

PROMOTING A PN-3 AGENDA

*Key findings from a nationwide survey of policy influencers
Conducted for the Pritzker Children's Initiative and NCIT*



PRITZKER
Children's Initiative

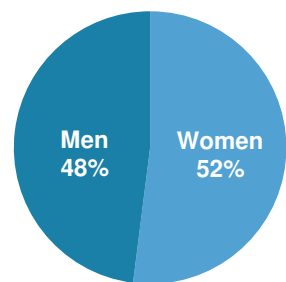
Methodology

- Online survey among 1,625 “policy influencers” nationwide
- Includes oversamples of Black, Hispanic, and AAPI policy influencers
- Interviewing conducted April 5 to 16, 2021
- Credibility interval is ± 2.9 percentage points for the full sample, with higher tolerances for subgroups

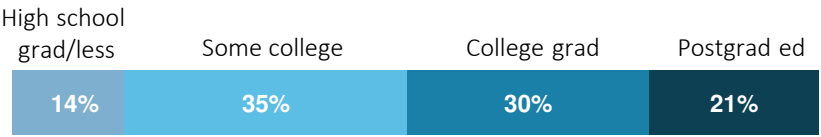


Profile of Policy Influencers

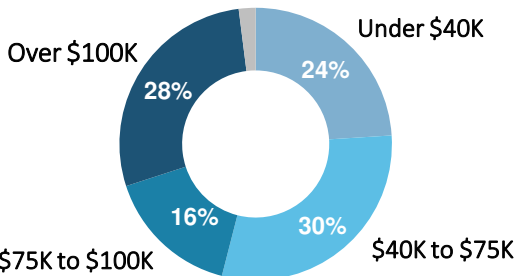
GENDER



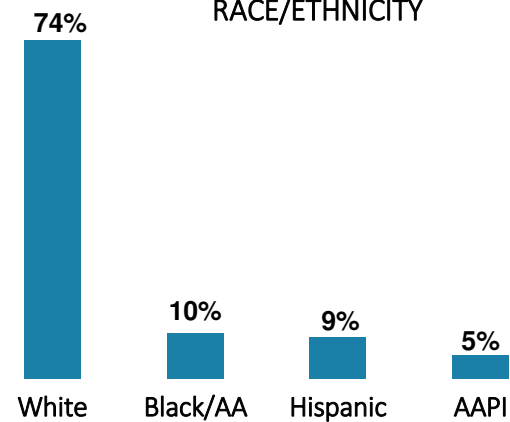
EDUCATION



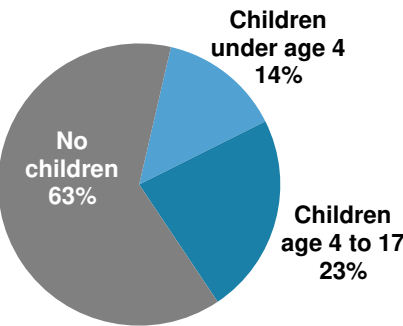
INCOME



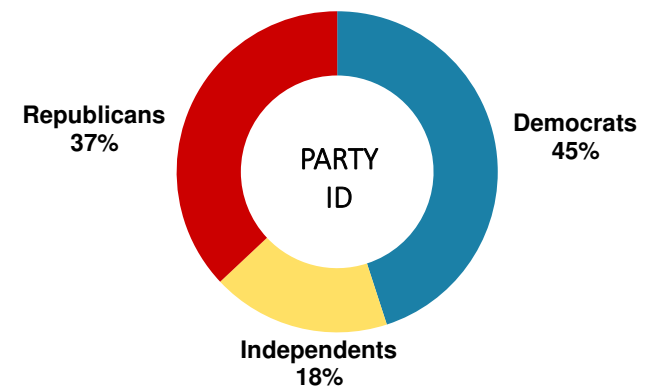
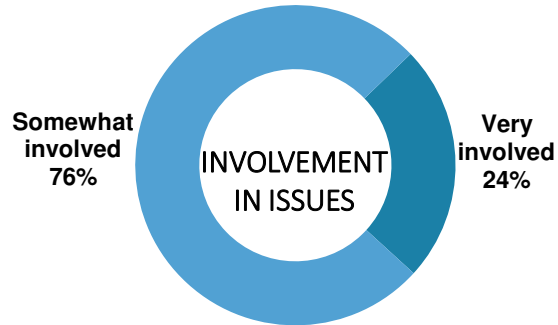
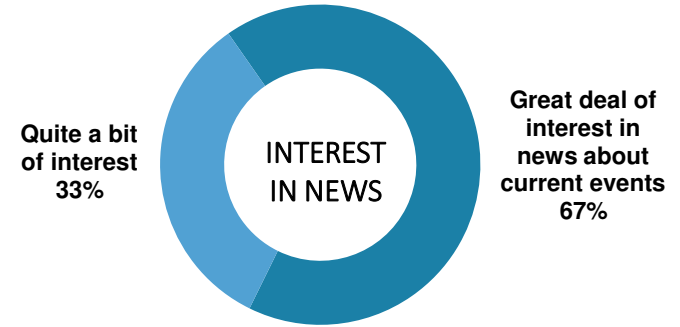
RACE/ETHNICITY



PARENTS



News and Civic Engagement of Policy Influencers



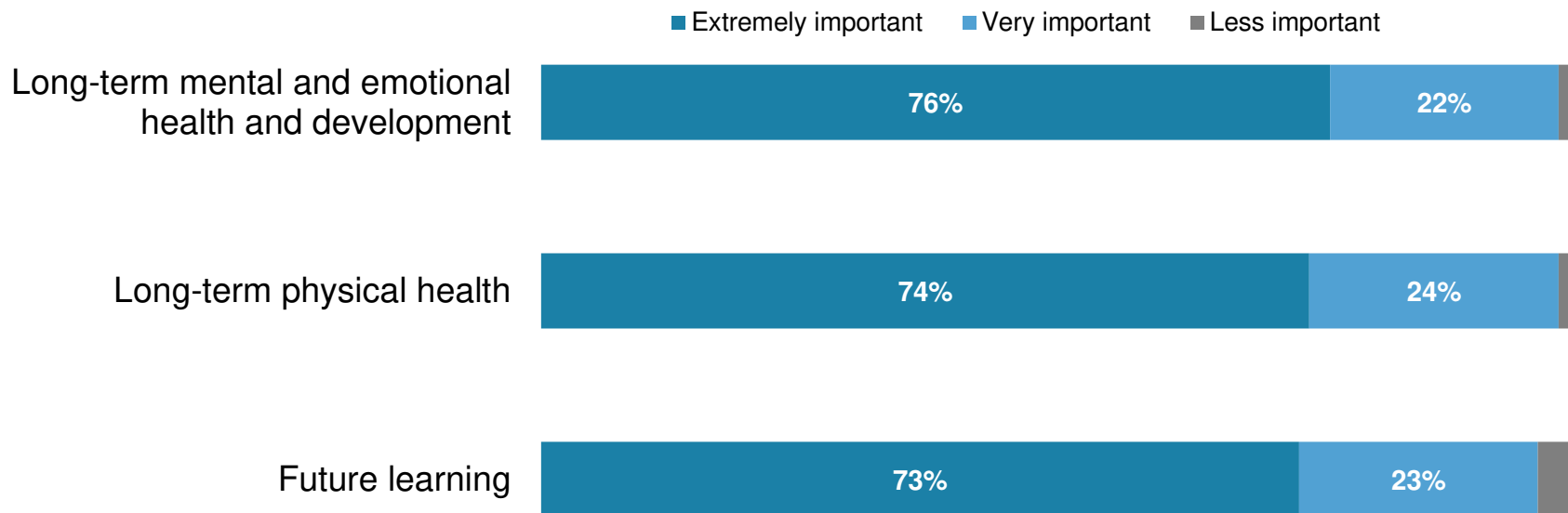
* Attending marches, rallies, public meetings; contacted elected officials; participating in causes/organizations

Attitudes toward the PN-3 Period and Policy Agenda



Policy influencers are highly clued in to the importance of PN-3 in children's development.

Importance of the Prenatal-to-Three Period in Aspects of a Young Child's Development

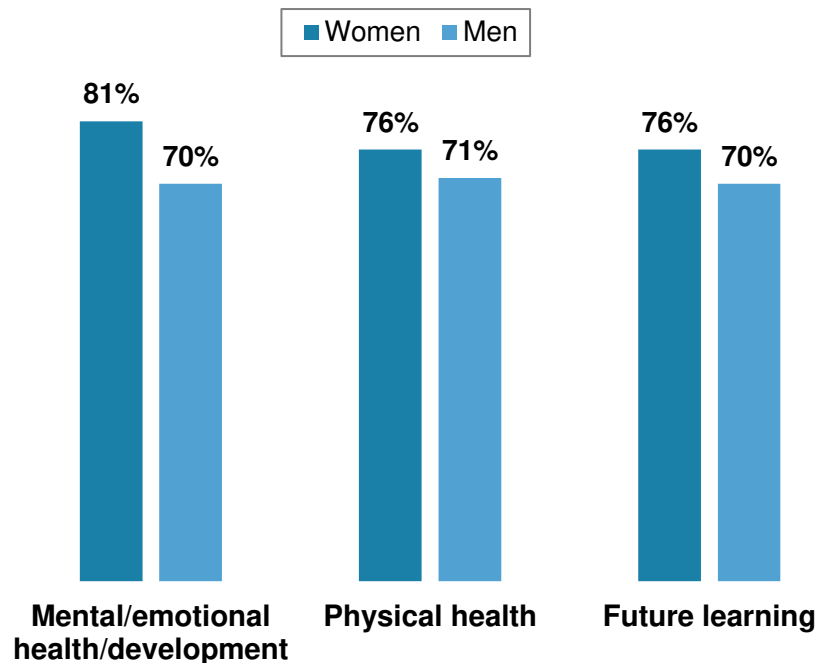


Differences among different groups are a matter of degree, but consistent.

