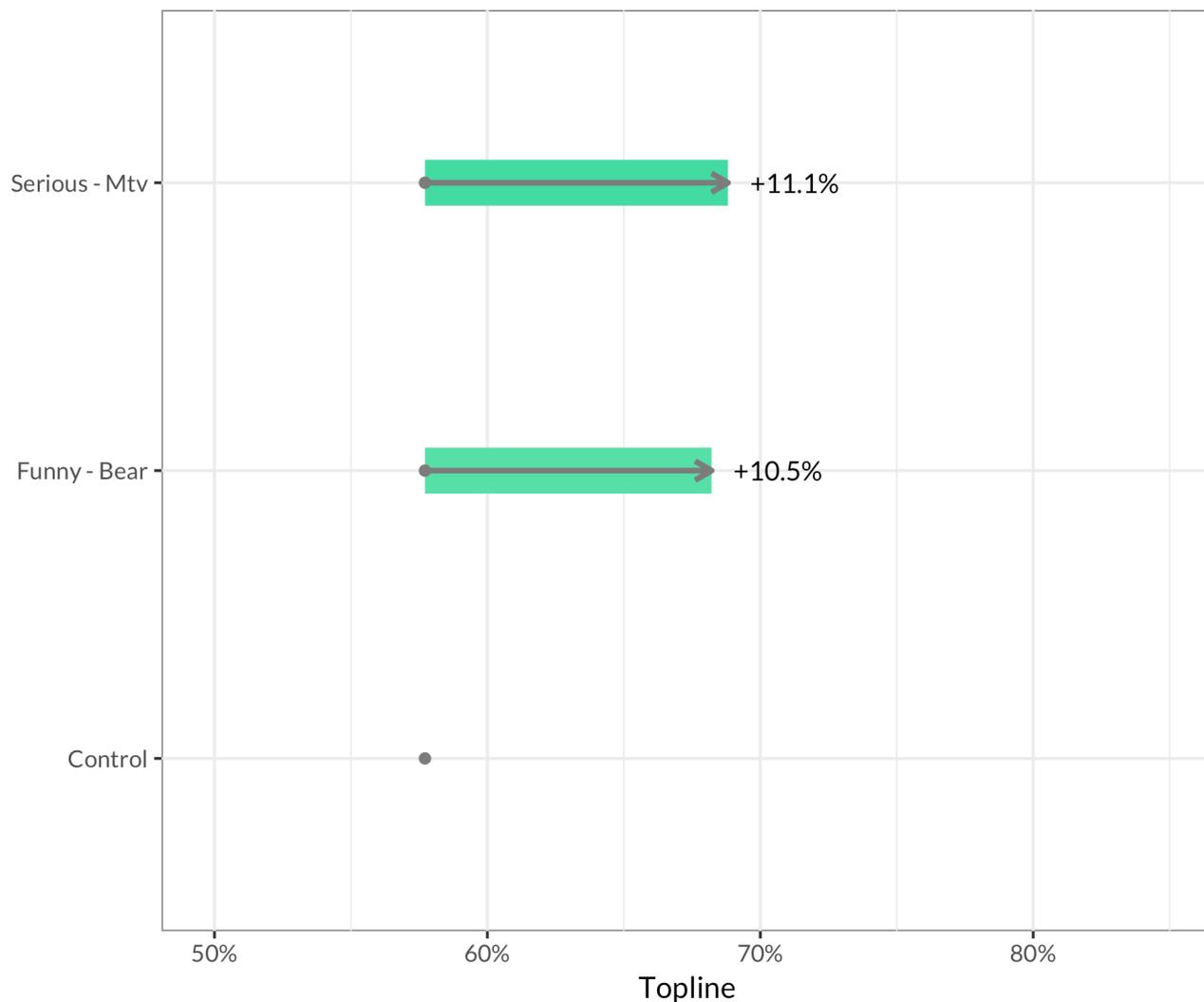
➤ ● Takeaways

The serious ad outperformed the funny ad on all metrics.

However, these differences are not statistically significant, and took place in the experimental context of being required to view the ad.

