



**Youth Development and Research Fund, Inc.**

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# **Perceptions of Out-of-School Youth: Findings from a National Poll**

Youth Development and Research  
Fund  
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## *Focus Group and SURVEY METHODOLOGY*

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The Youth Development and Research Fund (YDRF) conducted a series of four focus groups with the public to develop an appropriate framework for the construction of this survey. Focus groups were facilitated by YDRF staff at field houses with an average of ten to twelve participants. Focus groups included: Caucasian, college educated males in Baltimore, MD; Caucasian, college and non-college educated females in Baltimore, MD; college educated African-American males and females in Dallas, TX; and African-American non-college educated males and females in Los Angeles, CA. The findings of each focus group were transcribed, synthesized and constructed into guiding points that facilitated the development of the survey questions.

Lake Snell Perry & Associates designed and administered this survey, which was conducted by telephone using professional interviewers from November 26-28, 2001. The survey reached a total of 800 adults age 18 and older in the United States who indicated that they were registered to vote.

Telephone numbers for the survey were drawn from a random digit dial sample (RDD). The sample was stratified geographically by state based on the distribution of registered voters in each state. The data were weighted slightly by gender, age, education, race, and urban dwelling to more accurately reflect the distribution of registered voters in the United States.

In interpreting survey results, all sample surveys are subject to possible sampling error; that is, the results of a survey may differ from those which would be obtained if the entire population were interviewed. The size of the sampling error depends upon both the total number of respondents in the survey and the percentage distribution of responses to a particular question. For example, in Question 8, which all respondents answered, 53% said that they thought parents are the most responsible for young people failing to complete high school; we can therefore be 95% confident that the true percentage will fall within 3.5% of this percentage, or between 56.5% and 49.5%. The table below represents the estimated sampling error for different percentage distributions of responses. The margin of sampling error for subgroups is greater than the margin of error for the entire sample.

Sampling Error by Percentage  
(at 95 in 100 confidence level)

	<b>PERCENTAGES NEAR</b>								
<b><u>SAMPLE SIZE</u></b>	<b><u>10</u></b>	<b><u>20</u></b>	<b><u>30</u></b>	<b><u>40</u></b>	<b><u>50</u></b>	<b><u>60</u></b>	<b><u>70</u></b>	<b><u>80</u></b>	<b><u>90</u></b>
<b>800</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>2.1</b>
700	2.2	3.0	3.4	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.4	3.0	2.2
600	2.4	3.2	3.7	3.9	4.0	3.9	3.7	3.2	2.4
500	2.6	3.5	4.0	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.0	3.5	2.6
400	2.9	3.9	4.5	4.8	4.9	4.8	4.5	3.9	2.9
200	4.2	5.5	6.4	6.8	6.9	6.8	6.4	5.5	4.2
100	5.9	7.8	9.0	9.6	9.8	9.6	9.0	7.8	5.9

## *STRATEGIC SUMMARY*

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### *Overview*

The intent of this research is to discover the most direct means to bring the plight of out-of-school youth to the forefront of the public's consciousness. While education issues have been paramount for sometime, recent events have forced them to share the top spot on the nation's priority list with domestic security and economic issues. Nevertheless, education issues will continue to be a mainstay of social and political debate into the foreseeable future.

Unfortunately, the debate will be taking place at a time when most states are facing budget crises and education cuts will be made. The electorate will need to prioritize their education concerns because myriad problems will be vying for scarce education dollars. A primary task for this campaign will be to convince voters that out-of-school youth need some of the limited education dollars.

The key to success for this advocacy campaign is three-fold: First the campaign must make the public aware of the magnitude of the problem. It must convince voters the problem is widespread and effects even youth in their own community. Second, the campaign must convince voters that programs already in place are not always academically adequate, or sufficiently available to address the needs of this population. However, it will not be easy getting past voters' initial impression that these programs are doing a good job and the campaign will have to overcome the perception that they are of high academic quality and readily available to all that need them. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, this campaign will have to convince voters they have a stake in the outcome. While many voters will sympathize with the plight of this population and wish that something more could be done, the reality of limited resources can render those sentiments moot.

Finally, as the campaign gets underway it must remind itself that justification for the public to turn its collective back on this group is always close at hand. As

Americans, an integral part of the psyche screams personal responsibility at every turn. Any debate on this issue, which allows voters to perceive this population as having made a choice, runs the risk of failure no matter how altruistic its goal. Again, while the public might feel sympathy for the outcome, the notion of choice diminishes many arguments the campaign may pose. — Highlighting the kids who are left behind, learning disabled, or even someone on their street who had a bad school experience puts a different face on this and shows it is not always the student's "choice" to leave school.

### ***Key Findings***

There are myriad concerns all vying to be labeled the biggest problem facing education today. For most demographic groups, lack of funding and parental involvement rise to the top of this list. Currently, high dropout rates are not the concern for many and is not on their radar screen. Voters in the West North Central region, college educated women, and parents of children age 7-12 are especially tilted toward the lack of funding. Seniors, a major voting contingent, place the lack of parental involvement and poor quality teachers equally at the top of their list. In addition, while high dropout rates ranks much lower on this diffuse list overall, it ranks among the top choices for voters under 30 years old.

Notwithstanding the low ranking high-drop out rates receive, when voters are specifically asked about the issue they categorize out-of-school youth as a very big problem. However, less than one-third of voters demonstrate any intense personal concern on this issue. Voters readily accept that the problem is widespread nationally, and although slightly less convinced about the magnitude of the problem in their own backyard, a significant majority recognize their community is not immune.

The reasons voters attribute to the problem are numerous but can be divided into four separate camps. The first and most populous is the "cultural camp" this camp represents voters who believe students left school as a result of an atmosphere that

promotes a lax attitude about education's importance and the necessity for these students to make the grade. The next most populous camp is the "bad hand camp" this category is free from voters negative judgment, and represents voters who believe students didn't choose to fail, they were given a raw deal in terms of bad schools, bad communities, bad parents and bad luck. Voters believe that students in the "can't cut it camp" lack discipline and motivation, while they may be academically poor, voters are not as quick to shower them with sympathy. There is a sense that if they were only working harder they could make the grade. Lastly, there is the "risky behavior camp," voters reserve their harshest judgment for this group containing those who leave school because they've spent too much time engaged in risky adult behavior and too little time focused on obtaining their diploma.

In spite the of the reasons voters may assign to young people leaving school, they are very clear that parents must shoulder the lion share of responsibility for this failure, followed by the students themselves. Few are willing to place the blame on institutional players and despite anecdotal evidence to the contrary, these voters are reluctant to blame public schools and administrators.

Voters have a very favorable impression of programs earmarked to serve the educational and training needs of this population. Although voters may not possess concrete knowledge about the programs, half believe they do. And for the most part voters perceive them to be functioning well and serving all those in need. It may prove to be a difficult task to convince the public that the programs in place are inadequate at best and at worst provide substandard educational experience.

Interestingly, while, voters laud the efforts of programs serving the educational and training needs of this population, at the same time they believe that economic hardship is the most likely outcome of leaving school without first obtaining a diploma, followed by criminal activity. Few voters volunteer a positive outcome for this population.

Fortunately, some of the most shocking statistics generated by this issue are both worrisome and credible to voters. The facts that work best demonstrate the magnitude of the problem and the consequences facing youth. The best facts are two out of three male state prisoners are drop-outs and a half million students drop-out of school each year.

Nevertheless, tax liability make voters more circumspect. Despite their support on out-of-school issues and their concern on the effect it might have on themselves and their community, they are divided over increasing taxes to cover the cost of providing solutions.

Ultimately, most voters subscribe to the ideals put forth by this campaign. They do not need to be convinced about the fairness of out-school-youth proposals and feel that some sort of government entity should play a substantial role in solving the problem. However, voters recognize the limited resources available and promote a diffuse agenda for existing tax dollars.

When asked to choose between out-of-school youth desperately in need of assistance and allocating scarce resources to kids who stay in school, many voters say to take care of both populations, but when forced to choose voters come down on the side of the kids who stay in school with less than one-fifth of voters putting out-of-school youth as the priority.