PN-3 Extremely Important in Young Child's Development

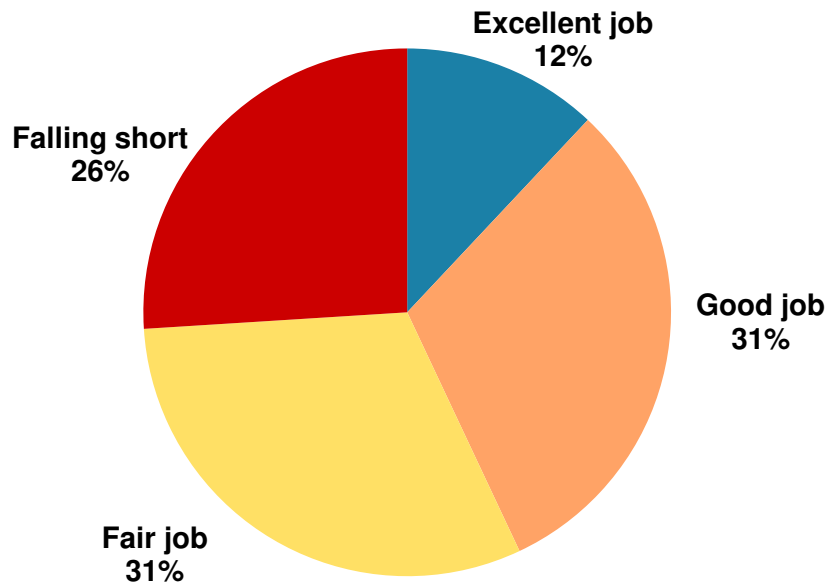
PN-3 “extremely important” across all three measures:

- No differences by race/ethnicity
- No differences by partisan groups
- Consistently higher among women under age 50
- Consistently lower among men non-college grads



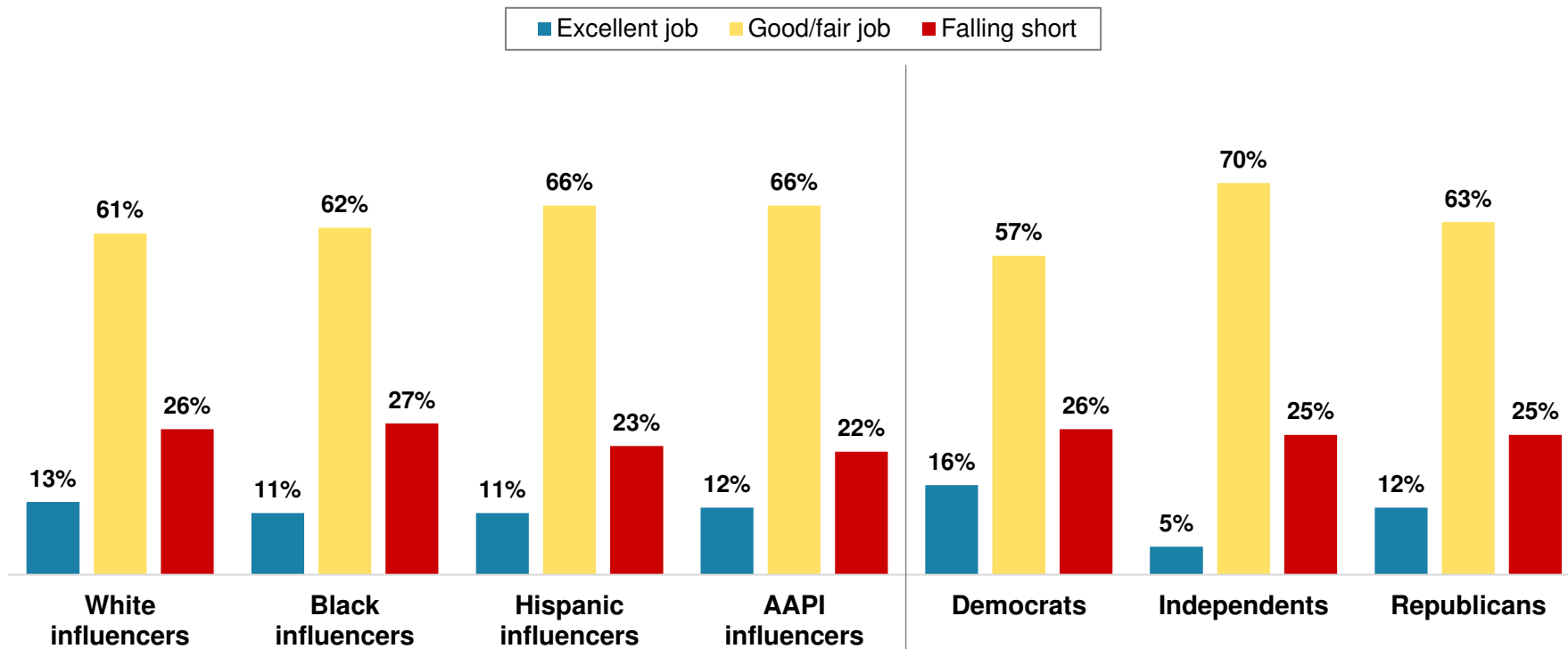
There is a sense that the country is doing an okay (at best) job of supporting PN-3 families.

Understanding that things vary from community to community, how would you rate the job our country is doing in ensuring that families and children during the prenatal-to-three period have the supports and resources they need?



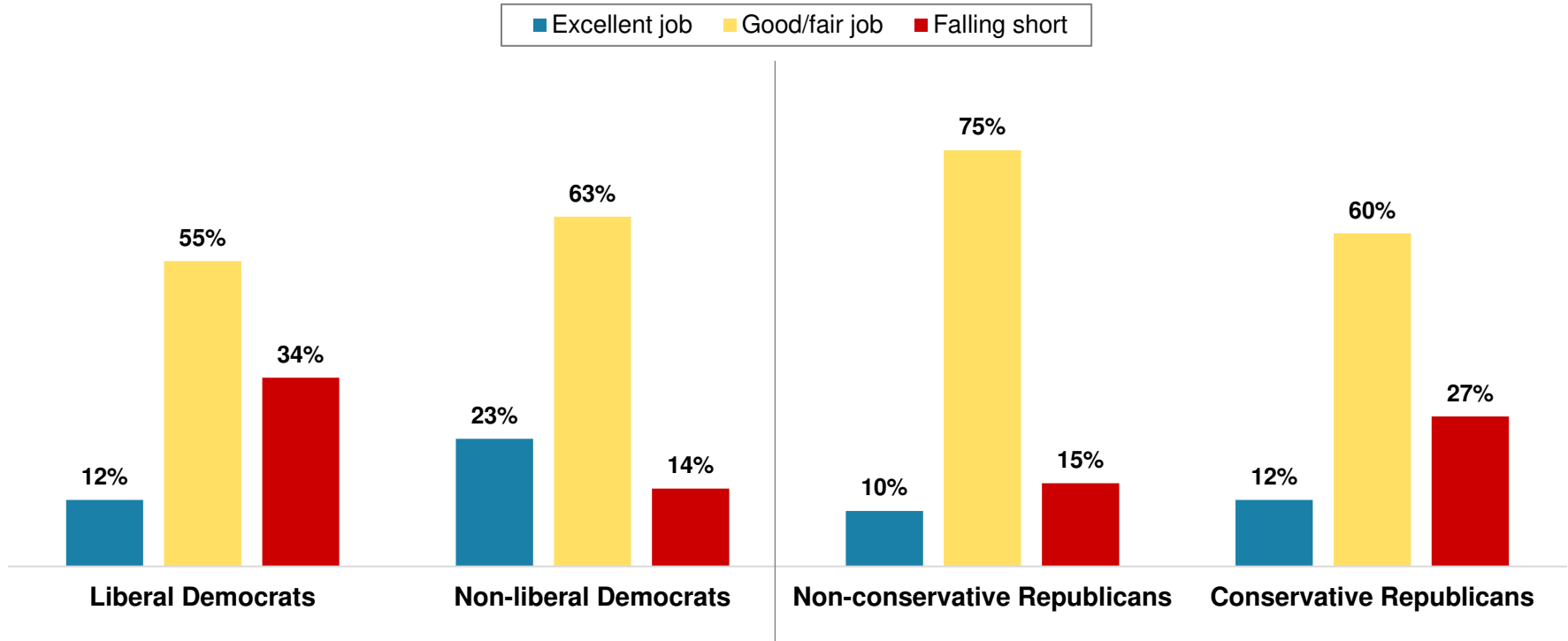
Perceptions on this point do not particularly correlate to race or partisanship.

Assessment of Job Country Is Doing Ensuring Families and PN-3 Children Have Supports/Resources



This is the very rare issue on which the ideological poles are in agreement.

Assessment of Job Country Is Doing Ensuring Families and PN-3 Children Have Supports/Resources



There are other significant differences, most notably by income and parental status.