Both PSAs increased respondents' likelihood to say that assault was among most important issues

● Please select up to three of the most important issues on college campuses today - Sexual assault



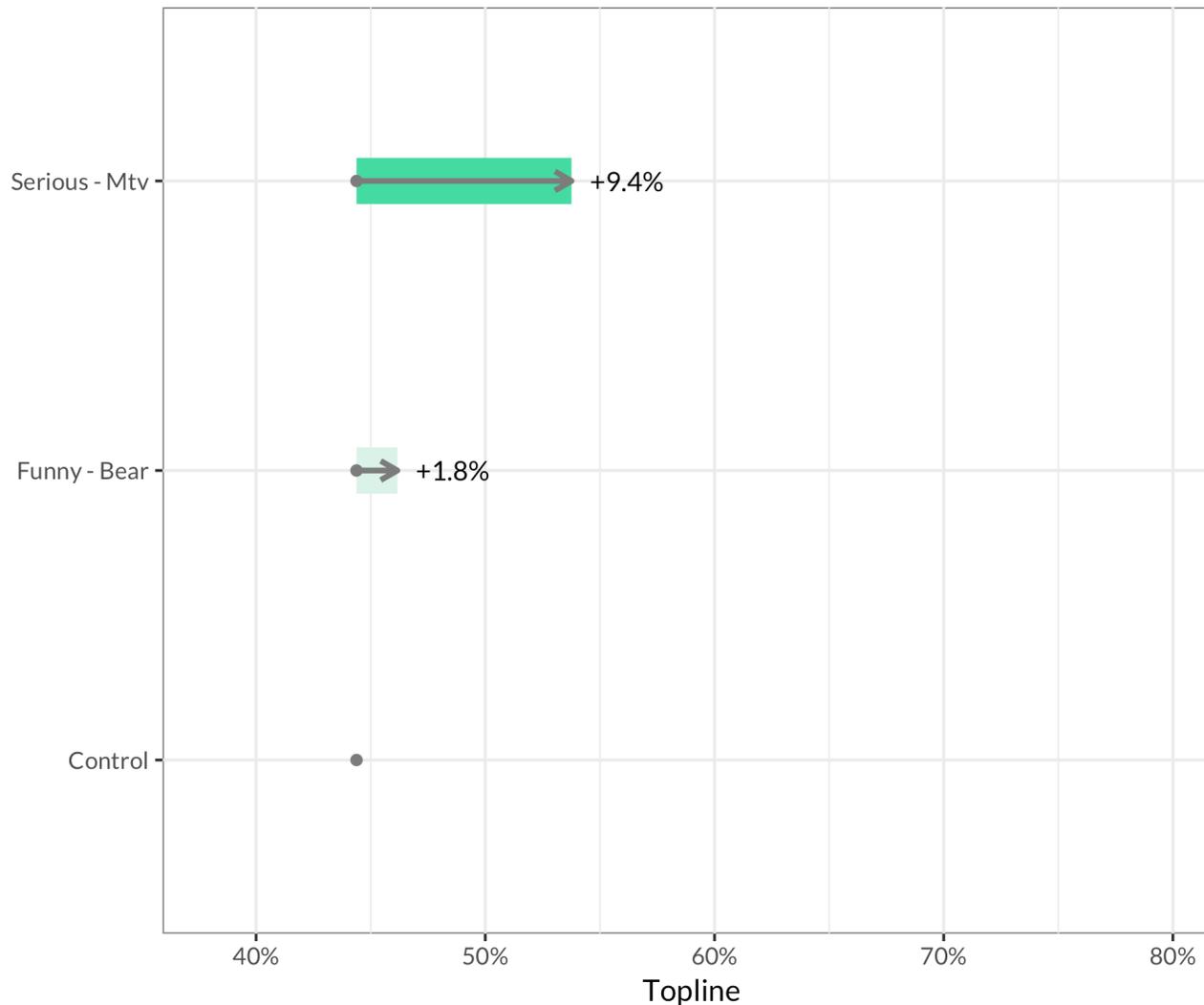
➤ ● Takeaways

Both PSAs had a significant effect on respondents' likelihood to say that sexual assault was among the three most important issues on campus today.