Messages with the greatest resonance use the “bad hand” model of justification and shift the responsibility from young people toward the bad luck of poor communities, poor schools, and inadequate home environments. Messages where nature is a factor, as in the case of learning disabilities and mental illness, the bad hand justification also works well.

Other messages which intensely move a majority of voters, use the community stake justification and focus on the economic hardships faced by this population and the at

risk behaviors that often ensue. Producing the least intensity are messages placing the onus on the inadequacies of institutionalized education.

## CONTEXT

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*The key to a successful advocacy campaign is convincing the public that the plight of out-of-school youth should rank high among their list of education concerns.*

*The first critical step toward a successful campaign is convincing the public that high drop-out rates are a bigger problem than they already suspect.*

Nationwide, education has been at the top of American's list of priorities for some time. Although recent events have shifted the nation's focus toward security and economic issues, education remains a core value and as such continues to be an integral part of the political and social debate.

While the public is focusing on a myriad of problems facing public education, high drop-out rates is not currently high on their list. When asked specifically about problems facing education, voters believe that a lack of funding (24 percent), the lack of parental involvement (22 percent), poor quality teachers (18 percent) and a lack of discipline and values in the classroom (14 percent) are the biggest problems facing education today. To a lesser extent high drop-out rates (6 percent), over-crowded classrooms (6 percent), the inability to pass standardized graduation tests (3 percent), too much bureaucracy (2 percent) and outdated buildings, books and materials (all: 1 percent) complete the list of problems facing American education<sup>1</sup>. The first critical step toward a successful campaign is relaying to the public that high drop-out rates are a bigger problem than they suspect.

While lack of funding and parental involvement tend to be among the top concerns for most demographic groups, voters' age and education level can affect how these and other top concerns are ranked. For example, among voters under 30 years old, the lack of funding (21 percent) continues to be the top concern. However, poor quality teachers (17 percent) is nearly identical to the lack of parental involvement (16 percent). Furthermore, voters under 30 are the only demographic group, aside from homemakers, to rank high dropout rates (14 percent) among the top four concerns. Conversely, at the other end of the spectrum, seniors view the lack of parental involvement (26 percent) and poor quality teachers (26 percent) as equally

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<sup>1</sup> Exact question wording: Now I am going to read you a list of concerns that some people have surrounding education. Please tell me which one of these you see as the biggest problem facing education today:

responsible for public education's woes, followed by the lack of funding (14 percent) and discipline in the classroom (12 percent).

Interestingly, while voters' education level is a contributing factor determining what they see as the biggest problem facing education, it tends to be more of a factor among women than men. College women tend to focus on the lack of funding and are less critical of teachers, while college men see funding, parents and teachers equally contributing to the problems of education. Over one-third of college educated women (36 percent) believe the lack of funding is the principal problem, followed distantly by the lack of parent involvement (22 percent), lack of discipline in the classroom (15 percent) and poor quality teachers (9 percent). College educated men are more evenly dispersed between the lack of funding (24 percent), lack of parental involvement (23 percent), and poor quality teachers (22 percent).

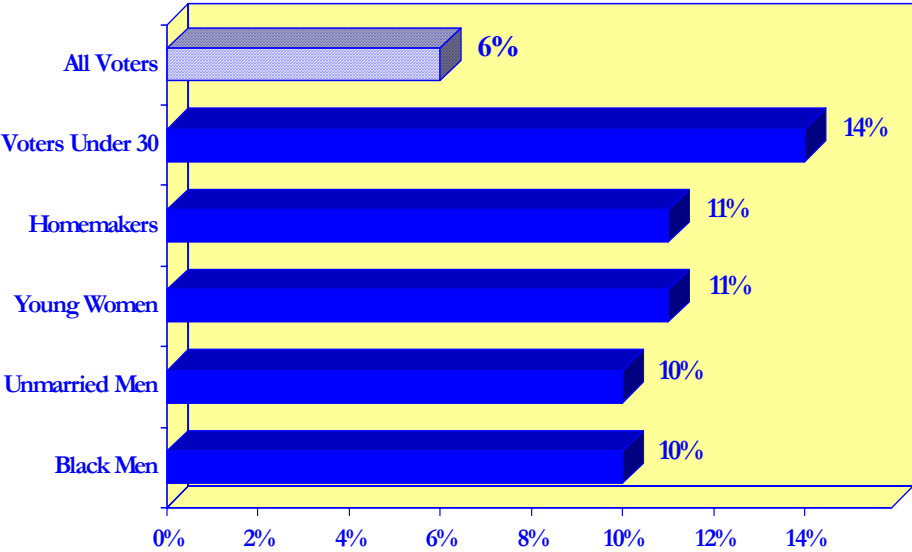
Ethnicity also drives some diversity among the rankings. White voters (20 percent) are almost twice as likely as African-Americans (11 percent) and Latinos (13 percent) to rank poor quality teachers as the biggest problem facing American education and African-Americans (18 percent) rank the lack of discipline and values in the classroom slightly higher than whites (14 percent) or Latinos (11 percent). While they all place lack of funding and parent involvement among their top concerns, Latinos are most likely to place lack of funding at the top (Latinos: 28 percent; whites: 23 percent; African-Americans: 22 percent). Lack of parental involvement ranks equally among the groups (whites: 23 percent; African-Americans: 22 percent; Latinos: 21 percent;).

Voters most likely to rank the lack of funding as the number one problem facing education today tend to live in the West North Central region (37 percent) are college educated women (36 percent), parents with children between the ages of 7 and 12 (36 percent), professionals (33 percent) parents with children between the ages of 13 and 18 (29 percent), Latinos (28 percent), Independent women (28 percent), and live in the West (28 percent).

Voters most likely to put lack of parental involvement at the head of the their list are white collar clerical workers (37 percent), voters in the East North Central region (33 percent), skilled blue collar workers (29 percent) and retired women (28 percent), and Republican men (26 percent).

The following chart illustrates demographic groups which have the largest proportion who rank high drop-out rates as the biggest problem facing education:

**Chart 1: Demographic groups with the highest proportion of voters who rank high drop-out rates as the biggest problem facing education today.**



Despite only six percent of voters overall ranking high-drop out rates as the biggest problem facing education, this by no means suggests that voters do not see this issue as a major problem. On the contrary, when voters are asked specifically about the size of the problem of young people leaving high school without a diploma – a strong majority think it is a very big problem (86 percent big problem, 57 percent very big)<sup>2</sup>.

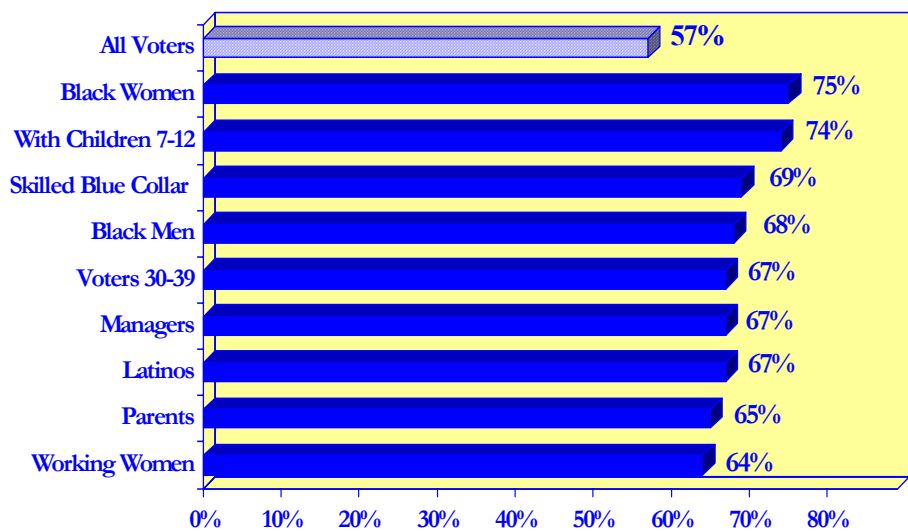
<sup>2</sup> Exact question wording: How big of a problem is young people leaving high school before they receive their diploma – a very big problem, somewhat of a problem, not that big of a problem, or no problem at all?