Assessment of Job Country Is Doing Ensuring Families and PN-3 Children Have Supports/Resources

	Excellent job	Good/fair job	Falling short
Women	9%	61%	30%
Men	17%	63%	20%
Income under \$40K	11%	59%	30%
Income \$40K to \$75K	9%	64%	27%
Income \$75K to \$100K	7%	66%	27%
Income over \$100K	21%	59%	20%
Age 18 to 34	16%	62%	22%
Age 35 to 49	19%	64%	17%
Age 50 to 64	8%	62%	30%
Age 65/older	6%	60%	34%
Have kids under 18	23%	63%	15%
No kids	7%	61%	32%

Those who are positive cite a plethora of resources; those less positive cite a large income gap.

Reasons for Saying Country Is Doing Excellent/Good Job for Families/PN-3 Children

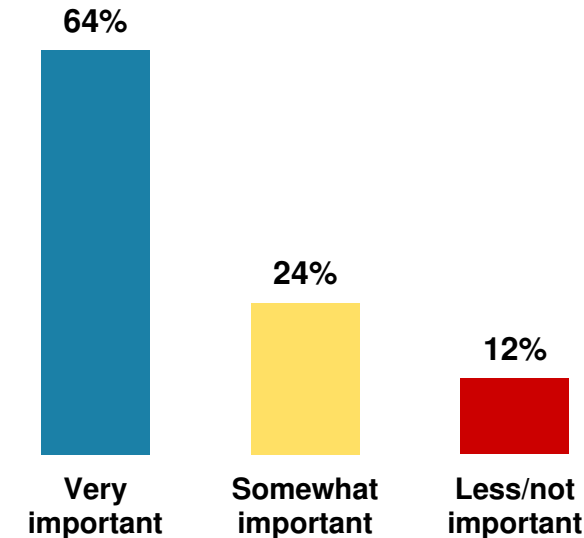
- 22%** **Plenty of resources, programs, access to services**
- 15% Provide healthcare services, access to healthcare, patient care
- 11% Doing a good, excellent job, like what is being done
- 10% Supplemental food programs, WIC, SNAP, services that provide nutritious food
- 10% Prenatal care, resources, support for pregnant women
- 10% Learning programs, preschool, Head Start, more education opportunities

Reasons for Saying Country Is Doing Fair Job/ Falling Short for Families/PN-3 Children

- 19%** **Income gap, low-income do not have the same access to resources**
- 10% Need affordable healthcare, children need good healthcare
- 9% Inadequate early education, need to fund early childhood education
- 9% Poor nutrition, food distribution, too many children are hungry
- 8% Good child care, daycare is too expensive, not affordable
- 6% Many parents, single parents must work, work multiple jobs to provide

Policy influencers' endorsement of a PN-3 agenda is appreciable.

Importance of Enacting Policies/Programs Like These to Provide Resources for PN-3 Children/Parents*



Based on 0-to 10 ratings: 9-10 = very important, 7-8 = somewhat important, 0-6 = less/not important

*Program descriptions prior to question:

- **Child care programs**, where children from birth to age three are in the care of trained caregivers in safe environments where they engage in developmentally appropriate play and learning.
- **Programs that support maternal physical and mental health**, to ensure that mothers have access to affordable, quality healthcare before and after birth and provide counseling, mental health treatments, and emotional support during and after pregnancy to parents who want it.
- **Family and newborn support networks that**, in the first months after their baby is born, can provide parents with support and advice and connect them with a range of programs and services in their community, such as health programs, care programs, services for children with special needs, and others.
- **Policies that help ensure financial security** for families, such as child tax credits and a higher minimum wage so they can better afford the basics of food, stable housing, healthcare, and transportation.
- **Home visiting programs**, where parents who want more intensive support can have a nurse or other professional visit them at home when they need or want it, during the first several years of their child's life, to answer questions, help them learn about parenting and healthy development of babies and make needed referrals.
- **Programs that support prenatal and baby physical and mental health**, to ensure babies are born healthy and stay healthy as infants and toddlers through physical and mental health screening, referral, and treatment.
- **Paid family and medical leave policies** that give families paid time off to care for and bond with a new baby, or to care for themselves or their children when they are facing a serious health condition.

Belief in the agenda's importance varies, but is solid across the board.

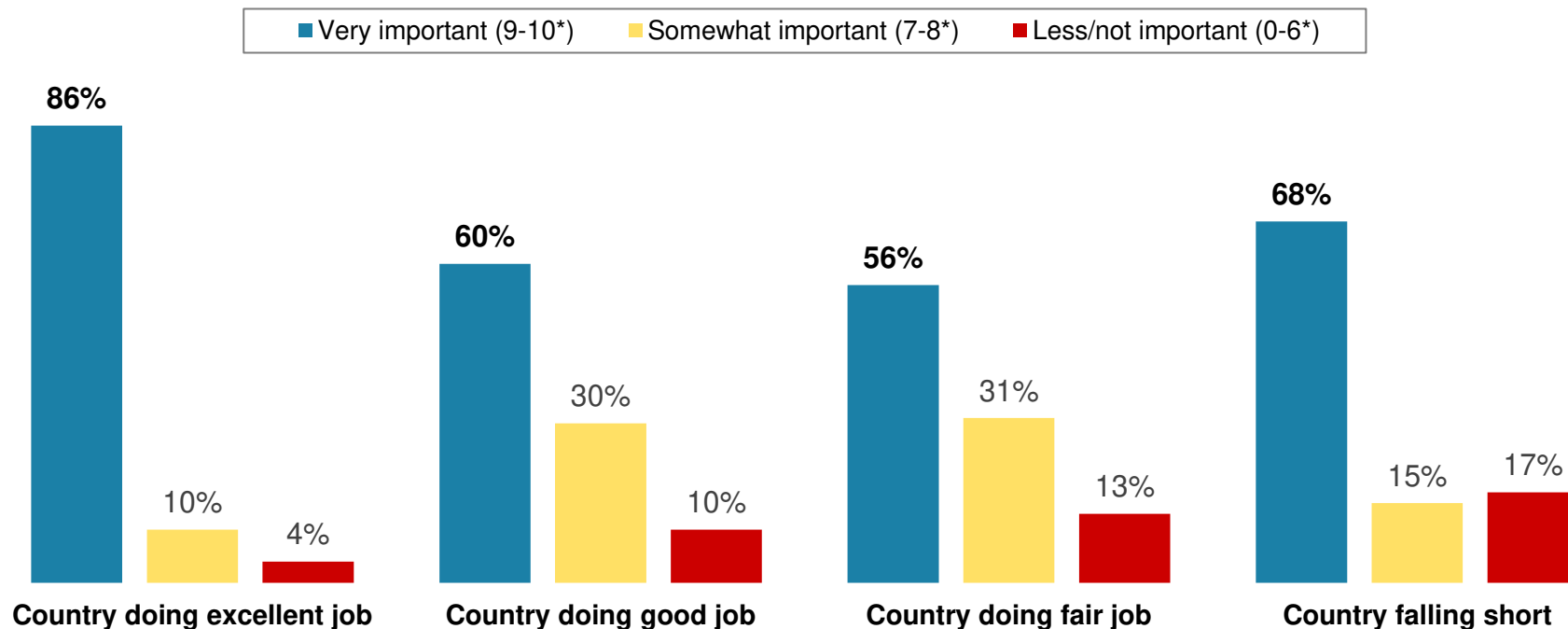
Proportions Rating It VERY IMPORTANT to Enact Policies/Programs for PN-3 Children/Parents*

All policy elites	62%	Income under \$40K	68%
Democrats	75%	Income \$40K to \$75K	64%
Independents	61%	Income \$75K to \$100K	59%
Republicans	52%	Income over \$100K	65%
Women	69%	Urban	70%
Men	58%	Suburban	64%
White	62%	Small town/rural	55%
Black	77%	Have kids under 18	71%
Hispanic	71%	No kids	60%
AAPI	67%		