Each ad's effect relative to the other was nearly indistinguishable.

Serious ad most effective in promoting intervention

- *People like me have the ability to reduce sexual assault on college campuses - Strong Agree*



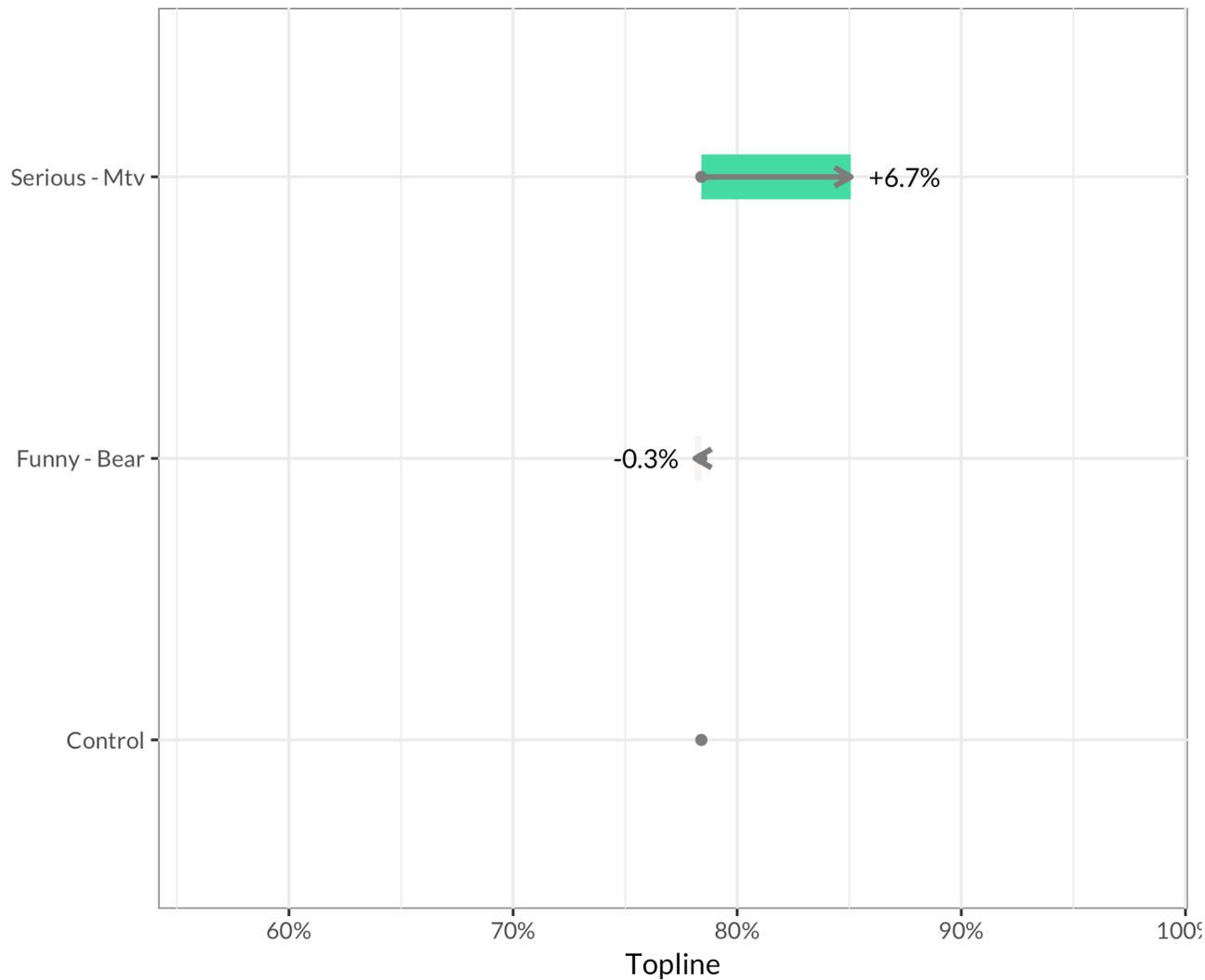
➤ ● Takeaways

The serious advertisement increased respondents' likelihood to strongly agree that they have the ability to reduce sexual assault by 9.4pp, a statistically significant result.

