



# IWPR POLLING PRESENTATION

Opinions on Higher Education

NOVEMBER 2023



## METHODOLOGY

This poll was conducted between October 10-12, 2023, among a sample of 2,207 adults. The interviews were conducted online, and the data were weighted to approximate a target sample of adults based on age, gender, race, educational attainment, region, gender by age, and race by educational attainment. Results from the full survey have a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

## Key Findings

### Higher Education

1. A majority of adults report their education has been impactful to their career (59%), salary (57%), job satisfaction (54%), and ability to change careers (52%).
2. A majority of adults who attended college think their education was a worthwhile investment (77%).
3. Adults are most likely to cite cost (37%), needing to earn money and support their family (25%), and caregiving responsibilities (14%) as barriers to their education. Notably, one in four Black women cite racism as a barrier (26%).

### Student Debt

4. A majority of Gen Z (53%) and Millennials (59%) who attended college report their student debt has affected their financial stability/security, as did 57% of Black and Hispanic women student debt holders.
5. A majority of Gen Z (62%) and Millennial (67%) student debt holders report their financial security is negatively affected by the Supreme Court's decision to block loan forgiveness, as did nearly a third of BIPOC women student debt holders report they will be negatively affected a great deal (30%).

6. A larger proportion of adults support rather than oppose student loan forgiveness (+25), including student debt holders across partisanship.
7. Across partisanship, a majority of adults find it important for Congress to take action on making college more affordable (79%) and providing relief to student borrowers (61%).

### Affirmative Action

8. Across partisanship, a majority of adults agree diversity in a higher education setting is important (68%).
9. Two-fifths of adults think the US has not achieved racial equity in higher education admissions (39%), including 48% of Black women.
10. A majority of adults believe there are still barriers to college admissions based on historical and systemic factors unrelated to students' merit (59%).
11. A majority of adults think the Supreme Court's decision to strike down affirmative action will impact access to higher ed (55%), diversity on college campuses (55%), and the quality of higher education (51%).

AGENDA

HIGHER EDUCATION

STUDENT DEBT

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

APPENDIX

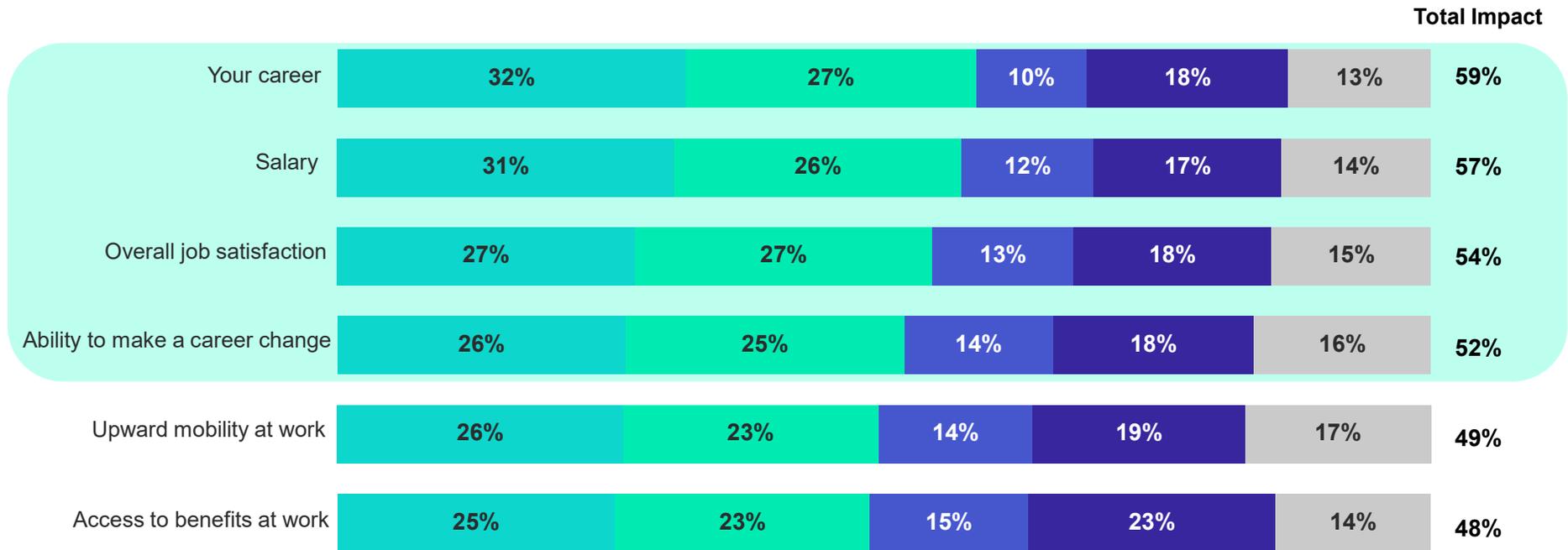


HIGHER EDUCATION

A majority of adults feel their education has impacted their career (59%), salary (57%), job satisfaction (54%), and ability to change careers (52%).

Thinking about your education, how much, if at all, do you feel your education has impacted the following?

● Significant impact ● Somewhat of an impact ● Not much of an impact ● No impact at all ● Don't know/No opinion



Total = % Significant + % Somewhat

HIGHER EDUCATION

Please explain how your education has had an impact on your career. Be as detailed as possible.

SKILLS + KNOWLEDGE + EXPERTISE

“Without my education I would not have been able to get the skills I needed to perform my job nor would I have been able to attain a license to practice.”

“My education has been instrumental in shaping my career. Through my studies, I gained valuable knowledge, skills, and expertise that directly relate to my chosen field.”

OWNING A BUSINESS

“It taught me most of what I needed to know about being starting my own business.”

“Without my college education I could have never landed the jobs that prepared me to own my own successful business that I ran for over 20 years and sold.”

JOB CHOICE

“My education has given me the ability to choose any kind of job I want.”

“My education gave me a wide range of knowledge that allowed for flexibility in my career choices.”