*A successful advocacy campaign is always a hard fought victory and it would be a mistake to become overly optimistic. Recognition of the problem is only one step in the process.*

The magnitude of the problem is recognized by voters regardless of gender (men: 58 percent very big; women: 55 percent very big), age (younger: 59 percent very; older: 53 percent very) or education (college: 59 percent very; non-college 56 percent very). Surprisingly, typical variations in perception often experienced across party lines is virtually non-existent (Dem: 59 percent very; Ind: 58 percent very; Rep: 59 percent very). Across racial lines voters also agree out-of-school youth is a very big problem, although there is a great deal more intensity among African-American and Latino voters (whites: 53 percent very; blacks: 71 percent very; Latinos: 67 percent very). In fact, with the exception of voters in the Northeast (49 percent), homemakers (48 percent) seniors (42 percent) and retired women (41 percent) a majority of all demographic groups say it is a very big problem.

The following chart illustrates the demographic groups with the highest proportion who say young people leaving school with out a diploma is a very big problem:

**Chart 2: Demographic groups with the highest proportion of voters who say young people leaving school without a diploma is a very big problem.**



Realistically, a successful advocacy campaign is always a hard fought victory, and while it is to this campaign’s advantage to have a majority of voters recognize young people leaving school without a diploma is a very big problem, it should also remember only 6 percent identify high-drop rates as the biggest problem facing

*The battleground now becomes convincing voters that the problem they see is something about which they should be personally concerned.*

*Translating the problem into a personal concern will be one of the challenges.*

*Working hand-in-hand with personal concern is the perception that this problem can affect the voters directly.*

education. It would be a mistake to become overly optimistic, as recognition of the problem is only one step in the process. The battleground now becomes convincing voters that the problem they see is something about which they should be personally concerned.

While they are willing to say young people not graduating is a big problem they are not as personally concerned about this problem. Six out of ten voters (63 percent extremely or very worried) say they are worried about out-of school youth,<sup>3</sup> however, less than one-third are extremely worried (29 percent extremely worried). To be successful voters must have enough personal concern about this issue to warrant active engagement. For example, even among voters who say that high school drop-out rates are the biggest problem facing education today, only half are personally worried about these youth (50 percent worried) and only a quarter are extremely worried (22 percent extremely). Nonetheless, as the campaign moves forward, intensity levels will be one of the key indicators by which persuasion efforts can be measured.

Currently, voters who are most likely to be worried about out-of-school youth tend to be African-American women (72 percent worried, 45 percent extremely), parents with kids age 7-12 (74 percent worried, 41 percent extremely), Latinos (71 percent worried, 37 percent extremely), Republican men (69 percent worried, 36 percent extremely) voters age 30-39 (72 percent worried, 36 percent extremely) and homemakers (60 percent worried, 35 percent extremely). — Many of whom were more likely to see out-of-school youth as a big problem.

Feeding into their perception that this is a big problem, voters readily accept that the problem of out-of-school is widespread. In fact, eight out of ten voters (80 percent a lot or many) believe many youth nationwide have left school without a diploma with

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<sup>3</sup> Exact question wording: How personally worried are you about young people who leave high school before they receive their diploma – extremely worried, very worried, somewhat worried, a little worried, or not worried at all?

nearly half (49 percent a lot) believing it's a lot of youth.<sup>4</sup> Across party lines, Independents (54 percent a lot) and Republicans (52 percent a lot) produce a majority who say there are a lot of out-of-school youth nationwide. To a slightly lesser degree Democrats (45 percent a lot) also believe that the problem is widespread.

*The real change in mindset takes place on the local level.*

The campaign's efforts to focus nationwide attention to the problem is understandable and voters believe the problem is widespread nationwide. However, the real change in mindset takes place on the local level. Voters often view a problem as nationwide but conclude they have no real stake in the outcome because they perceive the problem only exists in someone else's backyard. For this campaign the data shows this may not be the case. Although voters are slightly more optimistic about their own communities, nearly two-thirds (64 percent many, 31 percent a lot) believe that this problem affects a significant portion of their own local youth<sup>5</sup>. As the proportion of voters who believe a lot of youth are leaving school without a diploma in their own communities grows, so may their receptiveness to advocacy efforts.

*As the proportion of voters who believe a lot of youth are leaving school without a diploma in their own communities grows, so may their receptiveness to advocacy efforts.*

From the partisan perspective, Republicans (66 percent many, 35 percent a lot) appear more intensely aware of the problem in their own backyard than Independents ( 64 percent many, 27 percent a lot) and Democrats (63 percent many, 30 percent a lot). Gender and age are also key predictors of whether voters believe the problem of out-of-school youth is widespread in their community. Men are significantly more likely than women to say a lot of youth in their community have left school without diplomas (men: 69 percent many, 36 percent a lot; women: 59 percent many, 27 percent a lot). Likewise, younger voters, particularly those under 30, are more likely than their older counterparts to perceive the problem in their

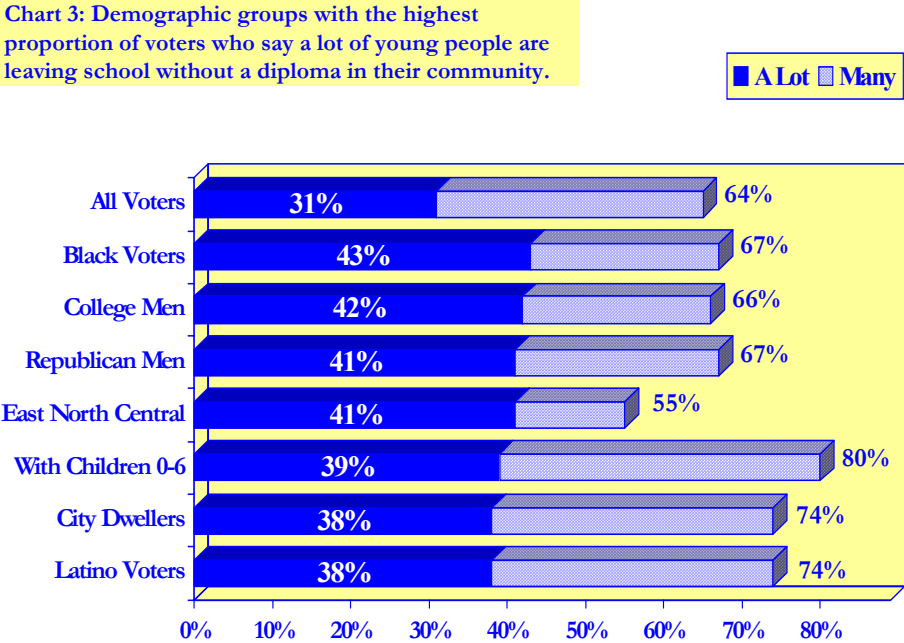
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<sup>4</sup> Exact question wording: Do you think there are a lot, many, a few or not that many young people in the nation who have left high school before receiving their diploma? This question asked of only half the sample.

<sup>5</sup> Exact question wording: Do you think there are a lot, many, a few or not that many young people in your community who have left high school before receiving their diploma? This question was asked of only half the sample.

community as widespread (younger voters: 71 percent many; 35 percent a lot; older voters: 58 percent many, 28 percent a lot).

The following chart highlights the demographic groups with the highest proportion of voters who believe out-of-school youth is a widespread problem in their community:



Voters suspect that there are a myriad of reasons why young people leave school before obtaining diplomas. Similarities between causalities allow for the division into four camps: The first camp consists of voters who feel students’ decision was influenced by cultural pressure, students who succumbed to peer pressure (18 percent), do not value education (12 percent) think school is no big deal (10 percent), just don’t like it (2 percent) or leave because they are unpopular (2 percent). Four out of ten voters attribute students leaving school without diplomas to the “cultural camp”.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Exact question wording: Why do you think some young people leave high school before receiving their diploma? Open-end question.