The impact of the funny "Bear" ad was smaller and not statistically significant.

Only the serious ad had an impact on views of whether sexual assault was a “very important” issue

● *Do you think the issue of sexual assault on college and university campuses is a very important issue, somewhat important, a little important, or not important? – Very Important*



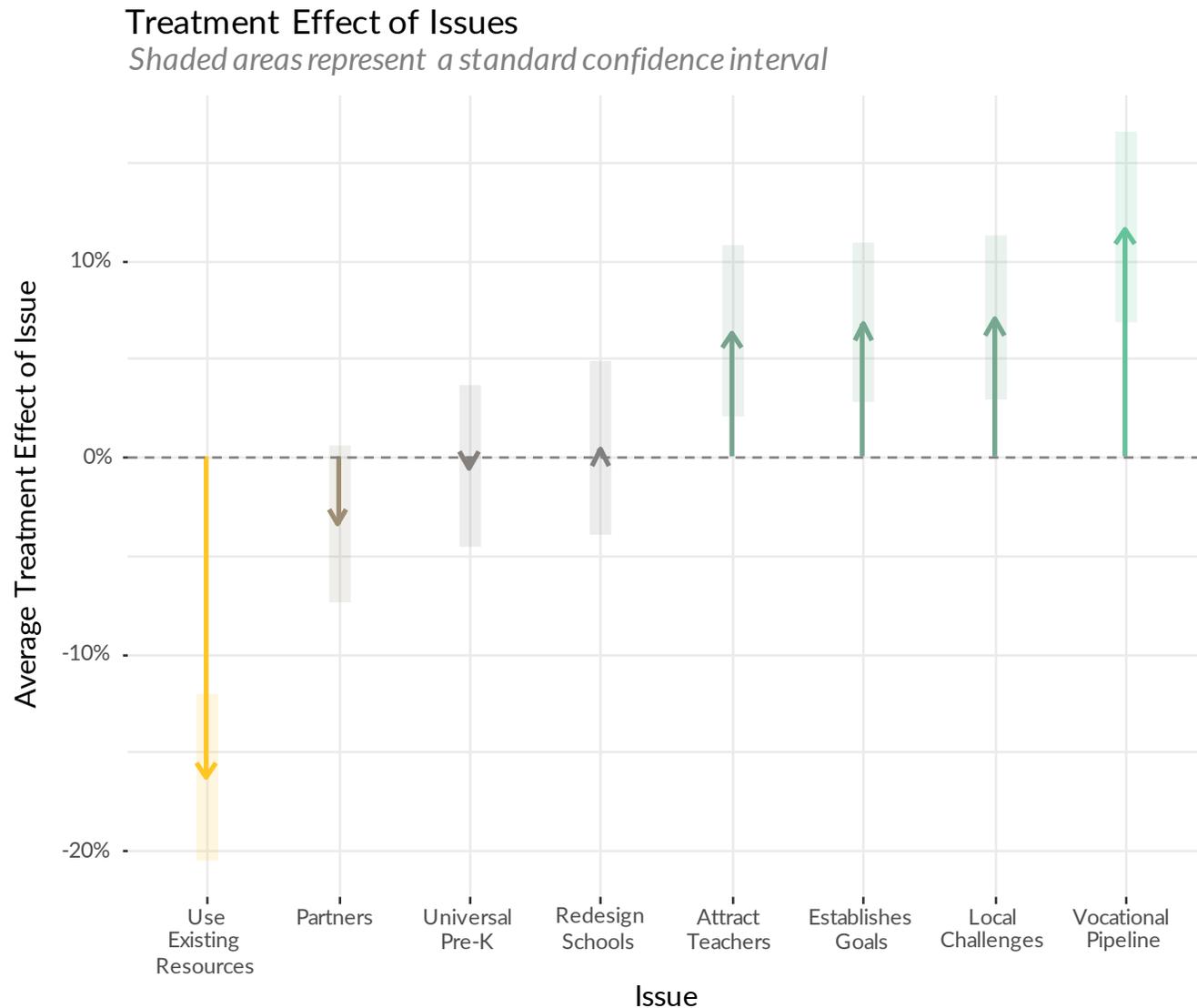
➤ ● Takeaways

The serious ad had a statistically significant positive effect on whether respondents described sexual assault as a “very important” issue.