LIMITATIONS FACED WITHOUT AN EDUCATION

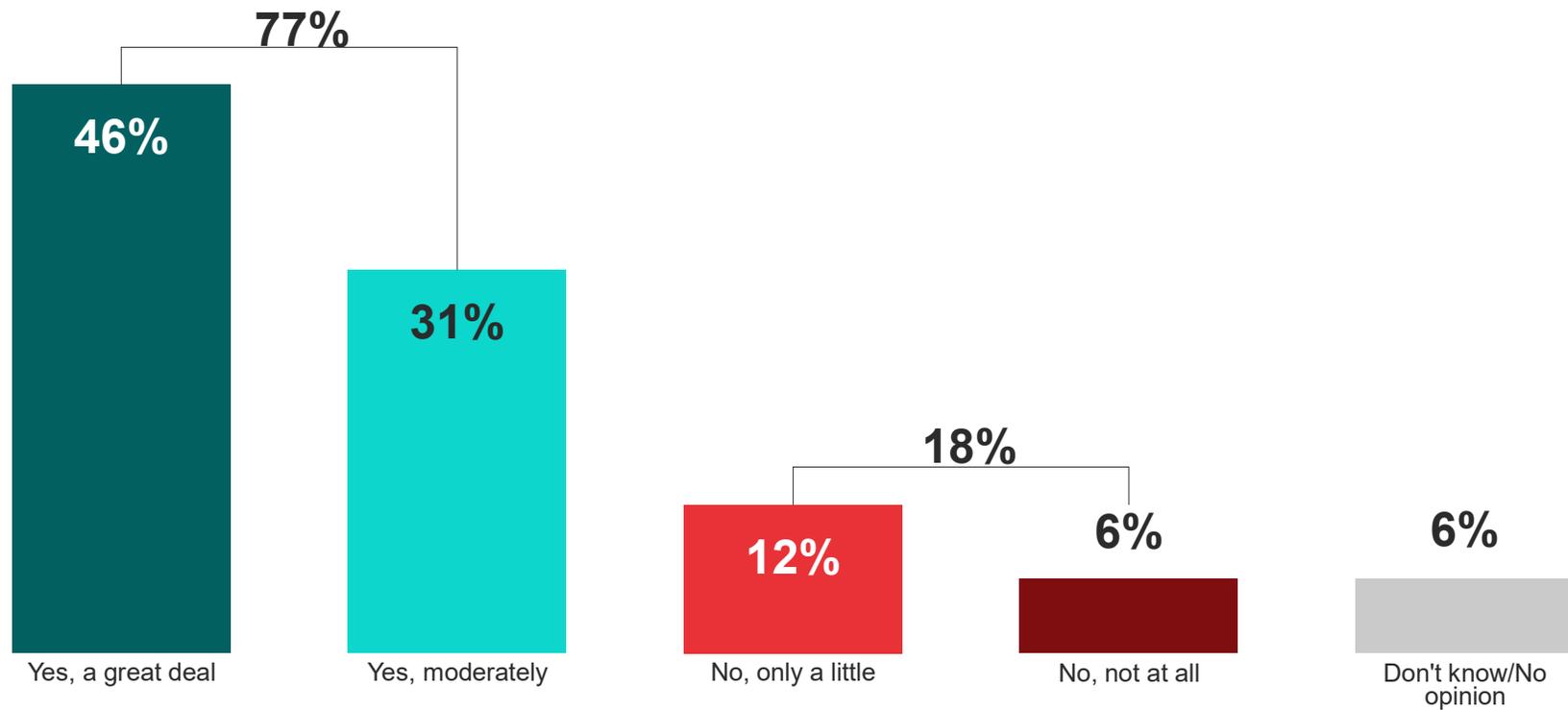
“Without finishing my college degree I found myself in a completely different line of work than what I had planned.”

“Since I chose not to finish my college degree it has closed a lot of opportunities that I could have had to better myself financially and stability.”

HIGHER EDUCATION

Three out of four adults who attended college think their education was a worthwhile investment (77%).

Do you think your own education was a worthwhile investment?\*

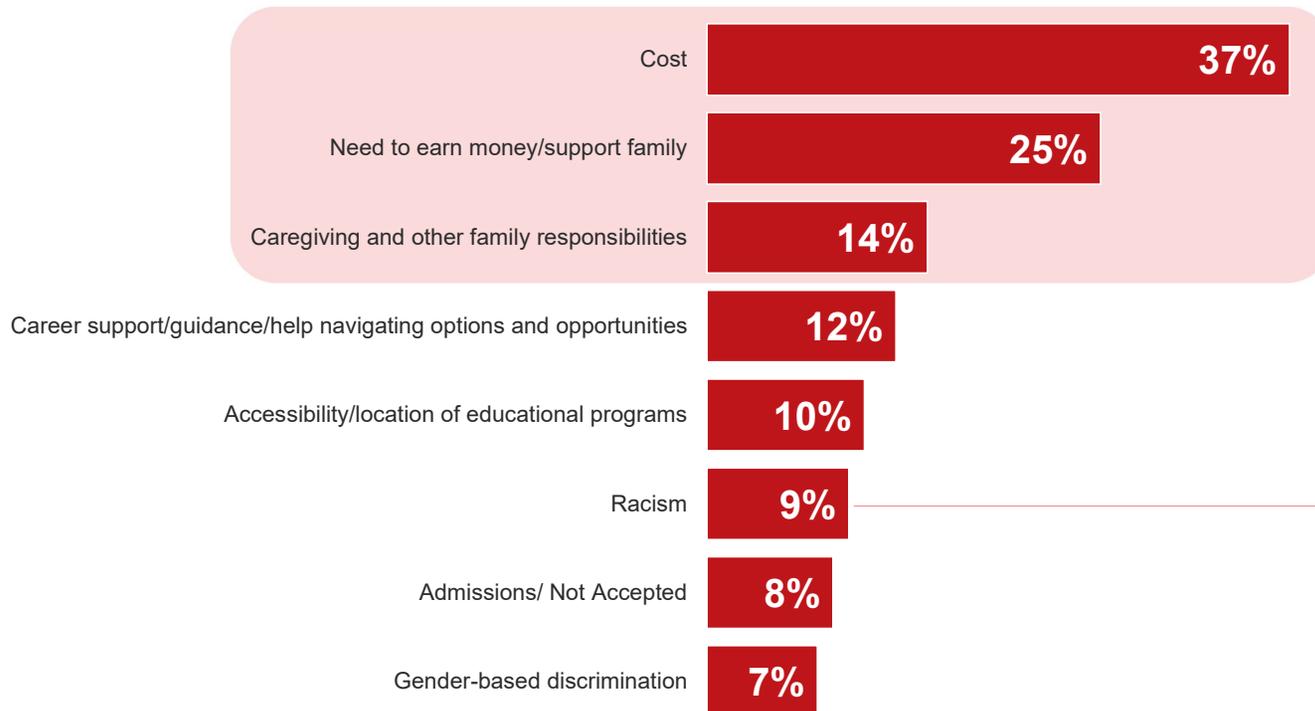


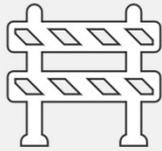
\*Note: Only asked of those that attended at least a two-year school.; n=1,365.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Adults are most likely to cite cost (37%), needing to earn money and support their family (25%), and caregiving responsibilities (14%) as barriers to their education. Notably, one in four Black women cite racism as a barrier (26%).