Secondly, there are voters who feel students leave school because of circumstances that are often beyond their control. The “bad hand” camp consists of students who have problems at home (17 percent), those with financial needs (6 percent) and those attending poor schools with poor quality teachers (6 percent). Nearly one third of voters subscribe to this point of view. Thirdly, there is the “can’t cut it” camp (12 percent of the electorate). This group is made up of voters who believe students lack discipline and motivation (9 percent) and are academically poor students (3 percent). And lastly, there are voters who believe students fail to graduate because they choose to engage in often risky adult behavior. The “risky behavior” camp (11 percent of the electorate) represents students who leave because they are involved with drugs and alcohol (5 percent), get pregnant (3 percent) or just want to be grown up (3 percent).

*Regardless of the reasons most young people leave school, the campaign needs to understand the motives assigned by voters.*

The campaign needs to understand the motives assigned by voters to young people leaving school, since these perceptions are a part of voters’ belief system. These values can also affect how receptive voters are to messages advocating for out-of-school youth.

*These perceptions are a part of voters’ belief system, these values can affect how receptive voters are to your advocacy efforts.*

While nearly every group assigns motives from the negatively charged cultural camp, college women lean toward the bad hand camp and Latinos and rural voters split between cultural and bad hand. When fashioning messages, understanding these core values can aid the campaign when trying to target specific audiences. The following table illustrates the differences between key demographic groups:

Demographic Group	Cultural Camp	Bad Hand Camp	Can’t Cut It Camp	Risky Business Camp
<b>All Voters</b>	44%	29%	12%	11%
<b>Men</b>	47%	26%	12%	9%
<b>Women</b>	41%	31%	12%	12%
<b>Working Women</b>	43%	31%	11%	12%
<b>Homemakers</b>	36%	36%	13%	11%
<b>Retired Women</b>	50%	22%	12%	14%

*Understanding these core values can aid the campaign considerably when trying to target specific audiences.*

Demographic Group	Cultural Camp	Bad Hand Camp	Can't Cut It Camp	Risky Business Camp
Younger Voters	45%	25%	14%	11%
Older Voters	43%	33%	9%	11%
College Men	49%	31%	9%	8%
College Women	39%	42%	13%	11%
Non-college Men	46%	24%	13%	10%
Non-college Women	42%	27%	11%	16%
Democrats	48%	26%	10%	12%
Independents	41%	27%	14%	14%
Republicans	40%	34%	13%	8%
White Voters	45%	27%	12%	12%
African-Americans	39%	31%	18%	10%
Latinos	40%	40%	8%	8%
White Men	50%	24%	10%	9%
White Women	40%	29%	12%	14%
Black Men	35%	33%	20%	10%
Black Women	44%	28%	16%	11%
Northeast	51%	23%	11%	10%
Midwest	39%	34%	10%	13%
South	42%	34%	10%	13%
West	47%	19%	17%	13%
City	49%	24%	12%	10%
Suburban	44%	30%	11%	12%
Rural	35%	36%	13%	13%

Not surprisingly, regardless of why young people choose to leave school, voters tend to feel that parents are most responsible for young people failing to graduate (76 percent combined 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> choice; 53 percent 1<sup>st</sup> choice)<sup>7</sup>. Followed distantly by students (50 percent combined, 18 percent 1<sup>st</sup> choice), teachers (36 percent combined, 14 percent 1<sup>st</sup> choice) public schools (16 percent combined, 7 percent 1<sup>st</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Exact question wording: Of the following groups, which one would you say is most responsible for young people failing to complete high school? Rotate list.

choice) and school administrators (10 percent combined, 3 percent 1st choice).<sup>8</sup> Notably, voters hold institutional players less accountable for out-of-school youth. Even adding up all of school elements does not equal the responsibility voters place on the parents (53 percent 1<sup>st</sup> choice parents; 43 percent 1<sup>st</sup> choice all others).

Initially, among all demographic groups, parents are the most responsible for youth failing to graduate. For most groups students are the next most responsible party. In fact, only college educated women, parents with children age 0-6 and 7-12, service employees and voters residing in the Pacific regions place a greater responsibility on teachers than students. Independent women hold teachers and students equally responsible.

*Messages focusing on institutional shortcomings without addressing voters' perception of ultimate culpability run the risk of being resisted and less effective overall.*

Demographic Group	Parents	Teachers	Students
With Children 7-12	49%	21%	13%
With Children 0-6	61%	17%	10%
Service Employees	45%	24%	17%
Pacific Region	49%	20%	16%
College Women	63%	13%	10%
West North Central Region	52%	14%	13%
Independent Women	60%	14%	14%

(Figures based on initial choice)

Messages that focus on institutional shortcomings but fail to address voters' perception of who is ultimately culpable run the risk of being resisted and less effective overall.

<sup>8</sup> Exact question wording: And who would you say is next most responsible?

## IMAGES AND PERCEPTIONS

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*The image of what happens to out-of-school youth is pretty cemented in the public's mind.*

The image of out-of-school youth is pretty cemented in the public's mind and voters make a fairly accurate assessment of what happens to these youth. Most see them as ending up as either economically challenged (50 percent), engaged in criminal activity (22 percent) or simply resigned to a poor quality of life (12 percent). Fewer than one in ten voters believe these youth will learn from the school of hard knocks and eventually make it (9 percent). Only four percent of the electorate does not offer an answer.<sup>9</sup>

Among all demographic groups the perception that these youth face economic hardship is the dominant assessment. Groups most likely to predict economic hardship for these youth are white collar managers (59 percent), white women (58 percent), voters age 40-49 (57 percent), older women (57 percent), working women (56 percent), retired women (56 percent), unmarried women (56 percent) and parents with children between 13-18 (56 percent). Regionally this perception is strongest among suburban voters (54 percent) and voters living in the Mid-Atlantic region (54 percent). Independent and African-American men are least likely to ascribe to this point of view (38 percent and 34 percent respectively).

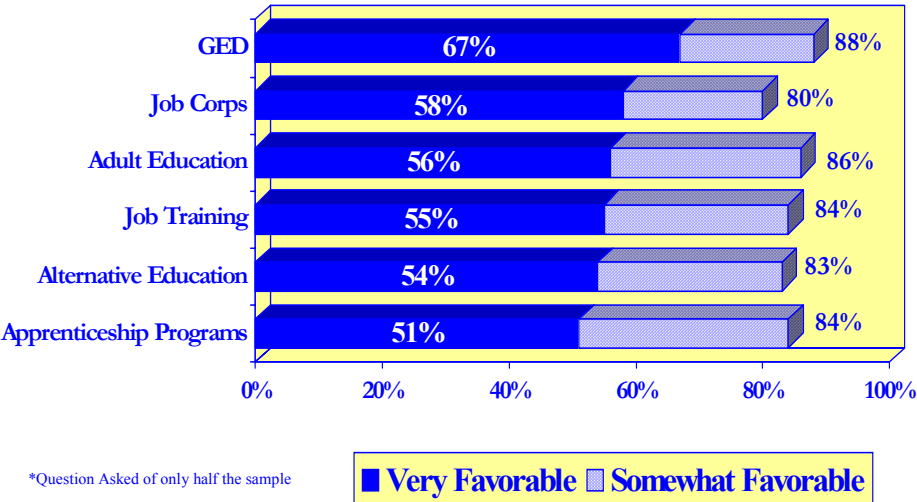
*These negative images represent voters' fears and concerns.*

The next most prevailing perception is criminal activity. Overall, one fifth of voters believe these youth join gangs, use drugs, commit crimes and ultimately end up in jail. Voters more likely to draw this conclusion tend to be Independent men (32 percent), voters residing in the West South Central region (31 percent), African-Americans (30 percent) older men (28 percent) and homemakers (27 percent).