The funny ad had a negligible effect.

Policy Salience and Legislation Support Overview

- Discussing the **vocational pipeline** is the most effective route overall for bill support



Takeaways

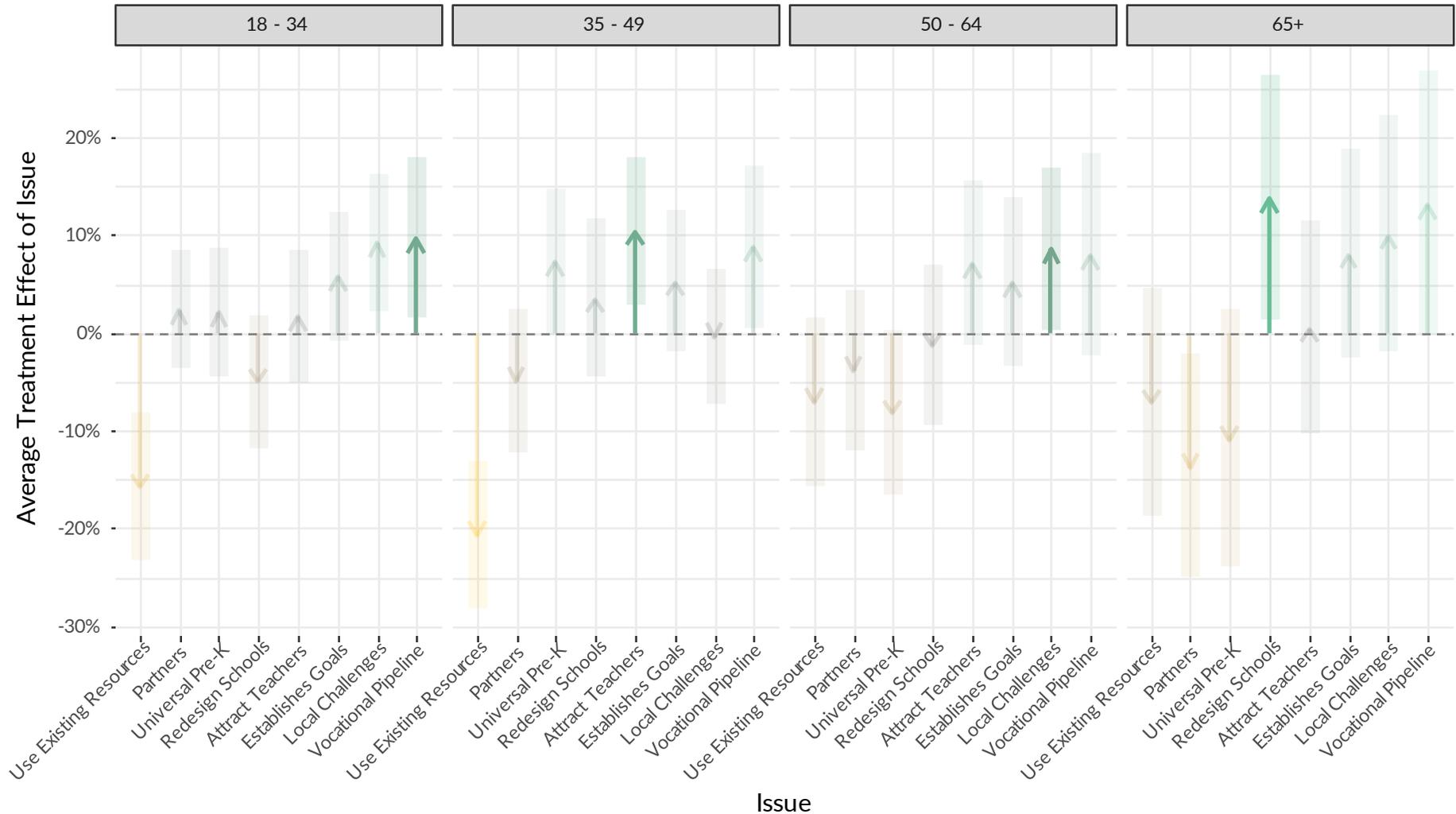
- Overall, the **vocational pipeline** topic is estimated to be the most successful, followed by **local challenges**, **establishing goals**, and **attracting teachers**.
- However, **use existing resources** actually decreased overall support for the bill.