In your own experience, which of the following barriers to education have you faced? Please select all that apply.



  
**More than one-in-four Black women cite racism as a barrier to their education (26%).**  
 N = 119

Note: Other not shown due to low response rate. Thirty-six percent of adults say they did not face any barriers to their education.

AGENDA

HIGHER EDUCATION

STUDENT DEBT

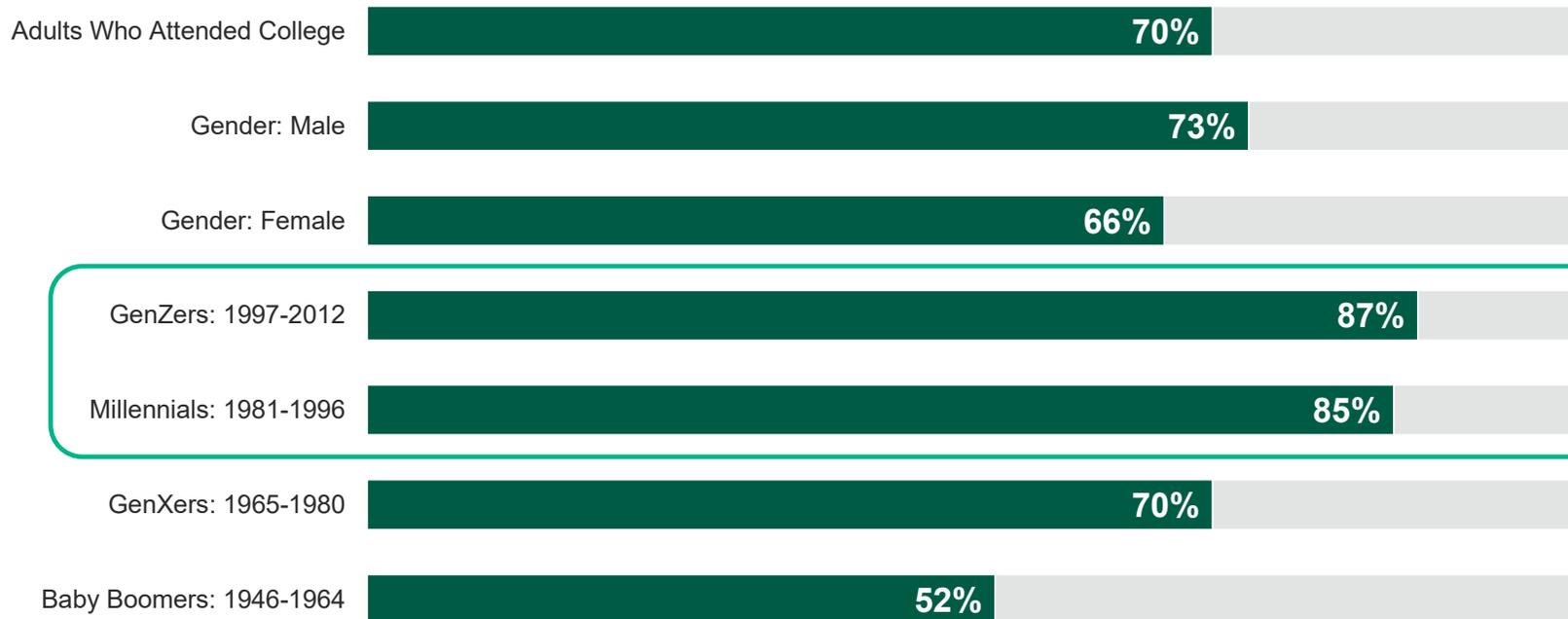
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

APPENDIX



Gen Z and Millennials who attended college are significantly more likely to have/had student debt compared to their older counterparts (85%+).

### Student Debt Holders by Demographic

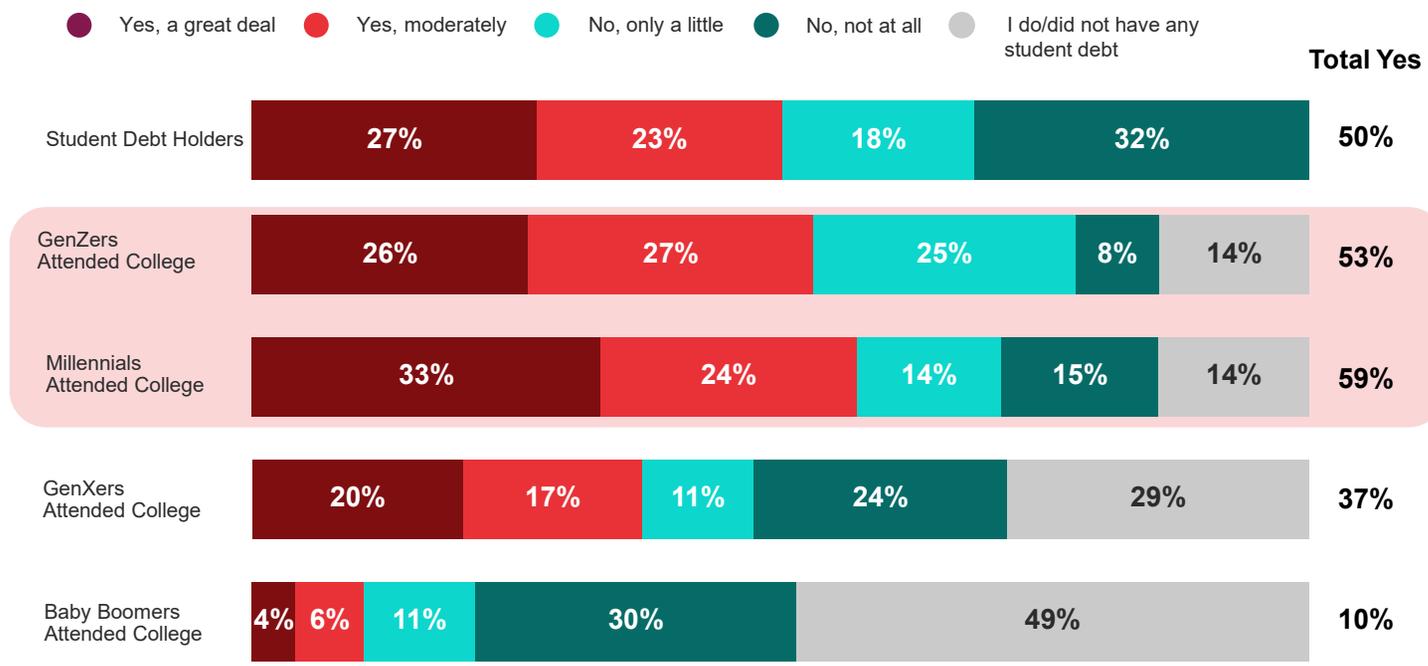


Note: Student Debt Holders defined in Appendix.; n=857. MOE = +/- 3

STUDENT DEBT

A majority of Gen Z (53%) and Millennials (59%) who attended college report their student debt has affected their financial stability/security, as did 57% of Black and Hispanic women student debt holders.