*9-10 ratings on 0-to-10 scale

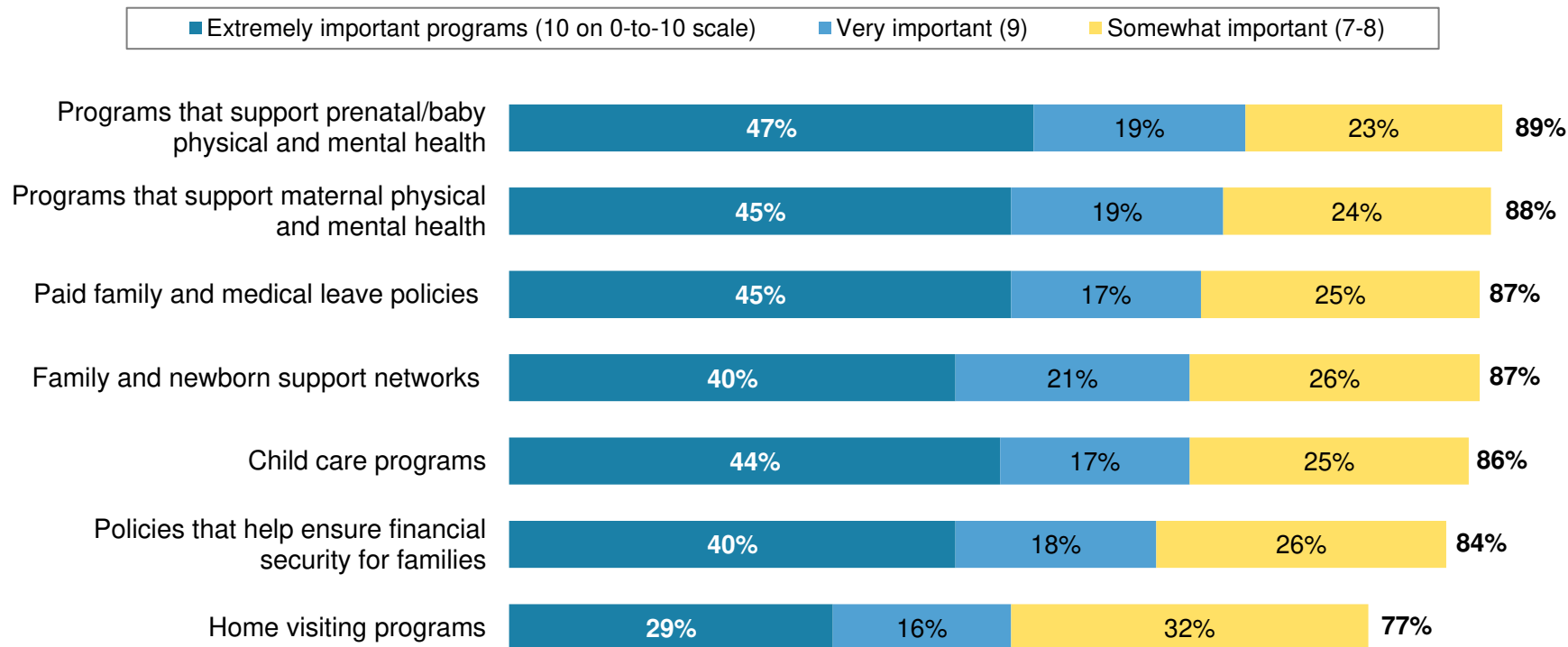
Counterintuitively, those who feel the country is doing best in supporting families provide the strongest endorsement of the PN-3 agenda.

Importance of Policies/Programs for PN-3 Children/Parents, by Evaluation of Country's Current Efforts



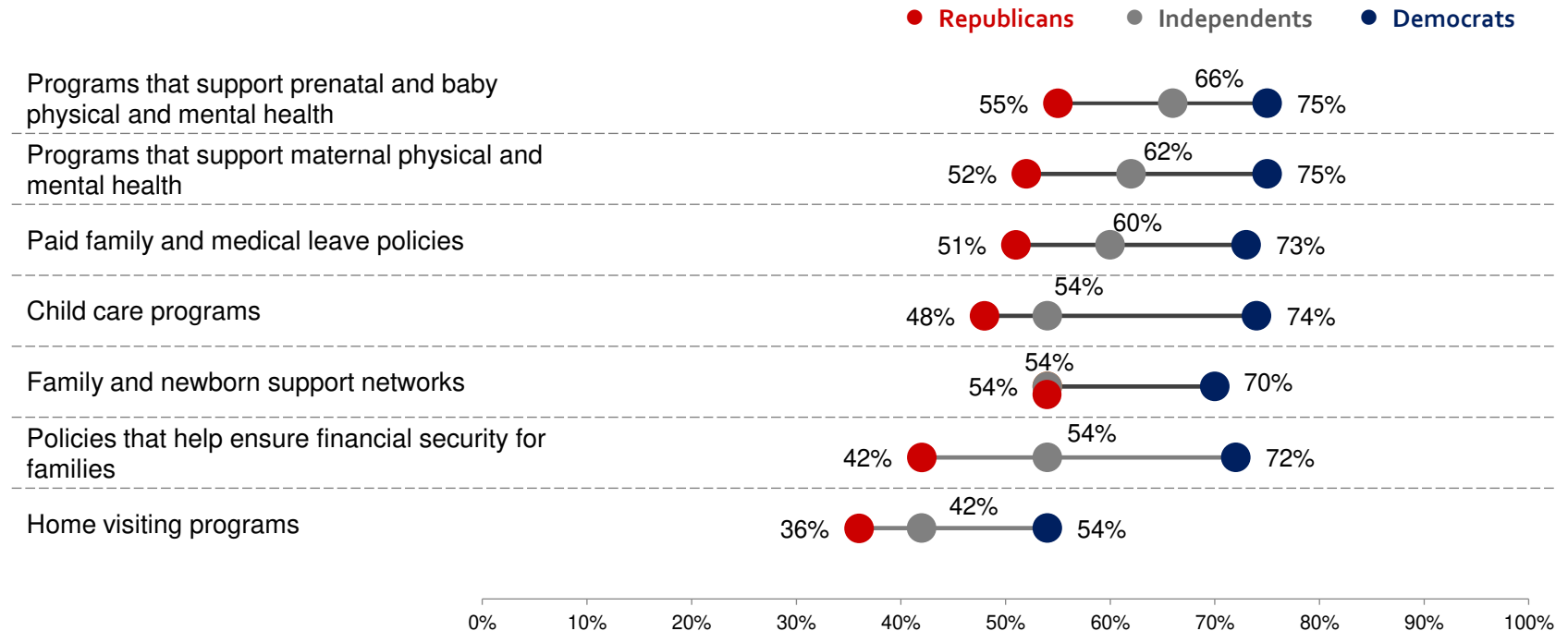
*Based on 0-to 10 ratings: 9-10 = very important, 7-8 = somewhat important, 0-6 = less/not important

Individual components of the PN-3 agenda are seen as highly important; home visiting is viewed as a lower priority.



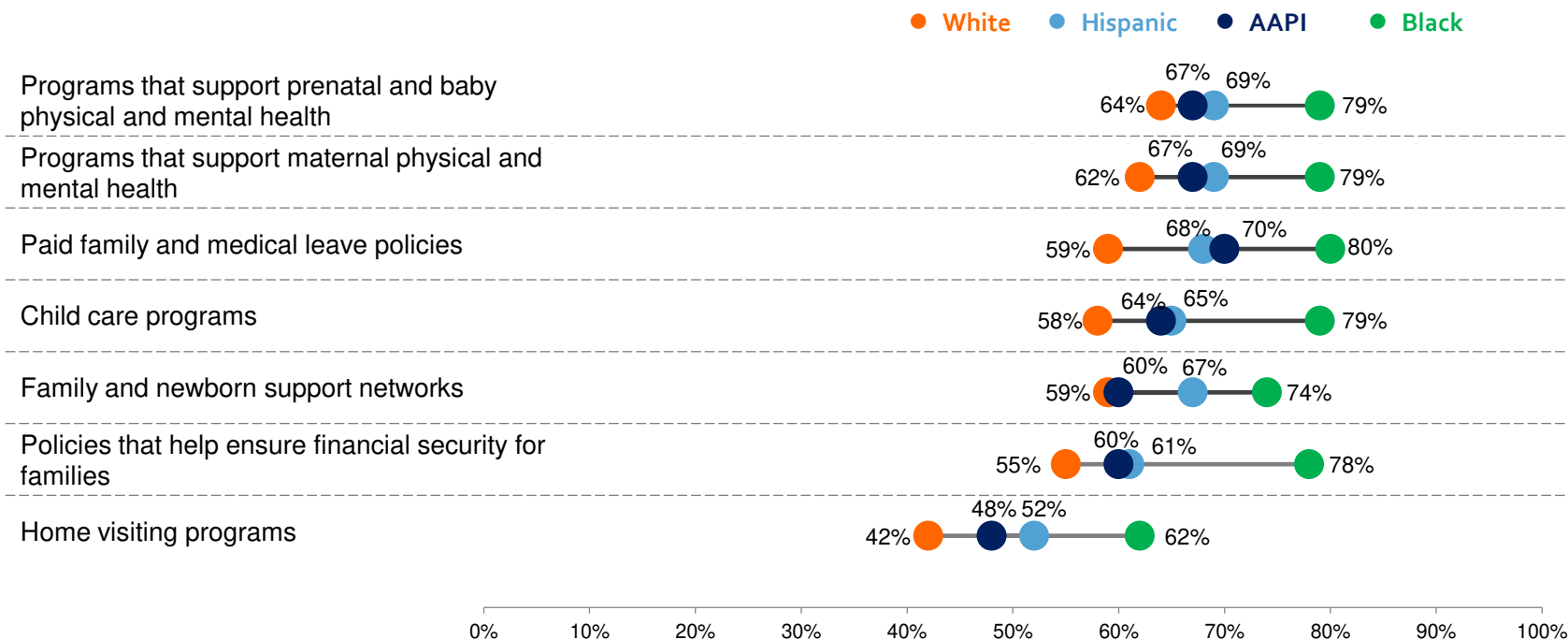
There are partisan gaps—especially on financial supports—though Republicans are generally quite supportive.

VERY IMPORTANT Program for PN-3 Children/Parents (9-10 on 0-to-10 scale)



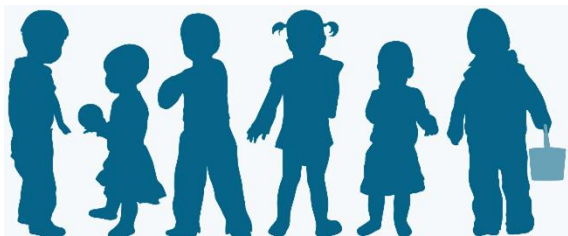
Black policy influencers are consistently the biggest endorsers of these policies.

VERY IMPORTANT Program for PN-3 Children/Parents (9-10 on 0-to-10 scale)



There are some noticeable differences within race/ethnicity groups.