Age Crosstabs

• Younger voters respond best to vocational pipelines, while older voters respond better to attracting teachers (35 to 49), local challenges (50 to 64), and redesigning schools (65+).

Treatment Effect of Issues

Shaded areas represent a standard confidence interval





Other Ways to Use Data in Higher Education

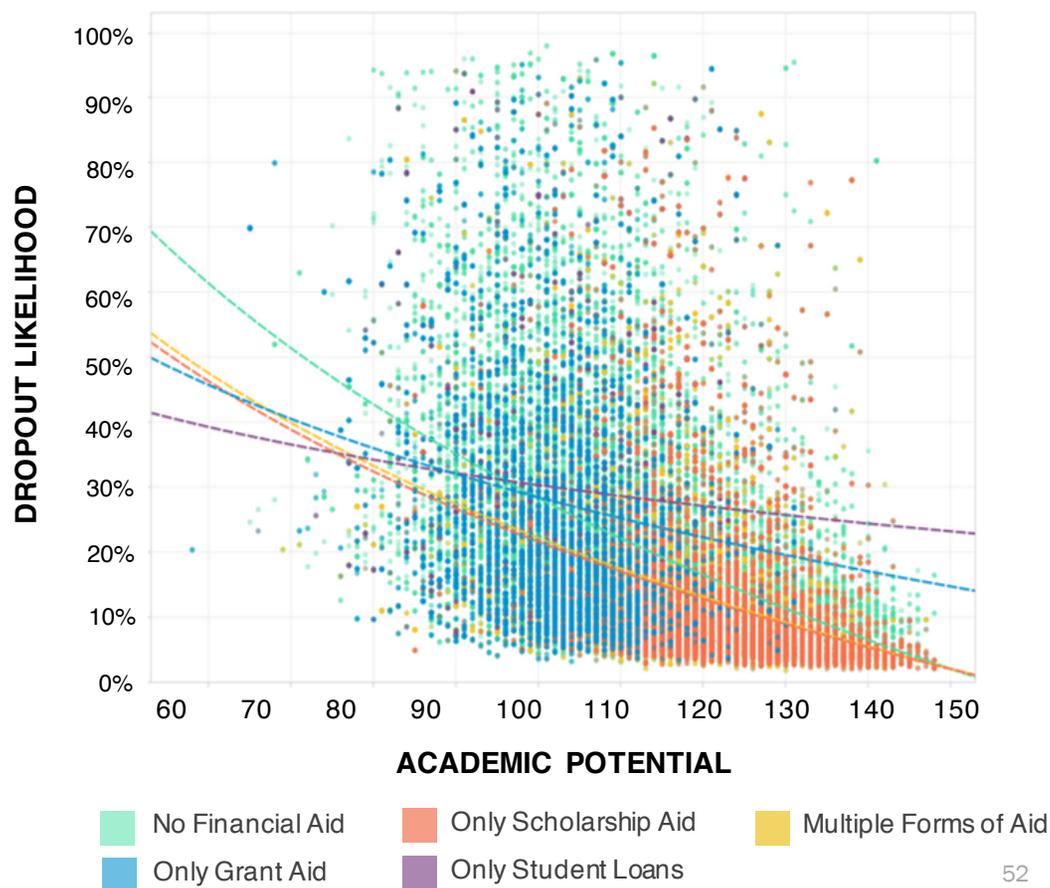
Identifying students most at-risk to drop out for a large public university



Identifying Students who are Likely to Drop Out

- We built a model estimating drop-out likelihood for current students using all available data, allowing retention efforts to be directed at those most at-risk. Of predicted graduates, 80.9% did graduate. Of predicted drop-outs, 71.8% did drop out.