In your opinion, has student debt affected your financial stability and/or security?\*



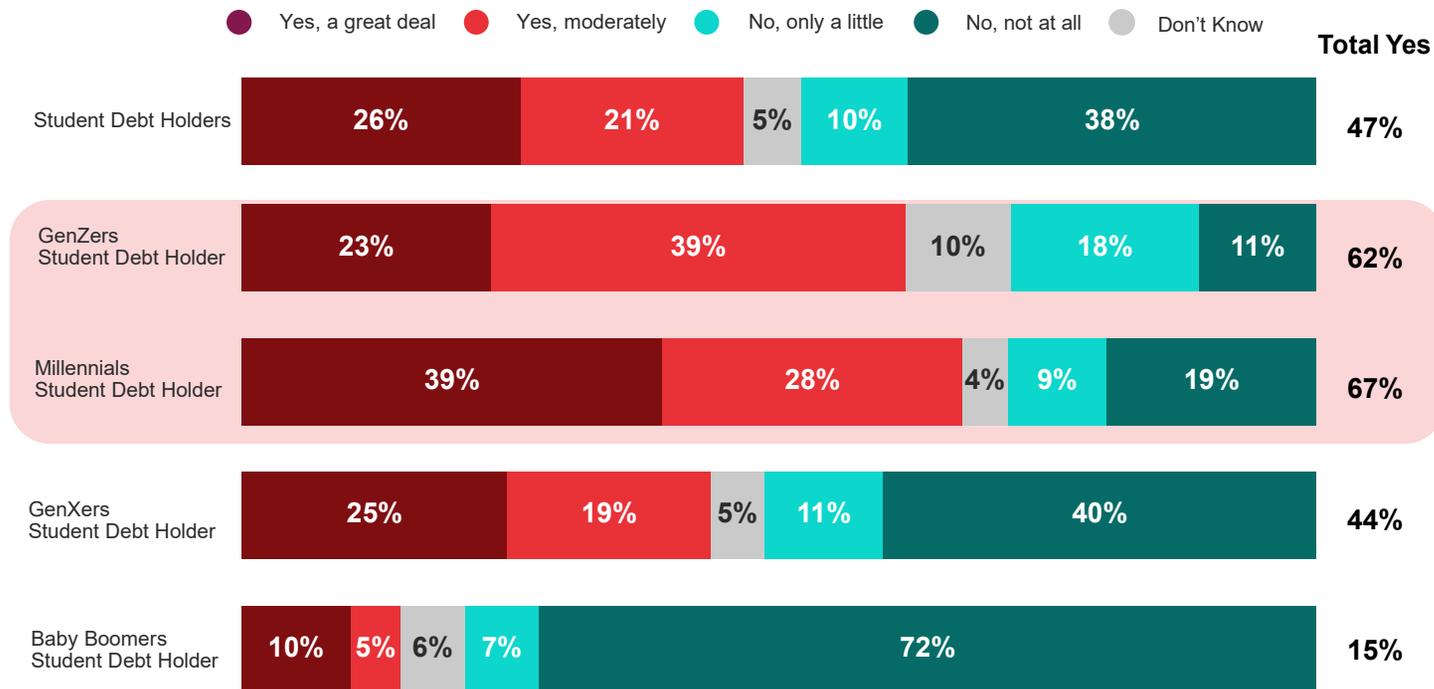
**57%**  
of **Black and Hispanic women student debt holders** report their debt has negatively affected their financial stability/security.  
N = 150

Note: Only asked of those that attended at least a two-year school.; n=1,365.

STUDENT DEBT

A majority of Gen Z (62%) and Millennials (67%) student debt holders report their financial security is negatively affected by the Supreme Court's decision to block loan forgiveness, as did nearly a third of BIPOC women student debt holders report they will be negatively affected a great deal (30%).

Looking ahead, does the Supreme Court's decision to block loan forgiveness negatively affect your financial security?\*