Unfortunately, convincing voters that these kids need help may prove to be less difficult than convincing them that there are not enough high quality, educational opportunities available. Currently, whether or not voters have a clear picture of the programs geared toward this population, their impression is overwhelmingly

favorable.<sup>10</sup> In fact, a majority of all demographic groups have a very favorable impression of the GED. Although intensity ratings vary on the remaining programs, a solid majority of every demographic group holds a favorable opinion of these programs. The following chart illustrates the level of favorability of these programs:

**Chart 4: Rankings of programs providing educational opportunities to out-of-school youth.**



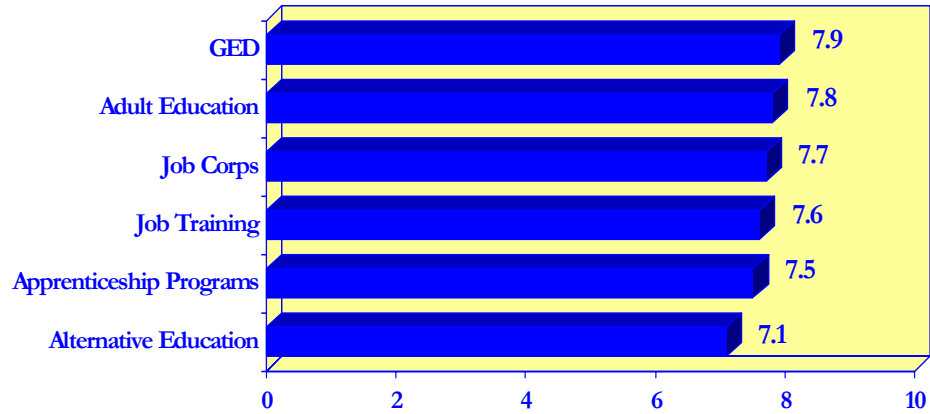
*The challenge for the campaign will be convincing voters that while these programs serve a purpose, they do not provide the high-quality educational opportunities needed.*

Likewise, voters give these programs high marks for preparing young people for the future. Again, not a single demographic group produces a neutral or negative job performance rating for any of these programs. Clearly, the challenge for the campaign will be convincing voters that while these programs serve a purpose, they do not provide the high-quality educational opportunities needed.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Exact question wording: What do you think happens to young people who leave high school before they receive their diploma? (Open end – percentages collapsed)  
<sup>10</sup> Now let me read you some different programs available to young people who do not complete high school. For each, I would like to know whether you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable impression of that program. If you haven't heard of the program, or if you don't know enough about that program to have an impression, just say so and we'll move on.  
<sup>11</sup> Exact question wording: Now let me read you some different programs available to young people who do not complete high school. For each one please rate it on a scale which goes from 0 to 10,

The chart below illustrates the job performance ratings given to these programs:

**Chart 5: Job performance ratings on programs providing educational opportunities to out-of-school youth.**



\*Question Asked of only half the sample

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where 0 means it does a poor job preparing young people for the future and 10 means it does an excellent job preparing young people for the future.

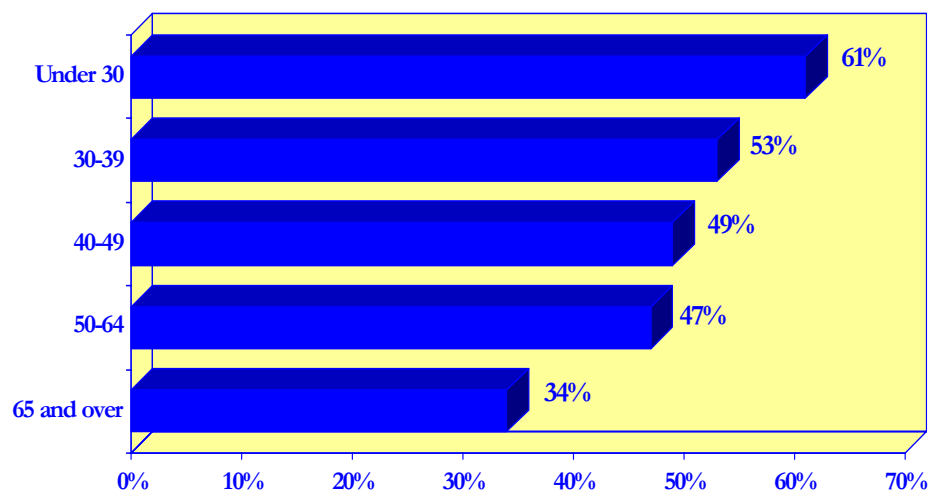
## REDEFINING THE ISSUE

*Voters appear to have broad perceptions surrounding this issue, but not concrete knowledge.*

As discussed earlier, while voters recognize that a problem exists, they show less personal concern and most feel the programs addressing out-of-school youth are relatively adequate and thus addressing the problem. Voters appear to have broad perceptions surrounding this issue, but not concrete knowledge. The job of this campaign will be to show them that the programs that currently exist are not adequately providing these youth with the quality education they deserve.

At this moment half of voters (50 percent) say they know something about the educational programming available for out-of-school youth.<sup>12</sup> However, only one fifth (22 percent) feel they know a lot about the programs. Voters' level of familiarity tends to decrease with age. For example, voters under 30 are twice as likely as seniors to claim to be knowledgeable about the programs.

**Chart 6: Percentage of voters who have a lot or some knowledge about educational programs available.**



<sup>12</sup> Exact question wording: Would you say you know a lot, some, a little, or not much at all about the educational programming available for out-of-school youth?

Voters who claim to have the most knowledge about the educational programs available are voters residing in the Pacific region (63 percent a lot/some), African-American women (62 percent), city dwellers (62 percent), parents with children between 7-12 (61 percent), under 30 (61 percent), service employees (59 percent) and younger and unmarried men (both: 58 percent).

## STANDARDS AND PROPOSALS

*Once the stakes are made clear the campaign will need to put forth solutions that seem realistic, affordable and capable of addressing the problem.*

Once the problem is defined, the need revealed and the stakes are made clear the campaign will need to put forth solutions that seem realistic, affordable and capable of addressing the problem. Articulating specific standards and proposals that voters can support politically is never an easy task. However, the data reveals once again, that voters are most receptive to standards and proposals that are in synch with their own core values and basic beliefs.

It is slightly more important overall to voters to ensure a high quality education than to hold these youth to the same educational standards, three-fourths of voters say it is important that out-of-school youth receive a high quality education (75 percent very important, 34 percent extremely),<sup>13</sup> while, two-thirds say it is important to hold out-of school youth to the same educational standards as in-school youth (67 percent very important, 38 percent extremely).<sup>14</sup> These ideas may appeal to voters sense of fairness or a sincere belief that everyone should have at least a fighting chance and a level playing field.

Gender and age appear to be a major factor in how important this idea is to voters. Men are more likely than women to have a stronger conviction on both the importance of a high quality education (men: 38 percent extremely important; women: 30 percent) and providing one that meets the same standards as education for in-school youth (men: 44 percent extremely important; women: 33 percent). Likewise, younger voters demonstrate far greater intensity than older voters on providing an education that meets the same standards as education for in-school

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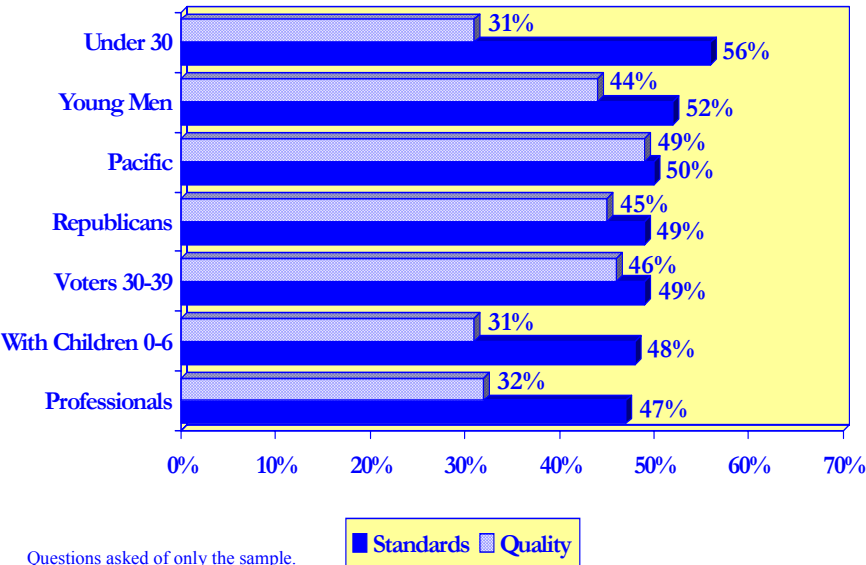
<sup>13</sup> Exact question wording: How important is it to you to hold out-of-school youth to the same educational standards as in- school youth – extremely important, very important, somewhat important, a little important, or not important at all?