- Black women and men, and younger and older Black influencers, are generally on par with each other in their high levels of support.
- Among Hispanic influencers, there are large gender gaps (women are much more supportive than men).
- Older (age 50 or older) AAPI influencers are substantially more supportive than younger AAPI influencers.
- Among white influencers, women and those under age 50 are more supportive than men and those age 50 or older.

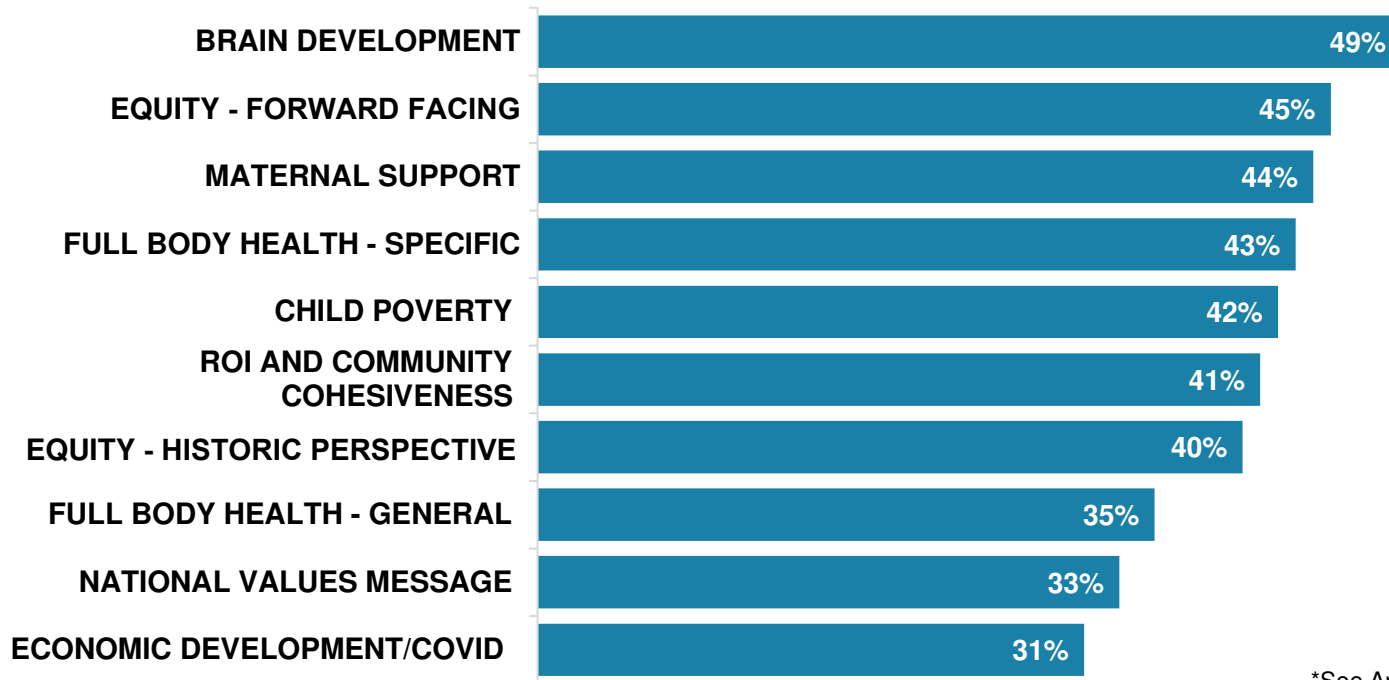


Messaging



We have several strong messages to work with, but brain development wins the day.

Most Convincing Arguments for Programs/Policies to Provide Resource to PN-3 Families/Children*



*See Appendix for full text of statements
Forced choice, three items selected

The tone of the equity frame should vary by audience.

<i>Proportions Selecting Each as a Top Three MOST CONVINCING Argument* for PN-3 Programs/Policies</i>	All Policy Influencers	White	Black	Hispanic	AAPI	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
EQUITY – FORWARD FACING. Every child deserves a strong start in life. By ensuring that all babies and toddlers have access to resources and services they need—regardless of where they live, their family’s income or education, their gender, or the color of their skin—we can strengthen our communities and live up to our promise as a nation. We must make investments to support families most in need so that all children can succeed in school and life.*	45%	45%	39%	48%	50%	50%	44%	39%
EQUITY – HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE. Every child deserves a strong start in life, but not every child starts from same place. A history of systemic racism has resulted in deep inequities simply because of where a child lives or the color of her skin. It can mean they begin life with fewer advantages than their peers and keep losing ground over time. That is not how our country is supposed to work. We must demand that our systems work for all kids and families with programs that support every mother and give every baby the same strong start.*	40%	37%	54%	46%	42%	48%	32%	35%

*Forced choice, three items selected

Order of top messages varies by group, but the same frames emerge repeatedly.

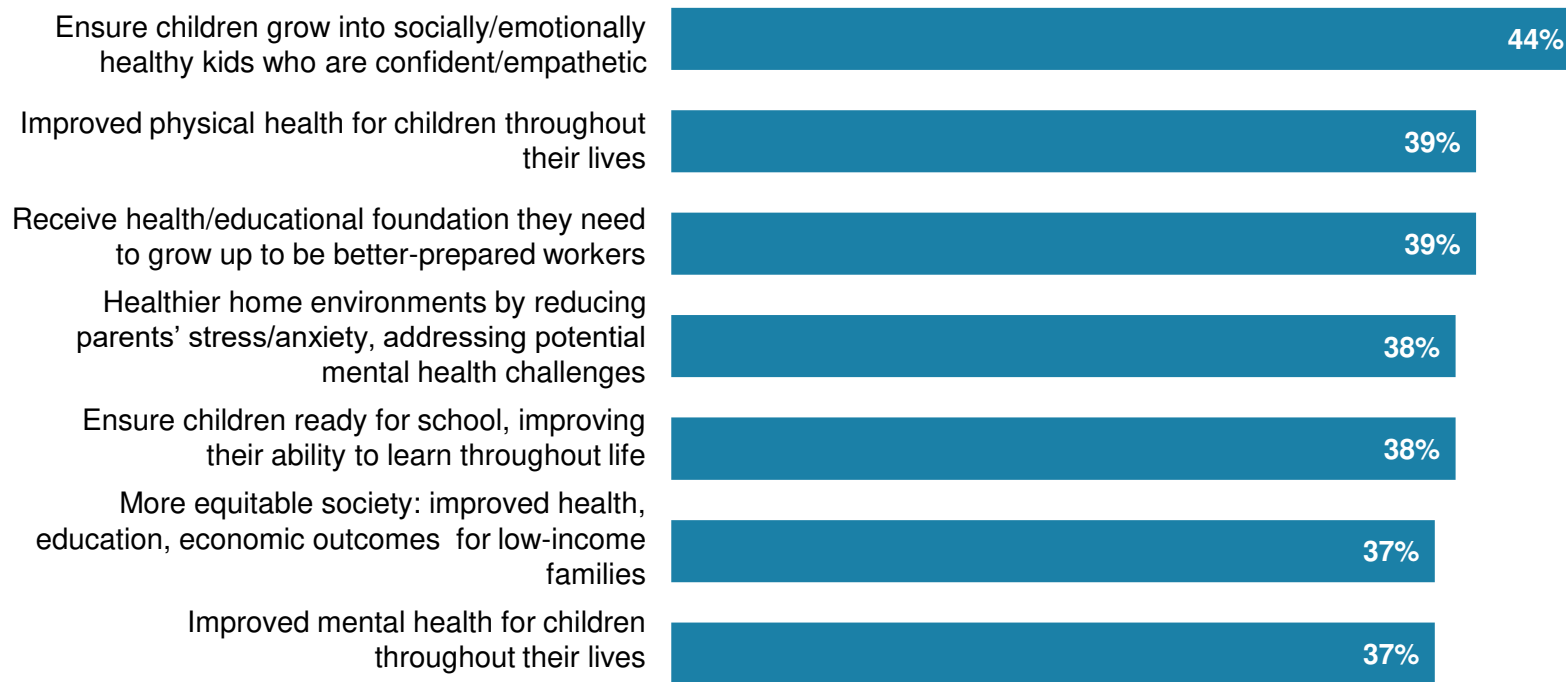
WHITE POLICY ELITES		BLACK POLICY ELITES		HISPANIC POLICY ELITES		AAPI POLICY ELITES	
BRAIN DEVELOPMENT	51%	EQUITY - HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE	54%	MATERNAL SUPPORT	50%	BRAIN DEVELOPMENT	54%
EQUITY - FORWARD FACING	45%	CHILD POVERTY	51%	EQUITY - FORWARD FACING	48%	CHILD POVERTY	52%
FULL BODY HEALTH SPECIFIC	44%	MATERNAL SUPPORT	49%	EQUITY - HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE	46%	EQUITY - FORWARD FACING	50%

REPUBLICANS		SMALL TOWN/RURAL		PN-3 AGENDA SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT (7-8)		PN-3 AGENDA LESS/NOT IMPORTANT (0-6)	
FULL BODY HEALTH SPECIFIC	54%	BRAIN DEVELOPMENT	51%	BRAIN DEVELOPMENT	55%	FULL BODY HEALTH (either)	47%
BRAIN DEVELOPMENT	52%	EQUITY - FORWARD FACING	45%	FULL BODY HEALTH SPECIFIC	51%	EQUITY - FORWARD FACING	40%
MATERNAL SUPPORT	44%	MATERNAL SUPPORT	43%	CHILD POVERTY	51%	BRAIN DEVELOPMENT	39%

*See Appendix for full text of statements

Policy influencers find a number of outcomes to be compelling.