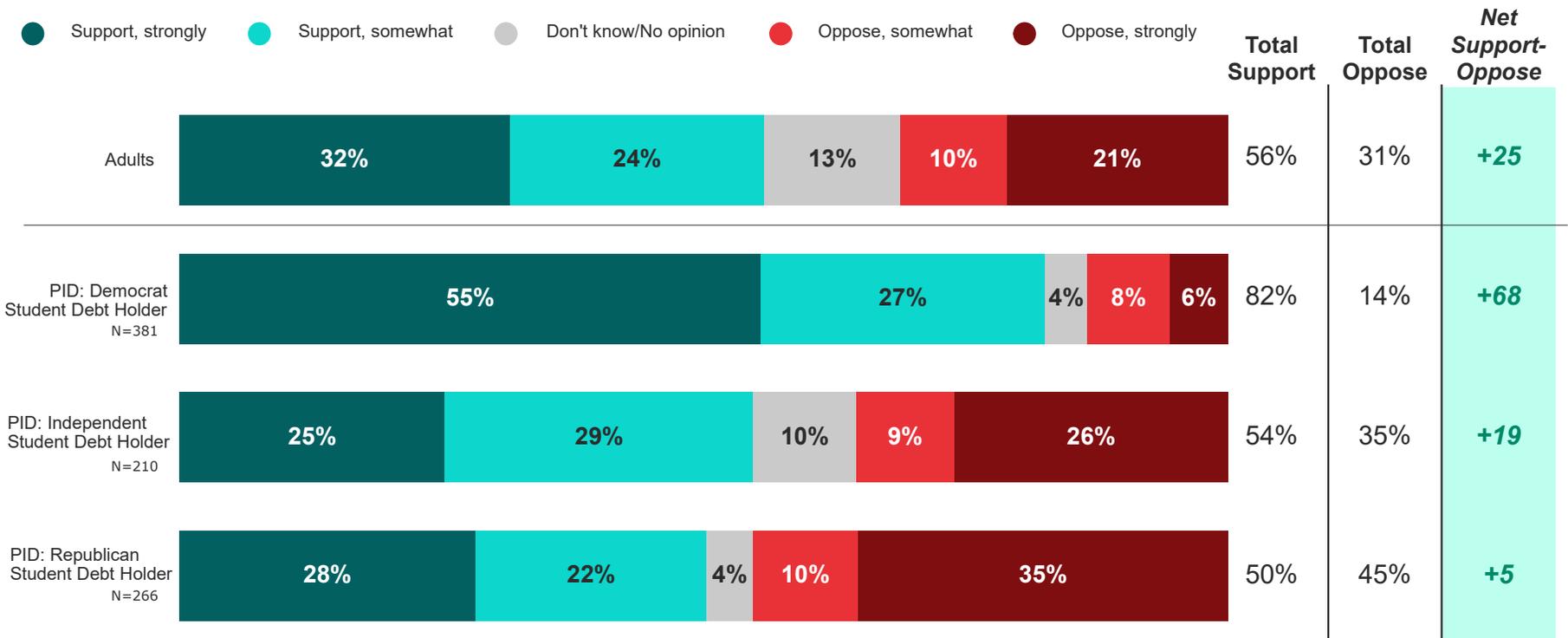
  
**30%**  
 of BIPOC Women student debt holders say the Supreme Court's decision negatively affects their financial security a great deal.  
 N = 211

Note: Student Debt Holders.; n=857. MOE = +/- 3

STUDENT DEBT

A larger proportion of adults support rather than oppose student loan forgiveness (+25), including student debt holders across partisanship.

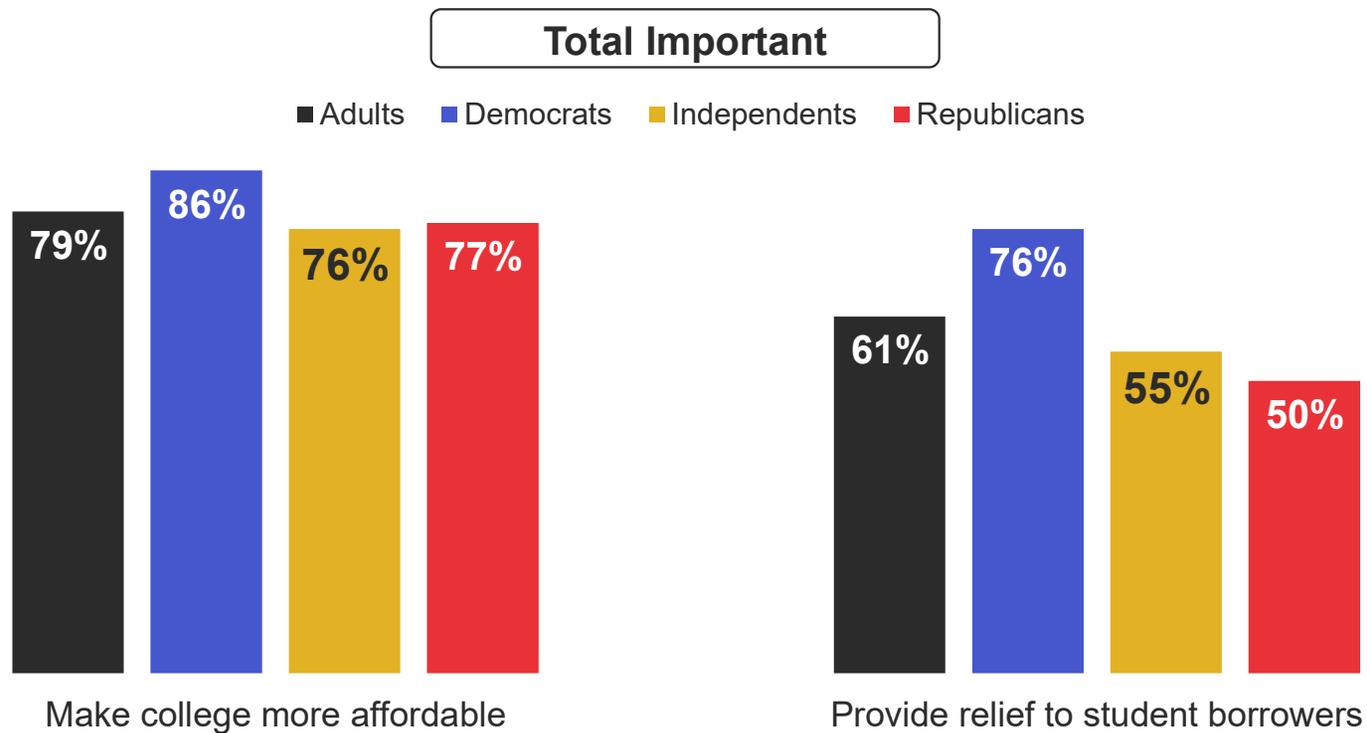
Even if you were not eligible, do you support loan forgiveness?



STUDENT DEBT

Across partisanship, a majority of adults find it important for Congress to take action on making college more affordable (79%) and providing relief to student borrowers (61%).

How important is it to you that Congress take action to:



Total = % Very + % Somewhat

|  
AGENDA

HIGHER EDUCATION

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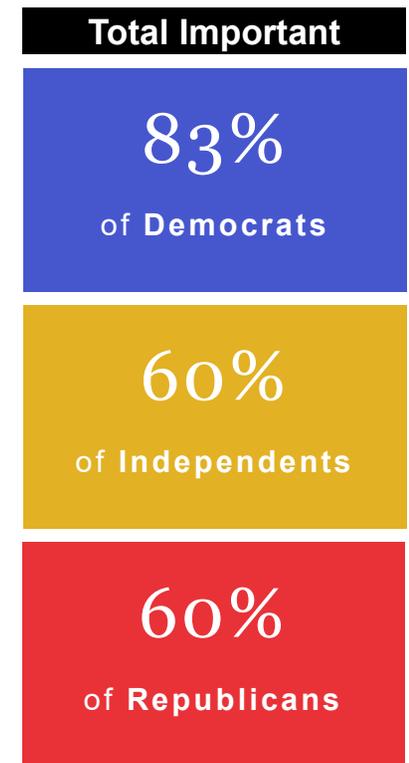
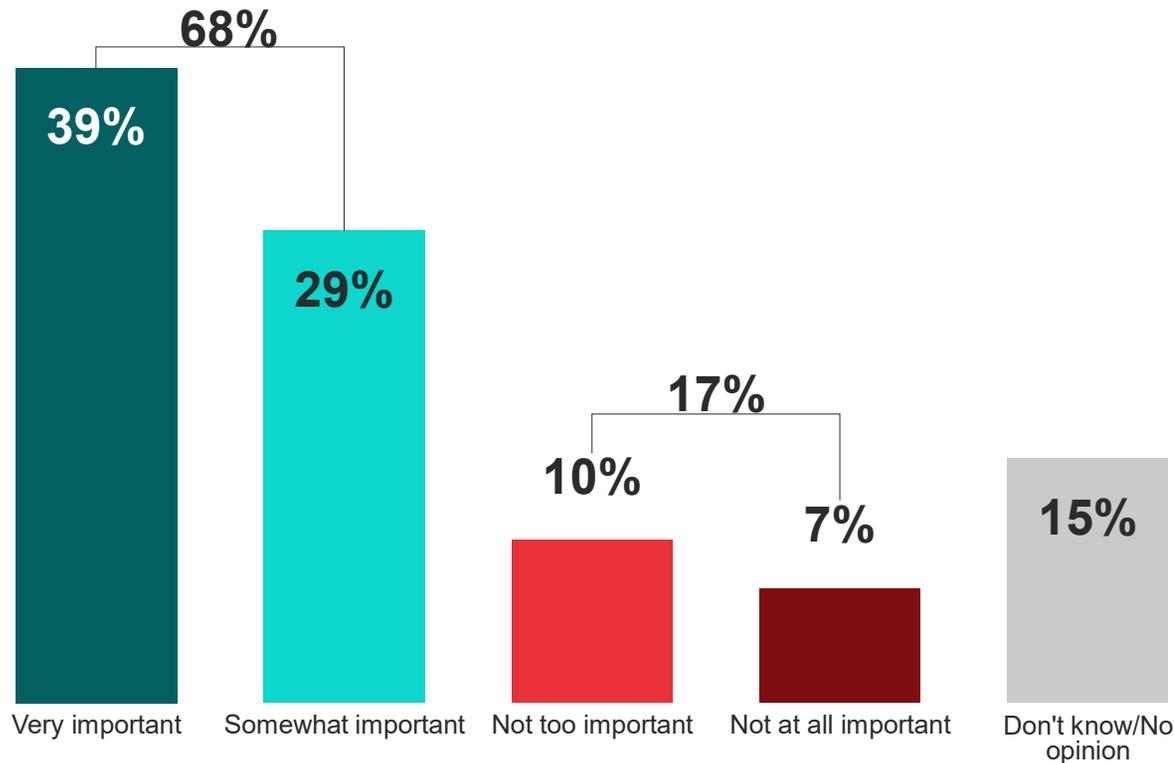
APPENDIX



AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

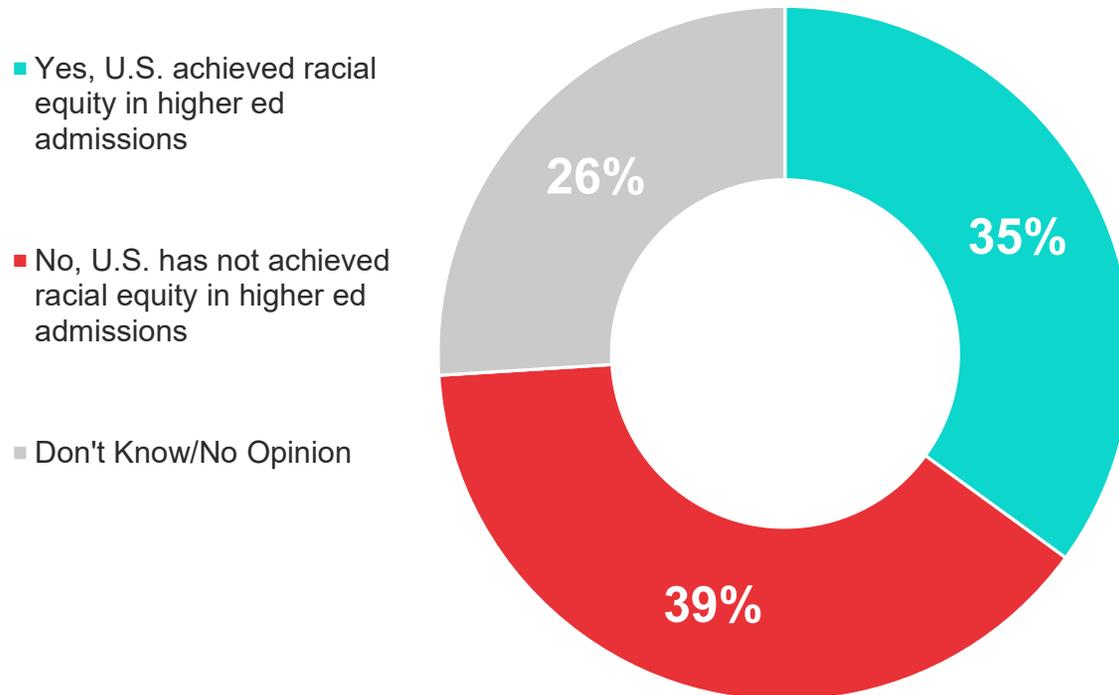
Across partisanship, a majority of adults agree diversity in a higher education setting is important (68%).

How important do you think diversity is in a higher education setting?



Two-fifths of adults think the US has **not** achieved racial equity in higher education admissions (39%), including 48% of Black women.

Do you think the United States has achieved racial equity in higher education admissions?



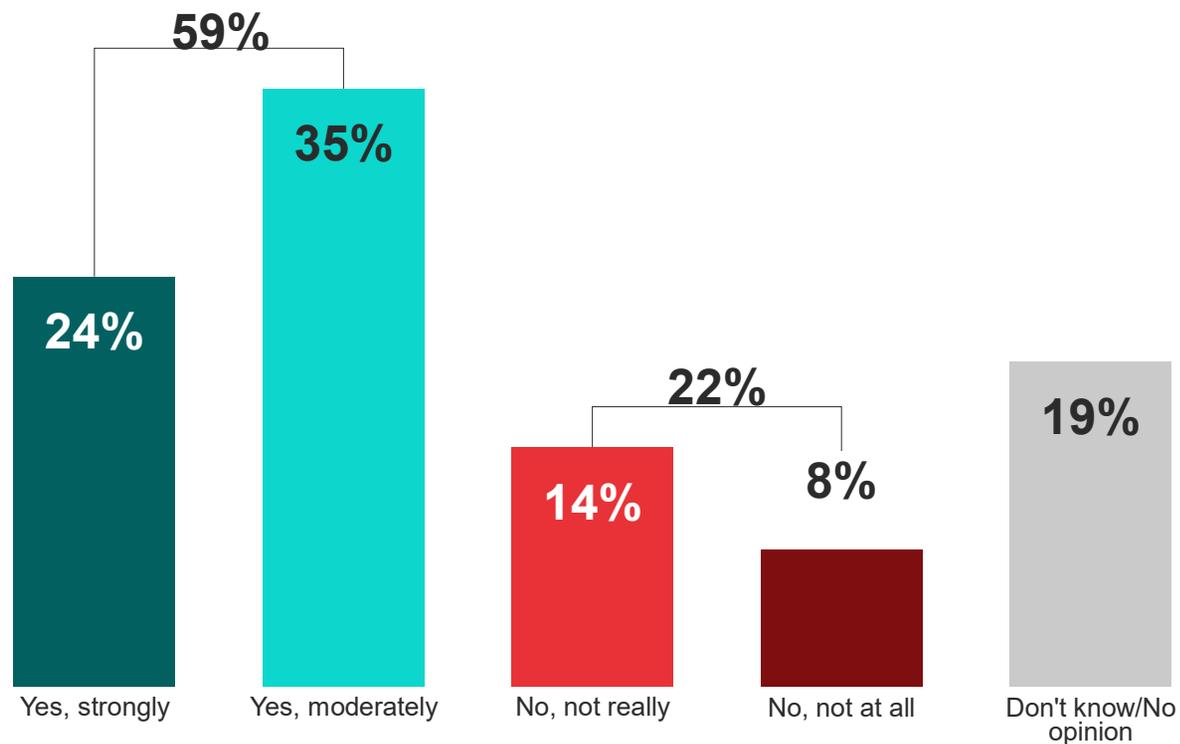
**48%**  
of **Black women** think the U.S. has not achieved racial equity in higher education admissions, and 30% of Black women are unsure.  
N = 119