<sup>14</sup> Exact question wording: How important is it to you to ensure that out-of-school youth receive a high quality education – extremely important, very important, somewhat important, a little important, or not important at all?

youth (younger voters: 48 percent extremely important; older voters: 27 percent), as well as the importance to provide a high quality education (younger voters: 40 percent extremely important; older voters: 26 percent).

Notably, despite solid support from many demographic groups for both ideals, meeting the same standards as in-school youth may produce greater intensity than providing high quality education among critical targets. In fact, among many of the groups producing the greatest intensity on meeting the same standards, few provide the same level of intensity for providing a high quality education.

**Chart 7: Importance of Meeting Same Standards vs. Providing High Quality Education.**  
(Percentage of voters who choose extremely important.)



*Ultimately, voters do not have to be convinced to have a sense of fair play or justice. Principals predicated on these core values are well received.*

In principal, most voters agree with the campaign’s goals and they do not need to be convinced to have a sense of fair play or justice. Campaign principals that are predicated on these core values are well received by the electorate and at least eight out of ten voters agree with all of the statements tested.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Exact question wording: Now I am going to read you some statements and for each one I want you to tell me if you agree or disagree with that statement. [If agree/disagree: Is that strongly/not so strongly?]

In fact, a solid majority strongly agree that out-of school youth should receive a high quality education (60 percent strongly agree, 84 percent agree), that they should have access to the same opportunities for high quality and high standards as in-school youth (59 percent strongly, 82 percent agree), that we need to ensure that these programs are available to all that need them (59 percent strongly, 90 percent agree), that there should be a national commitment to ensuring a high quality for out-of-school youth (58 percent strongly, 87 percent agree) and that children who are expelled from school have a right to an education (56 percent strongly, 82 percent agree). Nearly three-quarters of all demographic groups agree with these statements.

*The real work of the campaign will be convincing voters who should play the largest role in upholding these ideals.*

The real work of the campaign will be convincing voters who should play the largest role in ensuring quality education opportunities for these youth. For the most part, voters place government in this role (59 percent 1<sup>st</sup> choice).<sup>16</sup> In addition, when you give voters a second choice government once again takes the lead among a majority of voters (55 percent second choice).<sup>17</sup> While the federal government is the first choice for 29 percent of voters, after combining 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> choices, voters put the responsibility on the state government (45 percent), followed by the federal government (37 percent), parents (37 percent), local government (32 percent) and public schools (22 percent). They are less likely to hold community organizations (6 percent), the private sector (5 percent), or faith based organization responsible (5 percent).

When looking at combined responses, though nearly every demographic group looks to the state government to ensure these education opportunities, there are a few exceptions. Retired women (47 percent local) and suburban voters (45 percent local) look to the local government. Voters ages 50 to 64 split between the federal government and parents (state:43 percent, parents: 42 percent), as do rural voters (state:40 percent, parents: 41 percent). Older men (48 percent parents) college men

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<sup>16</sup> Exact question wording: Of the following, which group should play the largest role in ensuring quality educational opportunities for out-of-school youth?

(43 percent), and Independents (48 percent) look first to parents. African-American men (federal: 53 percent, state: 52 percent) unmarried men (federal: 45 percent, state: 45 percent), and Western voters (federal: 40 percent, state: 41 percent) split between federal government and the state government.

Interestingly, despite a consensus among voters that government should be ultimately responsible for providing these programs, they realize that educational programs must be prioritized and therefore have a diffuse agenda for existing tax dollars. When voters think about some of the areas that compete for their tax dollars, a majority (54 percent 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> choices, 30 percent 1<sup>st</sup> choice) places ensuring all kids meet academic standards as the area they think is more important to increase spending. This is followed by educational opportunities for out-of-school youth (42 percent 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> choices, 24 percent 1<sup>st</sup> choice), teachers salaries (39 percent 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> choices, 21 percent 1<sup>st</sup> choice) expanding quality after school programs (34 percent 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> choices, 11 percent 1<sup>st</sup> choice), defense spending (13 percent 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> choices, 8 percent 1<sup>st</sup> choice), and building more prisons (6 percent 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> choices, 2 percent 1<sup>st</sup> choice).

Nearly every groups ranks ensuring academic standards first, except for homemakers who split between opportunities for out-of-school youth (44 percent) and expanding after school programs (43 percent); Latinos (50 percent), college educated women (47 percent), and married women (47 percent) who opt for out of school youth; and Democratic women (49 percent) who would increase spending on teachers salaries.

The groups who tend to be more supportive of increasing spending on educational opportunities for out-of-school are Parents with children between 7-12 (54 percent), professionals (53 percent), Latinos (50 percent), working women (48 percent), parents with children under 7 (48 percent), voters ages 30-39 (47 percent), college women (47 percent), and married women (47 percent).

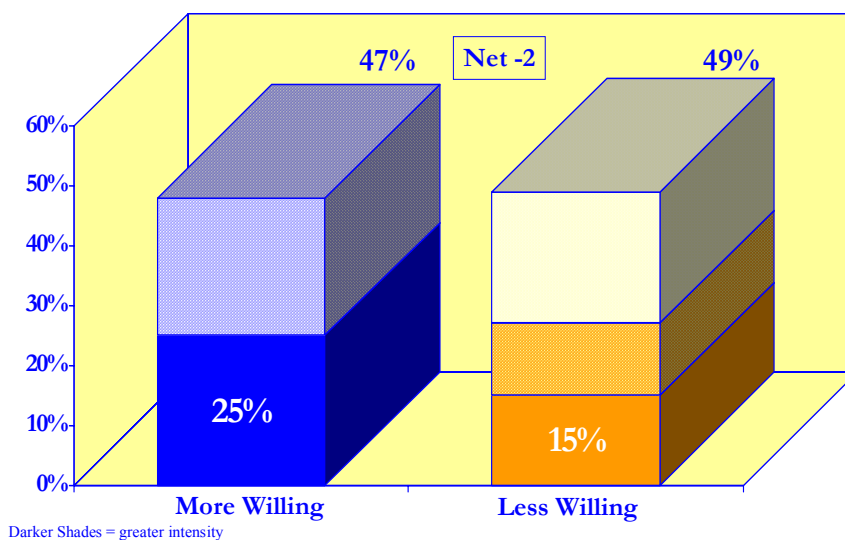
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<sup>17</sup> Exact question wording: And which group should play the next largest role in ensuring quality educational opportunities for out-of-school youth?

*Successful proposals also hinge on their affordability, voters are not necessarily always willing to the cost of their convictions.*

Unfortunately, voters are not necessarily willing to pay the cost for their convictions. Despite producing a majority who agree that there should be quality educational opportunities available for out-of-school youth, they are less supportive of increasing their tax dollars to make these programs a reality. Voters are nearly evenly divided with a slight edge going to voters who are less willing to pay an additional 100 dollars per year to ensure these quality programs are available.<sup>18</sup>

**Chart 8: Willingness to Pay Additional Taxes**



Not surprisingly, younger voters are more willing than older voters to increase their taxes (younger voters: 53 percent willing, 32 percent very – older voters: 41 percent willing, 16 percent very). College educated voters are also more willing than less educated voters to support a tax increase (college: 53 percent willing, 30 percent very – non-college: 45 percent willing, 22 percent very). Across racial lines Latinos are the most supportive of a tax increase followed by African-Americans and whites

<sup>18</sup> Exact question wording: How willing would you be to increase your taxes by \$100 per year to ensure that young people who leave school before receiving their diplomas have quality educational opportunities available to them – extremely willing, very willing, somewhat willing, a little willing, or not willing at all?

(Latinos: 59 percent willing, 33 percent very – blacks: 50 percent willing, 26 percent very – whites: 46 percent willing, 23 percent very).