Dropout Likelihood By Financial Aid Type



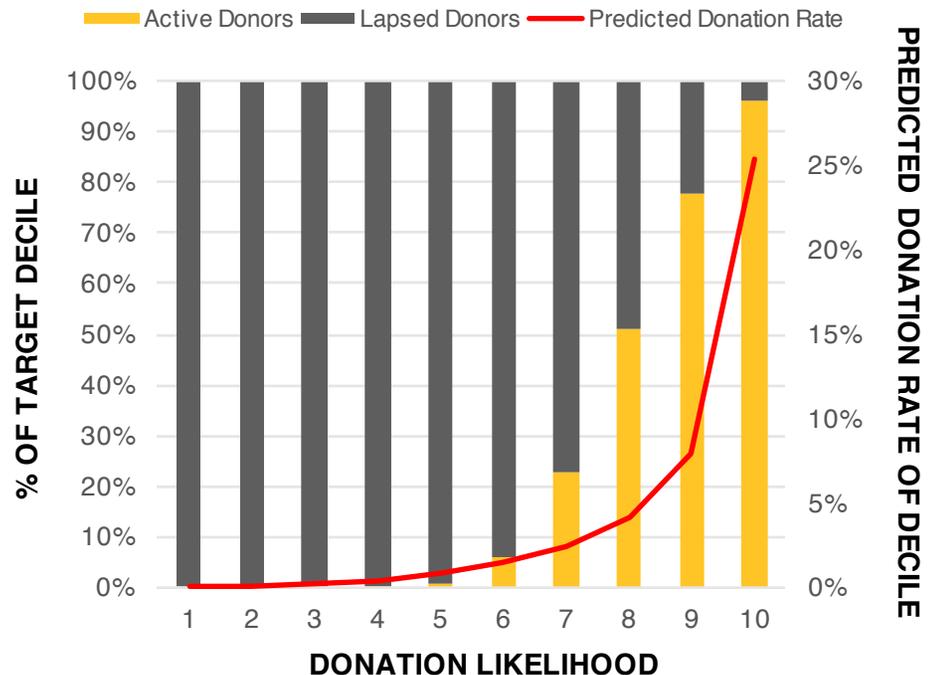
Identifying people most likely to donate when asked



Finding the right donation targets

● We unified data from 39 sources to create a historical view of donor behavior and contact attempts. We built two models – one assessing donor contactability, the other assessing donation likelihood – allowing donation requests to be directed to those most likely to both pick up and ultimately donate. We found a significant portion of lapsed donors were actually good targets.

Target Distribution by Active and Lapsed Donors





Conclusion

Conclusion

Higher education is viewed as important to economic success:

The vast majority of Americans (86%) and teachers (92%) say formal higher education training enhances one's prospects in the job market, and agree that high school students should pursue some form of higher education (~90%).

Americans are moderately satisfied with the state of higher education, particularly two-year programs:

Satisfaction with community colleges and two year programs (63%) is significantly higher than satisfaction with four year colleges and universities (52%), especially among white individuals and Republicans

- People with at least a Bachelor's degree are generally more favorable toward higher education. This is a topic on which within-party variability by education is both **consistent across parties** and greater than between-party variation.

Causes of dissatisfaction with four-year colleges differ by demographics and party:

- While **Democrats**, younger Americans, and people of color express concerns with the cost of attending four-year programs, **Republicans** express concerns about political pressures.

Understanding who you are talking to and what issues are salient to them can help PR campaigns.



Thank You

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