Note: Answer options within the survey were displayed as "Yes" and "No"

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

A majority of adults believe there are still barriers to college admissions based on historical and systemic factors unrelated to students' merit (59%).

Do you believe there are still barriers to college admissions based on historical and systemic factors unrelated to students' merit?



AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

A majority of adults think the Supreme Court's decision to strike down affirmative action will impact access to higher ed (55%), diversity on college campuses (55%), and the quality of higher education (51%).

How much, if at all, do you think the Supreme Court's decision to strike down affirmative action will impact the following?



Total = % Significant + % Somewhat

AGENDA

HIGHER EDUCATION  
STUDENT DEBT  
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

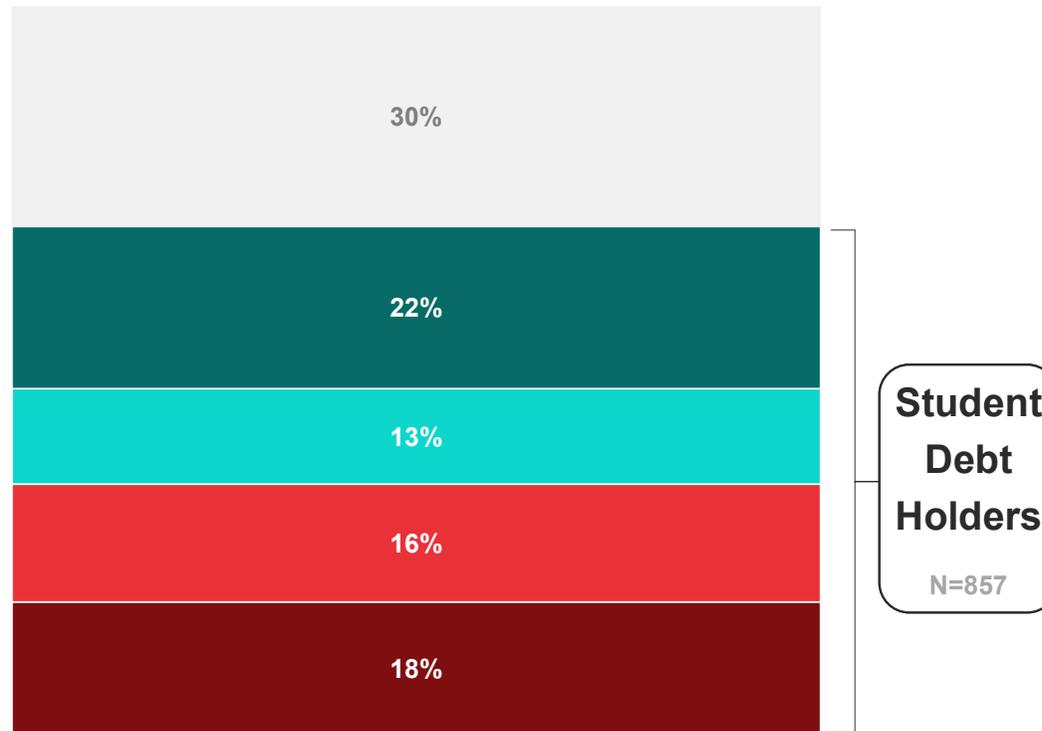
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## Definition: Student Debt Holders

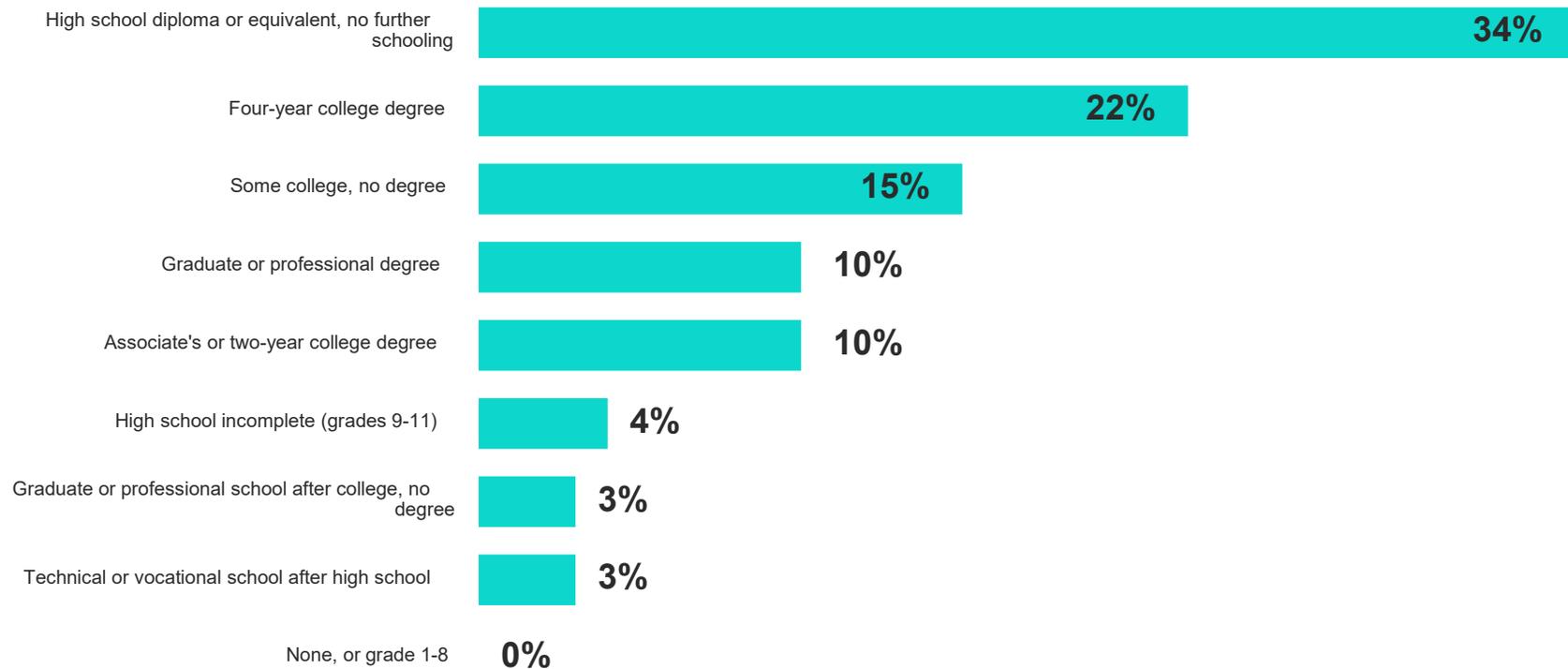
In your opinion, has student debt affected your financial stability and/or security?