Parents with children between 0-6 (59 percent willing), Latinos (59 percent), Republican men (58 percent), voters age 30-39 (57 percent), college men (57 percent) and city dwellers (57 percent), college men (57 percent), young women (54 percent), Republican women (54 percent) are the most supportive of a tax increase to ensure the availability of quality academic programs for out-of-school youth. Those most opposed to a tax increase are voters who live in rural areas (64 percent unwilling), retired women (60 percent), seniors (59 percent), older women (58 percent), Independent women (57 percent), service employees (57 percent), white women (54 percent), Midwestern voters (54 percent), and suburban voters (54 percent).

## MESSAGES

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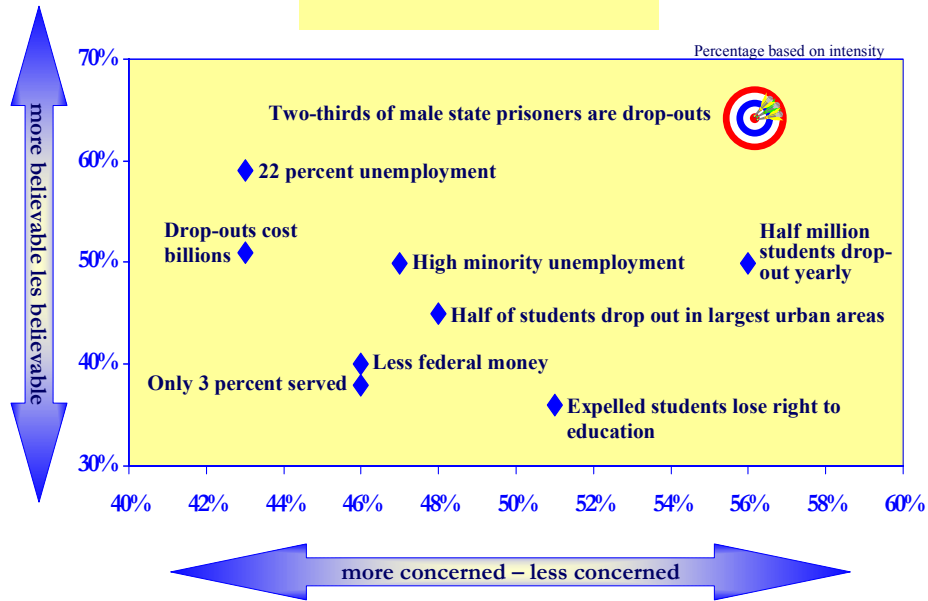
*The key to success is the ability to provide information to the public that both fits neatly into their world view, as well as demonstrates a clear and present danger to themselves and their communities.*

Facts illustrate the problem and the consequences. Statistics that resonate most with voters are the fact that a half million students drop-out every year (83 percent concerned, 56 percent extremely), that two thirds of male prisoners are drop-outs (81 percent concerned, 56 percent extremely), and that in half the states expelled kids do not have a right to education (79 percent concerned, 51 percent extremely).

While statistics can bolster your case, they are only as effective as they are credible. Not surprisingly, voters reacted most to information that was in line with their own core beliefs. For example, previously one fifth of respondents volunteered that criminal activity was a likely outcome for out-of school youth and this fact ranks the highest on the believability scale (94 percent believable, 65 percent very). Half of voters thought economic hardship would be the likely outcome and the second most believable fact focuses on the disproportionately high unemployment rate for out-of-school youth (89 percent believable, 59 percent very). However, while they find this believable, they do not show much personal concern for it. Thus the best facts to use are the nexus between concern and believability. —Two out of three male prisoners are drop-outs and a half million students drop out each year. These allow us to show the magnitude of the problem, as well as the consequences. While voters show much concern for the statement that expelled kids don't have the right to an education, they do not believe this would be the case. They just don't believe it possible that they wouldn't be able to go somewhere for an education.

There is little question that the ability to provide information to the public that both fits neatly into their world view, as well as demonstrate a clear personal stake in the issue makes the prospect of a successful campaign more readily attainable.

Chart 9: Concern vs Believability



Voters recognize that education resources are limited. In an ideal world most want the out-of-school issue addressed. However, when forced to choose between allocating resources between the kids who stay in school and those that choose to leave, nearly a third (31 percent) choose to make the kids who stay in school the first priority. The campaign must be aware that regardless of the economic stake to the community or the economic hardship facing out-of school youth, appealing to voters' sense that those who choose to leave ought to take a back seat to those who tough it out is a very powerful argument.<sup>19</sup> In fact, despite the dire consequences

*Those who choose to leave ought to take a back seat to those who tough it out is a very powerful sentiment.*

<sup>19</sup> Exact question wording: Some people/other people say that every year a half million young people leave high school without a diploma and despite much rhetoric that all kids should be educated, this group is largely ignored and forgotten. As a result, they are condemned to a life with little economic promise and are much more likely to engage in at-risk behaviors like crime, drugs, and out-of-wedlock pregnancies. As a nation we cannot afford to let so many of our youth just simply slip through the cracks. Every year we as a nation lose \$88 billion in lost earning potential and \$32 billion as a result of dropout crime. The choice is simple, we can either provide this group of young people with the quality educational and training opportunities they need to live productive and successful lives or we can do nothing and they will continue to suffer. We need to make these kids a priority for our education dollars.

Some people/other people say American children continue to lag behind the youth of other countries and employers say that students graduating from high schools do not have the skills, analytical ability, concentration, or motivation to compete effectively in the global economy. We should all be concerned about the plight of youth that elect to drop out of school and every effort should be made

predicted for the community at large, less than one fifth of voters would make educating and training out-of-school youth the priority (19 percent), while well over a third (37 percent) say both statements reflect their views.

More alarming, critical demographic groups such as parents with children between 7-12 (50 percent), skilled blue collar workers (43 percent) voters in the West North Central region (40 percent), Independent men (38 percent), non-college men (37 percent) and African-American men (36 percent) are disproportionately in favor of placing kids who stay in school at the head of the resource line. In fact, nearly every group sides with this sentiment except for voters under 30 (26 percent out-of-school youth to 21 percent in-school kids). Additionally, homemakers (27 percent out-of-school youth to 26 percent in-school kids), African-American women (21 percent out-of-school youth to 21 percent in-school kids), unmarried women (24 percent out-of-school youth to 23 percent in-school kids), and service employees (28 percent out-of-school youth to 28 percent in-school kids) split their choices.

In some respects, it is understandable why some voters feel that kids who stay in school should be made the higher priority. The campaign will need to address this notion of choice because it fits comfortably with the public's view of personal and individual responsibility.

Messages that resonate with voters address the notion of choice.<sup>20</sup> One of the top messages among voters applies the "bad hand" justification. Only this time the factors beyond the control of some youth are more nature than nurture; this message

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to encourage them to finish their education. But we need to be realistic, we have limited resources and our first priority has to be the kids that stick it out and stay in school. We owe the kids that don't give up and stay in school to improve the quality of their education so that they can compete and succeed in this new global economy.

Which of the statements comes closest to your point of view?

<sup>20</sup> Exact question wording: I am going to read you some statements some people have made for ensuring quality educational opportunities for out-of-school youth. After each, please tell me whether you think it is a very convincing reason to ensure educational opportunities for out-of-school youth, a somewhat convincing reason, a not too convincing reason or not at all a convincing reason.

*The campaign will need to address the choice issue over and over again. It will undoubtedly be an integral component of any opposing message. It fits comfortably within the public's view of personal and individual responsibility. And can be touted by any politician as a reason to forego attention while inoculating against being branded by the public as insensitive and uncaring.*

cites learning disabilities and mental illness as the culprits creating this situation (92 percent convincing overall; 55 percent very convincing).<sup>21</sup> Another convincing message also removes choice and personal responsibility from the equation by shifting the responsibility to the poor communities they come from, the inadequate schools they attend and the fractured families from which they come – the “bad hand” these kids were dealt (83 percent convincing overall; 56 percent very convincing).<sup>22</sup>

Other messages that resonate well focus on the stake to the community. A majority of voters are moved by the realistic evaluation that some day they will have to depend on these young people to provide the goods and services they will need (89 percent convincing overall; 53 percent very convincing).<sup>23</sup> They also realize that economic hardship is likely to increase this population’s engagement in risky behaviors and the price they might ultimately pay (84 percent convincing overall; 51 percent very convincing).<sup>24</sup> Bringing to mind the image of inner city kids facing

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<sup>21</sup> Exact message wording: Education is the great equalizer and opens the doors to opportunities. However, some young people have learning disabilities or mental health problems who need alternative learning environments. Young people who drop out are not always unmotivated individuals, they are kids who just can’t make it in a traditional school setting. It’s not fair to punish these children for the rest of their lives by not providing them quality alternative educational opportunities.