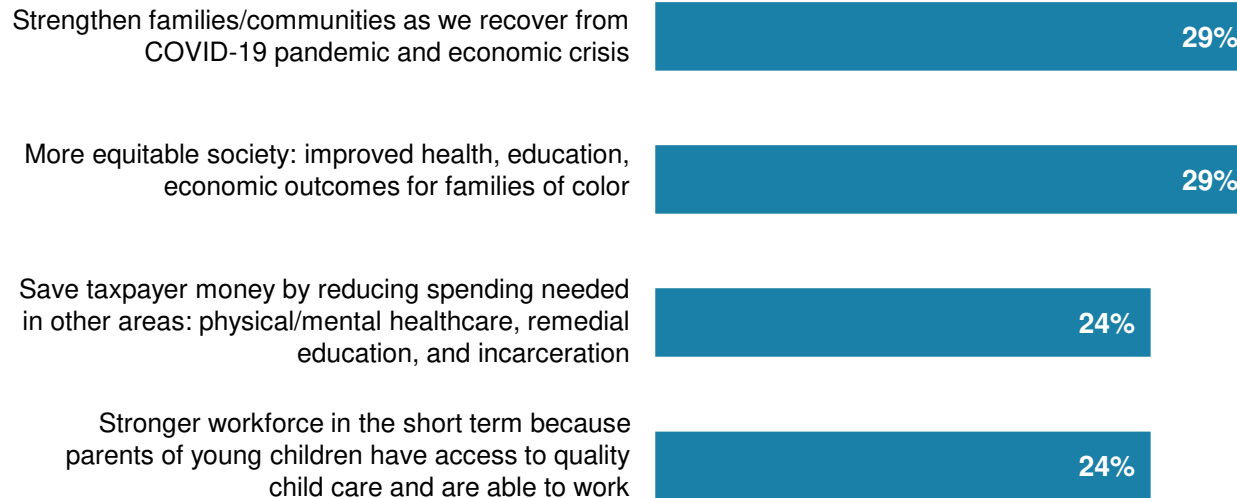
Most Important Outcomes of Programs/Policies that Provide Resource to PN-3 Families/Children*



*Forced choice, four items selected

Less Compelling Outcomes

Most Important Outcomes of Programs/Policies that Provide Resource to PN-3 Families/Children*



*Forced choice, four items selected

Top outcomes vary somewhat by group, but children developing confidence and empathy is a recurring theme.

WHITE POLICY ELITES		BLACK POLICY ELITES		HISPANIC POLICY ELITES		AAPI POLICY ELITES	
Kids' confidence/empathy	46%	More equitable for low-income families	51%	More equitable for low-income families	45%	Kids' confidence/empathy	44%
Kids' improved physical health	41%	More equitable for families of color	49%	Foundation to be better workers	40%	More equitable for low-income families	43%
Foundation to be better workers	39%	Kids' confidence/empathy	39%	Parents' reduced stress	40%	Parents' reduced stress	41%
Improved ability to learn	39%	Parents' reduced stress	39%	Kids' confidence/empathy	36%	Foundation to be better workers	39%
REPUBLICANS		SMALL TOWN/RURAL		PN-3 AGENDA SMWHT IMPORTANT (7-8)		PN-3 AGENDA LESS/ NOT IMPORTANT (0-6)	
Kids' confidence/empathy	48%	Kids' improved physical health	41%	Kids' improved physical health	45%	Kids' improved physical health	47%
Kids' improved physical health	44%	Kids' social/emotional health	40%	Kids' improved mental health	43%	Foundation to be better workers	40%
Improved ability to learn	44%	Parents' reduced stress	40%	Improved ability to learn	42%	Improved ability to learn	38%
Foundation to be better workers	41%	Kids' confidence/empathy	40%	Kids' confidence/empathy	41%	Kids' confidence/empathy	37%

Many proof points are persuasive, (again) brain science leads the way.

<i>Proportions Saying Each Is a VERY CONVINCING Argument for PN-3 Programs/Policies</i>	
52%	The early years are the most active period for establishing the neural connections that make up brain architecture, when more than one million new neural connections form every second.
50%	One in six children in the United States has a disability. Identifying those needs early and addressing them immediately reduces the likelihood of disabilities worsening, decreases the need for later services, and saves money.
44%	Programs that connect parents to nurses before and after birth result in a 48% reduction in child neglect and abuse, a 67% reduction in children's behavioral problems, and an 82% increase in mothers' employment.
44%	Research based on high-quality early childhood programs have found that for every \$1 invested in early care and education, there is a \$4 to \$9 return to society over the course of a child's life.
44%	Nearly 25% of all U.S. women start prenatal care late in pregnancy or do not receive the recommended number of prenatal visits. This number rises to 34% among African-American women and to 41% among American-Indian or Alaska Native women.
42%	Investing in home visiting programs can save in ER visits, child abuse and neglect, special education and grade repetition, and future juvenile delinquency and crime.
42%	Cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and depression —three of the most common and costly conditions that account for more than \$600 billion in healthcare expenditures in the United States annually— can be linked to adverse early childhood experiences.
41%	A major investment in child care and early learning would create an estimated 2.3 million new jobs, as well as provide opportunities for parents with low incomes to return to the workforce.
41%	Infants and toddlers in families with low incomes who received early intervention services are more likely to catch up to their peers without delays or disabilities, compared with children who were suspected of delay but did not receive services.
39%	American women die in childbirth at a higher rate than in any other developed country, and Black women are more than twice as likely to die due to complications from childbirth than White women in the United States.
37%	Economists suggest that a significant investment in child care would increase women's overall labor force participation enough to boost GDP by roughly \$210 billion.
37%	Even before the COVID-19 pandemic began, businesses lost about \$1,150 per working parent each year when parents don't have access to child care, from decreased productivity and extra hiring and training costs.
36%	Every dollar invested in programs that connect new parents to services and resources in their area saves \$3.02 in emergency health costs for the community.

Brain development and disability needs are consistently popular proof points.

WHITE POLICY ELITES		BLACK POLICY ELITES		HISPANIC POLICY ELITES		AAPI POLICY ELITES	
Neural connections	52%	High maternal death rates	67%	Neural connections	63%	Identify disability needs	50%
Identify disability needs	50%	Insufficient prenatal care	65%	Low-income kids catch up to peers	60%	High investment ROI	49%
High investment ROI	44%	New jobs/return to work	62%	Reduce neglect/behavior problems	58%	New jobs/return to work	48%
Insufficient prenatal care	43%	Prevent future health problems	59%	High maternal death rates	54%	Reduce neglect/behavior problems	45%
REPUBLICANS		SMALL TOWN/RURAL		PN-3 AGENDA SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT (7-8)		PN-3 AGENDA LESS/NOT IMPORTANT (0-6)	
Neural connections	47%	Identify disability needs	48%	Neural connections	36%	Neural connections	29%
Identify disability needs	39%	Neural connections	46%	High investment ROI	34%	Reduce community emergency health costs	17%
Reduce neglect/behavior problems	33%	Reduce neglect/behavior problems	41%	Identify disability needs	31%	Home visits reduce ER visits/abuse	15%
Lost business revenue	32%	Home visits reduce ER visits/abuse	40%	Reduce neglect/behavior problems	30%	Lost business revenue	15%

Two complementary messages are especially motivating for making the urgency case: kids are essential and they're falling behind.

Proportions Saying Each Is a VERY CONVINCING Argument for Making PN-3 Programs/Policies a TOP PRIORITY

58%
Democrats
66% PN-3
10 rating

46%

KIDS ARE ESSENTIAL. Kids are essential. The start we give them creates our future. We cannot expect a healthier, more resilient, more prosperous country if we don't invest in our future. Our country is at its best when we recognize that children, particularly our youngest, are our greatest resource. Infants and toddlers must be our highest priority and they need our investment now—because they only get one chance at a strong start. This is our chance to make a powerful commitment to our youngest generation.

59%
Democrats
66% PN-3
10 rating

46%

COVID/FALLING BEHIND. During the first three years of life, the brains and bodies of infants and toddlers make huge gains in development. And their needs are not put on pause when the world goes into lockdown. Because of COVID-19, countless infants and toddlers have fallen behind due to isolation, economic hardships and family stress—but it's not too late to fix that. We must act now to ensure that families have the support they need in their children's earliest years to recover and build a strong foundation for a healthy future.

40%

COVID/OPTIMISTIC. This last year has shown we are capable of doing big things to tackle serious problems. We've known for a long time that the earliest years in a child's life are critical, and that many families of young children need more support. Now is the time to step up to this challenge and ensure that families are getting the support and resources they need to give their young children a strong foundation. Recovery is not enough. We must also rethink how we support families in this country and rebuild in a way to finally provide what infants and toddlers need.

39%

JUSTICE/TURNING POINT. The pandemic has exacerbated centuries of glaring structural racial disparities throughout our society. America is at a pivotal moment, as we acknowledge the racial, social, and economic inequality that has historically fallen hardest on people of color and families with low incomes. If we're serious about doing better, now is the time to prioritize addressing the root issues that have led to persistent inequities so that all children can build the foundation they need to meet their full potential. Our future doesn't depend on some kids. It depends on all kids.