- I do/did not have any student debt
- No, not at all
- No, only a little
- Yes, moderately
- Yes, a great deal

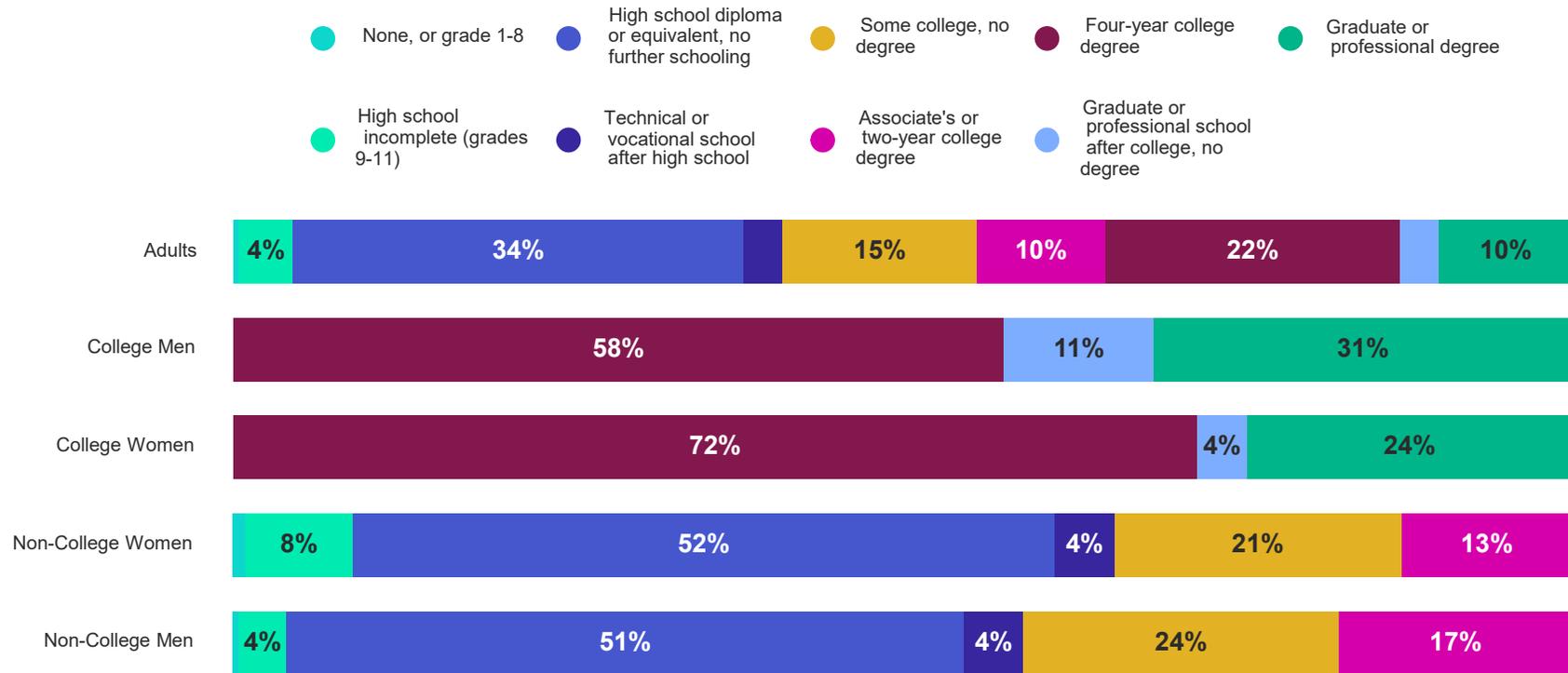


Note: Only asked of those that attended at least a two-year school.; n=1,365.

## What is the last grade or class you completed in school?



# What is the last grade or class you completed in school?



## Thinking about your education, how much, if at all, do you feel your education has impacted the following?

% Total Impacted	Adults	Non-College Men	Non-College Women	College Men	College Women
Your career	58%	50%	48%	75%	74%
Salary	57%	51%	48%	73%	67%
Overall job satisfaction	54%	48%	46%	68%	65%
Ability to make a career change	52%	45%	45%	65%	66%
Upward mobility at work	50%	43%	39%	65%	64%
Access to benefits at work	48%	44%	41%	63%	58%

Total = % Significant + % Somewhat

In your own experience, which of the following barriers to education have you faced? Please select all that apply.

	Adults	Non-College Men	Non-College Women	College Men	College Women
Cost	37%	36%	35%	38%	44%
Need to earn money/support family	25%	25%	29%	20%	19%
Caregiving and other family responsibilities	14%	9%	17%	14%	15%
Career support/guidance/help navigating options and opportunities	12%	10%	8%	19%	14%
Accessibility/location of educational programs	10%	9%	9%	15%	12%
Racism	9%	11%	6%	10%	10%
Admissions/ Not Accepted	8%	8%	6%	15%	6%
Gender-based discrimination	7%	6%	5%	10%	9%
Did not face a barrier	36%	34%	40%	34%	34%

Note: Other not shown due to low response rate.

More  
than a  
third

Of adults cite **cost** as a barrier to their education (37%).

More  
than  
1 in 4

Black women cite **racism** as a barrier to their education (26%).

More  
than  
1 in 3

Hispanic women cite **the need to earn money & support their families** as a barrier to their education (35%).



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