<sup>22</sup> Exact message wording: Education is the great equalizer and opens the doors to opportunities. However, some young people begin their educational experience in poor communities, inadequate schools, or fractured families that makes it difficult for some to continue their education. It’s not fair to punish these children for the rest of their lives by not providing them quality alternative educational opportunities.

<sup>23</sup> Exact message wording: We say that our children are the most important part of our country’s future. Yet today, we ignore the half million of our children who leave school without a diploma every year. We need to invest in all of America’s youth – providing high quality alternative educational programs for out-of-school youth will ensure that we have qualified citizens to fill the jobs of the future. We owe it to them to invest in quality alternative education so no child is left behind, we owe it to ourselves -- because we will have to depend on these children to provide the goods and services we will need in the future.

<sup>24</sup> Exact question wording: There are many strategies in place to make sure mainstream youth meet high academic standards. Unfortunately, when it comes to the half a million young people who leave school without a diploma every year, standards are not even part of the discussion among the organizations that are charged with the outreach and development of this group of young people. Without a quality educational and training opportunity that employers can respect, we resign these kids to a life with little chance of economic achievement and an increase in their engagement in at-risk behaviors.

economic hardship produces slightly less intensity (84 percent convincing overall; 47 percent very convincing).<sup>25</sup>

Only slightly less convincing are messages placing the lion share of the responsibility on the inadequacies of institutionalized education. Again, as discussed earlier, voters are less comfortable with institutional blame. As a result, they are more reluctant to place responsibility for the out-of-school youth problem either on public schools or school administrators. Voters are less intense about the “can’t cut it” justification, even when the image projected in the message is of youth in every community including their own (86 percent convincing overall; 49 percent very convincing).<sup>26</sup>

The following tables illustrates which messages resonates most with key demographic groups (percentages based on very convincing):

Demographic Group	All Voters	Men	Women	Younger Voters	Older Voters
Bad Hand Nurture	56%	55%	56%	59%	53%
Bad Hand Nature	55%	55%	55%	52%	59%
Community Stake Economic	53%	54%	53%	54%	53%
Community Stake Risky Behavior	51%	50%	52%	58%	44%
Community Stake Inner City	47%	49%	46%	44%	52%
Can't Cut It Everywhere	49%	47%	50%	44%	55%

<sup>25</sup> For the most part public schools are one size fits all. Having a half million kids leaving school without a diploma every year is proof that one size doesn't fit everyone. In our 20 largest urban school districts half of the students fail to graduate which puts our cities' local economies in serious jeopardy. Currently, our nation loses approximately \$88 billion a year because of the lost earnings of this population. In many cases out-of-school youth left without the skills needed in today's economy are forced to participate in underground or illegal activities in order to survive and it costs the nation nearly \$32 billion as a result of dropout crime. The bottom line is that it's in everyone's best interest to promote quality educational opportunities for all of our youth.

<sup>26</sup> Exact question wording: Dropouts are not just inner city kids, but also come from middle class neighborhoods. They are kids who for whatever reason cannot adapt to a traditional learning environment and drop out from frustration with the school and educational system. All communities need educational programming for a variety of youth with different needs and learning challenges.

Demographic Group	All Voters	College	Non College	Parents	No Children
Bad Hand Nurture	56%	55%	56%	60%	55%
Bad Hand Nature	55%	60%	53%	55%	55%
Community Stake Economic	53%	58%	51%	57%	52%
Community Stake Risky Behavior	51%	50%	52%	58%	49%
Community Stake Inner City	47%	45%	48%	48%	47%
Can't Cut It Everywhere	49%	54%	47%	48%	50%

Demographic Group	All Voters	North-east	Midwest	South	West
Bad Hand Nurture	56%	60%	55%	55%	55%
Bad Hand Nature	55%	56%	52%	58%	51%
Community Stake Economic	53%	52%	51%	55%	55%
Community Stake Risky Behavior	51%	56%	56%	47%	61%
Community Stake Inner City	47%	49%	48%	51%	38%
Can't Cut It Everywhere	49%	45%	44%	57%	45%

Demographic Group	All Voters	City	Suburbs	Rural
Bad Hand Nurture	56%	61%	55%	45%
Bad Hand Nature	55%	62%	57%	57%
Community Stake Economic	53%	53%	58%	51%
Community Stake Risky Behavior	51%	56%	47%	42%
Community Stake Inner City	47%	44%	59%	44%
Can't Cut It Everywhere	49%	45%	54%	52%

Demographic Group	All Voters	White Voters	Black Voters	Latino Voters
Bad Hand Nurture	56%	55%	56%	63%
Bad Hand Nature	55%	56%	46%	52%
Community Stake Economic	53%	54%	48%	57%
Community Stake Risky Behavior	51%	48%	58%	63%
Community Stake Inner City	47%	49%	42%	45%
Can't Cut It Everywhere	49%	51%	35%	47%

As the tables reflect, some key demographic groups may respond more intensely to messages which were less effective with voters overall or conversely, respond to overall top message with less intensity. For example, while men and women respond to all of the messages virtually identically, younger voters are clearly more responsive than older voters to the risky behavior theme. Likewise, voters with children are also more likely to be moved by the risky behavior message than voters without children under 18. Regionally, Southern voters appear less responsive to the risky behavior component than voters in all other regions. In addition, while the risky behavior message is among the top messages for African-Americans, Latinos, and urban voters, it generates significantly less intensity among suburban, rural, and white voters.

## *CULTURAL INFLUENCE*



For the last twenty-five years critics of the hip-hop and rap genre have insisted it was just a passing fad that would eventually disappear like such things do. However, hip-hop and rap music has stood the test of time and as some would say has done more than become part of the culture, it has in fact become the culture.

It's not just people under 30 or Madison Avenue that believes in the influence of the genre; nationwide, voters believe the genre is having an effect on the younger generation. In fact, nearly three quarters of the electorate believe hip-hop and rap has at least some influence on young people, with a plurality believing it has a lot of influence (72 percent influence, 44 percent a lot).<sup>27</sup>

While nearly equal numbers of men and women regard the genre as having influence on young people, men are more likely than women to feel that it has a lot of influence (men: 74 percent influence, 49 percent a lot – women: 71 percent influence, 40 percent a lot). Not surprisingly, younger voters tend to be less convinced of hip-hop's influence than their older counterparts (older: 78 percent influence, 50 percent a lot – younger: 67 percent influence, 39 percent a lot). However, even among America's youngest voters a majority believes that hip-hop has some influence on the younger generation (under 30: 64 percent influence, 36 percent a lot).

Interestingly, education is less of a factor. A similar proportion of both college and non-college educated voters believe hip-hop has some influence (non-college: 74 percent influence, 45 percent a lot – college: 69 percent influence, 44 percent a lot). However, the culture war continues across partisan lines. While a majority of Republicans believe hip-hop has a lot of influence on young people, Democrats and Independents have less intensity on this issue (Rep: 80 percent influence, 53 percent

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<sup>27</sup> Exact question wording: What kind of influence do you feel hip-hop or rap music has on young people – a lot of influence, some influence, a little influence or not much influence at all?

a lot – Ind: 70 percent influence, 43 percent a lot – Dem: 71 percent influence, 39 percent a lot). Across the racial divide, African-Americans are less adamant about rap’s influence than whites and Latinos (Latinos: 65 percent influence, 48 percent a lot – whites: 76 percent influence, 46 percent a lot – blacks: 60 percent influence, 36 percent a lot).

The chart below illustrates the demographic groups with the highest proportion of voters who say hip-hop and rap have a lot of influence on young people:

**Chart 10: Percentage of voters who are most likely to say hip-hop and rap has a lot of influence on young people.**