38%

ECONOMIC RECOVERY. As we take bold steps to recover, we need to ensure that parents of infants and toddlers are not left behind. Parents with young children want to get back to work and want to do what is best for their children. They can do both if we enact policies that provide parents with the support they need to remain contributing members of the workforce while caring for their children and giving them a solid foundation from which to grow and thrive.

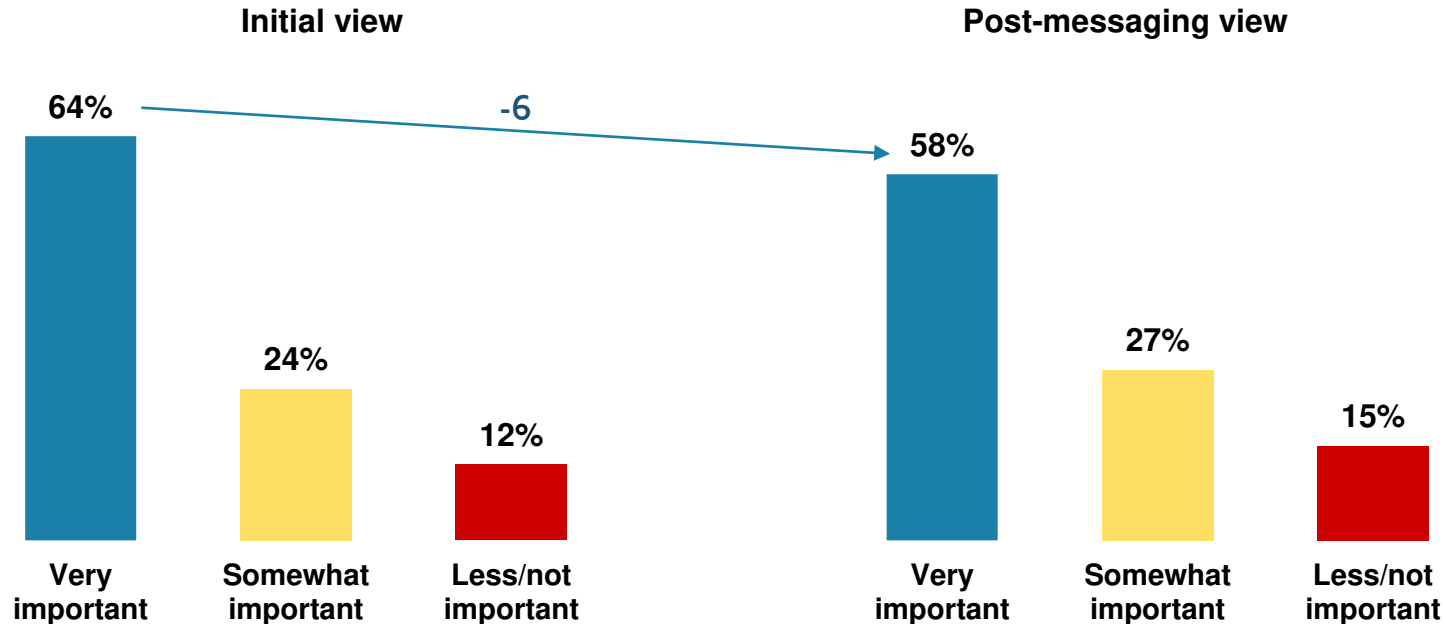
Opposition messages are less compelling on the whole, but a few have some currency with some groups.

Proportions Saying Each Is a VERY CONVINCING Argument for NOT Making PN-3 Programs/Policies a TOP PRIORITY

PARENT SHOULD STAY HOME	There is no question that very young children have many needs, but their biggest need is to have a parent present with them. Children's health, learning, development, and values are all strengthened when a parent is with them as much as possible in the early years. We should not have policies that encourage a culture of both parents working all the time and leaving the raising of their children to others.	38%	Black women 47% White men 46% Republicans 44% Sm town/rural 44% Non-liberal Dems 44% Hispanic women 41%
PARENT RESPONSIBILITY	These programs and policies shift responsibility for raising children from parents to the government and taxpayers. Parents should consider whether they can afford to raise a child and give them what they need to grow up healthy and thrive, before deciding to have a child.	32%	Republicans 40%
PRIORITIES	Our country is currently in the midst of multiple enormous crises. The COVID-19 pandemic, lost jobs and a weak economy, and kids not able to get back to school, just to name a few. While infants, toddlers, and their families are important, these other challenges need to be our top priorities right now.	32%	Black men 44% Non-liberal Dems 43% Black women 38%
GOV'T NOT UP TO TASK	Government already has the responsibility for educating children in public schools, and in too many cases it is failing at that vital task. There is no reason to think it will do any better in providing quality care for babies and toddlers. Government needs to actually do the job it already has—to educate children—rather than taking on new responsibilities for even younger kids.	32%	Non-liberal Dems 43%
COST	Who is going to pay for these? Any one of these policies would be expensive on its own, and taken together they would cost tens of billions of dollars. The federal government has already spent almost \$2 trillion on pandemic relief, and state and local governments are currently facing massive budget deficits. Implementing these policies would make the budget situation much worse.	31%	Republicans 40%
GOV'T OVERREACH	Many of these policies are pure government overreach and would help create a “nanny state” in which government tells families how they should be raising their children. Bringing the government into homes, encouraging parents to put their kids in child care, requiring companies to give employees paid time off—these and the other policies are clear examples of government going too far.	27%	

We lose a little ground post messaging but remain in a strong position.

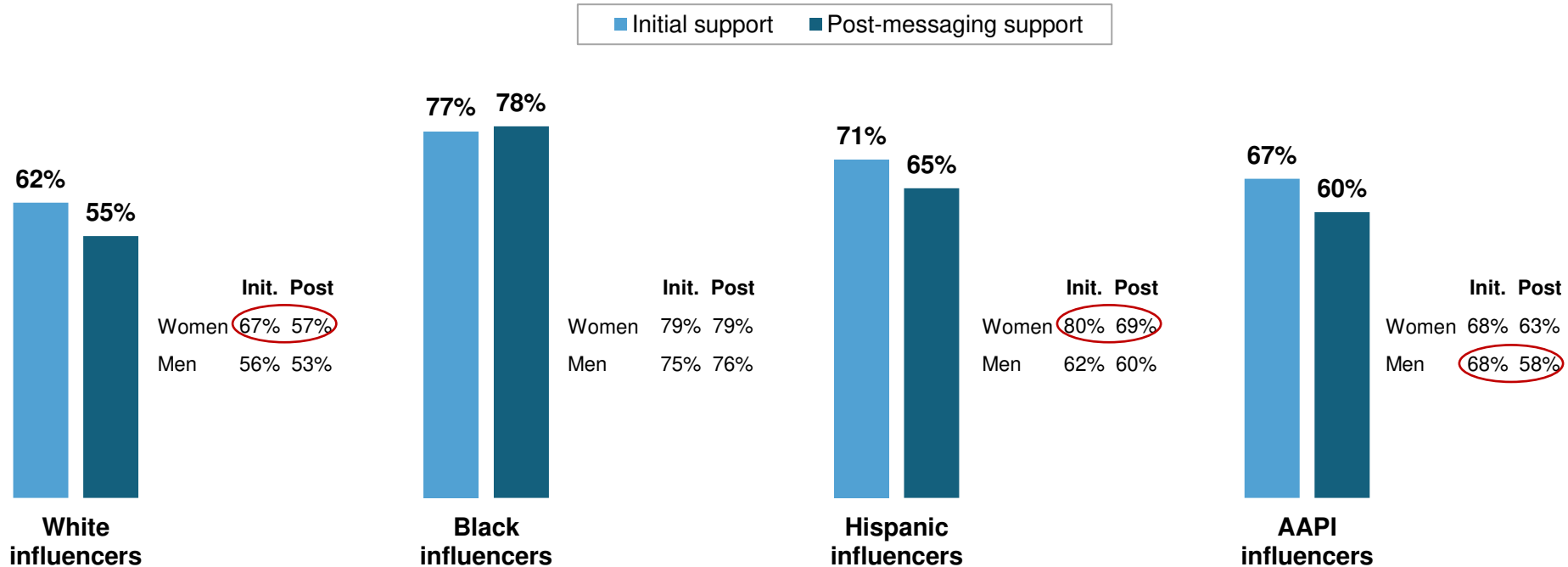
Importance of Enacting Policies/Programs to Provide Resources for PN-3 Children/Parents



(Based on 0-to 10 ratings: 9-10 = very important, 7-8 = somewhat important, 0-6 = less/not important)

Black influencers remain the strongest group, with no slippage in support.

Proportions Saying It Is VERY IMPORTANT to Enacting Policies/Programs for PN-3 Children/Parents



(Based on 0-to 10 ratings: 9-10 = very important, 7-8 = somewhat important, 0-6 = less/not important)

Appendix



Pro-PN-3 Agenda Messages

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT	Babies' brains develop fastest from before birth to age three. So, their relationships with caregivers and early experiences—both positive and negative—build the foundations of brain architecture, which supports their ability to learn, their behavior, and their overall health. That's why it's critical to support parents and babies early, so caregivers can prevent infants and toddlers from experiencing prolonged stress that can disrupt healthy development. Access to mental health resources, quality child care, and networks of community support are critical to set families on a path for success.
EQUITY – FORWARD FACING	Every child deserves a strong start in life. By ensuring that all babies and toddlers have access to resources and services they need—regardless of where they live, their family's income or education, their gender, or the color of their skin—we can strengthen our communities and live up to our promise as a nation. We must make investments to support families most in need so that all children can succeed in school and life. <i>(asked of half sample)</i>
MATERNAL SUPPORT	A healthy baby starts with a healthy mom. But our country is failing when it comes to maternal health. More women in the United States die in childbirth than in any other developed country, and Black women are more than twice as likely to die as White women. We must do better. All mothers need access to care during and after pregnancy, and they need access to the regular well-child visits, screenings, and mental healthcare that give their babies the best start in life.
CHILD POVERTY	Kids only get one chance at a strong start. For too many, poverty stands in the way of healthy development. Housing instability, food insecurity, and overall stress can lead to long-term physical and mental health problems for the more than 40% of infants and toddlers in the United States who live below poverty or with low incomes. By investing in programs that support mothers during and after pregnancy, connect families to a community of care, and build economic security, we can lay the foundation for a healthy childhood and future success for these families. <i>(asked of half sample)</i>
FULL BODY HEALTH – SPECIFIC	Positive experiences early in children's lives promote healthy physical development throughout the body, including the brain, the heart and lungs, the systems that turn food into energy, and the immune system. Negative experiences early in life can lead to long-term health problems such as high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and mental health challenges. By investing in programs that support families with infants and toddlers, we can give more children a healthy foundation for life. <i>(asked of half sample)</i>

Pro-PN-3 Agenda Messages (*continued*)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/ COVID	The COVID-19 pandemic has hit families with infants and toddlers particularly hard. All the pressures that come with being a parent—healthcare, finding quality child care, getting time off of work, emotional stress—have been made even worse and shown just how important supports for parents and newborns are. Now we have the chance to help families recover from the pandemic stronger than before by putting families at the center of our efforts. Policies that give parents access to care and support early in a child’s life pay life-long dividends because healthy growth and development up to age three is so crucial for future success. (<i>asked of half sample</i>)
NATIONAL VALUES MESSAGE	It is time to ask ourselves what kind of country we want to be. Are we satisfied with so many infants and toddlers being raised in poverty? Are we okay with new parents not having the basic necessities—healthcare, child care, mental health services, paid family leave—to raise the next generation of Americans? Studies have shown time and again that we can make a truly positive difference in the lives of young children and that doing so will make our country stronger over the long term.
FULL BODY HEALTH- GENERAL	Positive experiences early in children’s lives promote healthy physical development throughout the body. Negative experiences early in life can lead to long-term health problems such as high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and mental health challenges. By investing in programs that support families with infants and toddlers, we can give more children a healthy foundation for life. (<i>asked of half sample</i>)
EQUITY – HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE	Every child deserves a strong start in life, but not every child starts from same place. A history of systemic racism has resulted in deep inequities simply because of where a child lives or the color of her skin. It can mean they begin life with fewer advantages than their peers and keep losing ground over time. That is not how our country is supposed to work. We must demand that our systems work for all kids and families with programs that support every mother and give every baby the same strong start. (<i>asked of half sample</i>)
ROI AND COMMUNITY COHESIVENESS	Strong communities start with strong families. Investing in young children’s health and care pays off for all of us. Babies grow up healthier. Parents have more opportunity to work. Communities are more connected, and our economy gets stronger. In fact, for every dollar we spend on high-quality programs that support young children from birth, we see a 13% annual return in economic benefits, in areas such as reduced healthcare costs and less crime. Investing in families is an investment in our communities and our future.

Urgency Messages

KIDS ARE ESSENTIAL	Kids are essential. The start we give them creates our future. We cannot expect a healthier, more resilient, more prosperous country if we don't invest in our future. Our country is at its best when we recognize that children, particularly our youngest, are our greatest resource. Infants and toddlers must be our highest priority and they need our investment now—because they only get one chance at a strong start. This is our chance to make a powerful commitment to our youngest generation.
COVID/ FALLING BEHIND	During the first three years of life, the brains and bodies of infants and toddlers make huge gains in development. And their needs are not put on pause when the world goes into lockdown. Because of COVID-19, countless infants and toddlers have fallen behind due to isolation, economic hardships and family stress—but it's not too late to fix that. We must act now to ensure that families have the support they need in their children's' earliest years to recover and build a strong foundation for a healthy future. <i>(asked of half sample)</i>
COVID/ OPTIMISTIC	This last year has shown we are capable of doing big things to tackle serious problems. We've known for a long time that the earliest years in a child's life are critical, and that many families of young children need more support. Now is the time to step up to this challenge and ensure that families are getting the support and resources they need to give their young children a strong foundation. Recovery is not enough. We must also rethink how we support families in this country and rebuild in a way to finally provide what infants and toddlers need. <i>(asked of half sample)</i>
JUSTICE/ TURNING POINT	The pandemic has exacerbated centuries of glaring structural racial disparities throughout our society. America is at a pivotal moment, as we acknowledge the racial, social, and economic inequality that has historically fallen hardest on people of color and families with low incomes. If we're serious about doing better, now is the time to prioritize addressing the root issues that have led to persistent inequities so that all children can build the foundation they need to meet their full potential. Our future doesn't depend on some kids. It depends on all kids.
ECONOMIC RECOVERY	As we take bold steps to recover, we need to ensure that parents of infants and toddlers are not left behind. Parents with young children want to get back to work and want to do what is best for their children. They can do both if we enact policies that provide parents with the support they need to remain contributing members of the workforce while caring for their children and giving them a solid foundation from which to grow and thrive.

Opposition Messages

PARENT SHOULD STAY HOME	There is no question that very young children have many needs, but their biggest need is to have a parent present with them. Children's health, learning, development, and values are all strengthened when a parent is with them as much as possible in the early years. We should not have policies that encourage a culture of both parents working all the time and leaving the raising of their children to others. . <i>(asked of half sample)</i>
PARENT RESPONSIBILITY	These programs and policies shift responsibility for raising children from parents to the government and taxpayers. Parents should consider whether they can afford to raise a child and give them what they need to grow up healthy and thrive, before deciding to have a child.
PRIORITIES	Our country is currently in the midst of multiple enormous crises. The COVID-19 pandemic, lost jobs and a weak economy, and kids not able to get back to school, just to name a few. While infants, toddlers, and their families are important, these other challenges need to be our top priorities right now.
GOVERNMENT NOT UP TO TASK	Government already has the responsibility for educating children in public schools, and in too many cases it is failing at that vital task. There is no reason to think it will do any better in providing quality care for babies and toddlers. Government needs to actually do the job it already has—to educate children—rather than taking on new responsibilities for even younger kids. <i>(asked of half sample)</i>
COST	Who is going to pay for these? Any one of these policies would be expensive on its own, and taken together they would cost tens of billions of dollars. The federal government has already spent almost \$2 trillion on pandemic relief, and state and local governments are currently facing massive budget deficits. Implementing these policies would make the budget situation much worse.
GOVERNMENT OVERREACH	Many of these policies are pure government overreach and would help create a “nanny state” in which government tells families how they should be raising their children. Bringing the government into homes, encouraging parents to put their kids in child care, requiring companies to give employees paid time off—these and the other policies are clear examples of government going too far.

Top Messages by Region

NORTHEAST		SOUTH	
CHILD POVERTY	49%	BRAIN DEVELOPMENT	48%
BRAIN DEVELOPMENT	48%	EQUITY - FORWARD FACING	47%
EQUITY - FORWARD FACING	43%	EQUITY - HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE	46%
MIDWEST		WEST	
BRAIN DEVELOPMENT	51%	FULL BODY HEALTH	50%
ROI/COMMUNITY COHESIVENESS	45%	BRAIN DEVELOPMENT	49%
MATERNAL SUPPORT	44%	EQUITY - FORWARD FACING	47%

*See Appendix for full text of statements

Top Outcomes by Region

NORTHEAST		SOUTH	
Kids' confidence/empathy	49%	Kids' improved physical health	43%
Foundation to be better workers	42%	Kids' confidence/empathy	42%
More equitable for low-income families	41%	Improved ability to learn	40%
Parents' reduced stress	37%	Healthier home environment	38%
MIDWEST		WEST	
Kids' confidence/empathy	42%	Kids' confidence/empathy	44%
Improved ability to learn	41%	More equitable for low-income families	40%
Kids' improved physical health	40%	Parents' reduced stress	39%
Foundation to be better workers	40%	Kids' improved physical health	37%

Top Proof Points by Region

NORTHEAST		SOUTH	
Identify disability needs	56%	Identify disability needs	51%
Neural connections	54%	Neural connections	49%
Insufficient prenatal care	51%	Reduce neglect/behavior problems	46%
High investment ROI	50%	Insufficient prenatal care	45%
MIDWEST		WEST	
Neural connections	52%	Neural connections	56%
Identify disability needs	48%	Reduce neglect/behavior problems	48%
High investment ROI	43%	Low-income kids catch up	48%
New jobs/return to work	43%	Identify disability needs	46%
		Insufficient prenatal care	46%

Other Groups with Larger Drops in Support

Proportions Saying It Is VERY IMPORTANT to Enacting Policies/Programs for PN-3 Children/Parents

	Initial support	Post-messaging support	Drop in support
Women age 18 to 49	75%	64%	-11
Women college grads	72%	61%	-11
Conservative Republicans	50%	41%	-9
Suburban residents	64%	57%	-7
Small town/rural residents	55%	48%	-7
Age 65/older	57%	50%	-7

(Based on 0-to 10 ratings: 9-10 = very important, 7-8 = somewhat important, 0-6 = less/not important)