

Budgets for the days ahead:

A survey of Massachusetts voters on state budget priorities

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This project was sponsored by The Boston Foundation, The Hyams Foundation, King Boston, Amplify Latinx, BECMA, the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, The Bridgewater State University Foundation, the Massachusetts Municipal Association, and individual contributors.

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Survey Background

- Results based on a statewide survey of 1,522 registered voters of Massachusetts, including the following:
 - A base sample of 1,000 voters statewide.
 - Oversamples to reach ~250 each of Black and Latino voters.
- Conducted December 8-20, 2020 via live telephone and online survey interviewing, in English and Spanish.
- Data was weighted first within race groupings by gender, age, education, and region, and then to known population parameters by gender, age, race, education level, and region for the state's population.
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Key findings

- Feeling the effects of the pandemic, voters have an extensive to-do list for state leaders.
 - Testing and vaccine funding top the list, followed by paid sick leave, assistance with housing payments, and transit.
 - Black and Latino voters identify more high priorities for state leaders, and largely agree on revenue sources to pay for them.
- The economy, education, healthcare are the top long-term priorities, echoing years of polling before the pandemic.

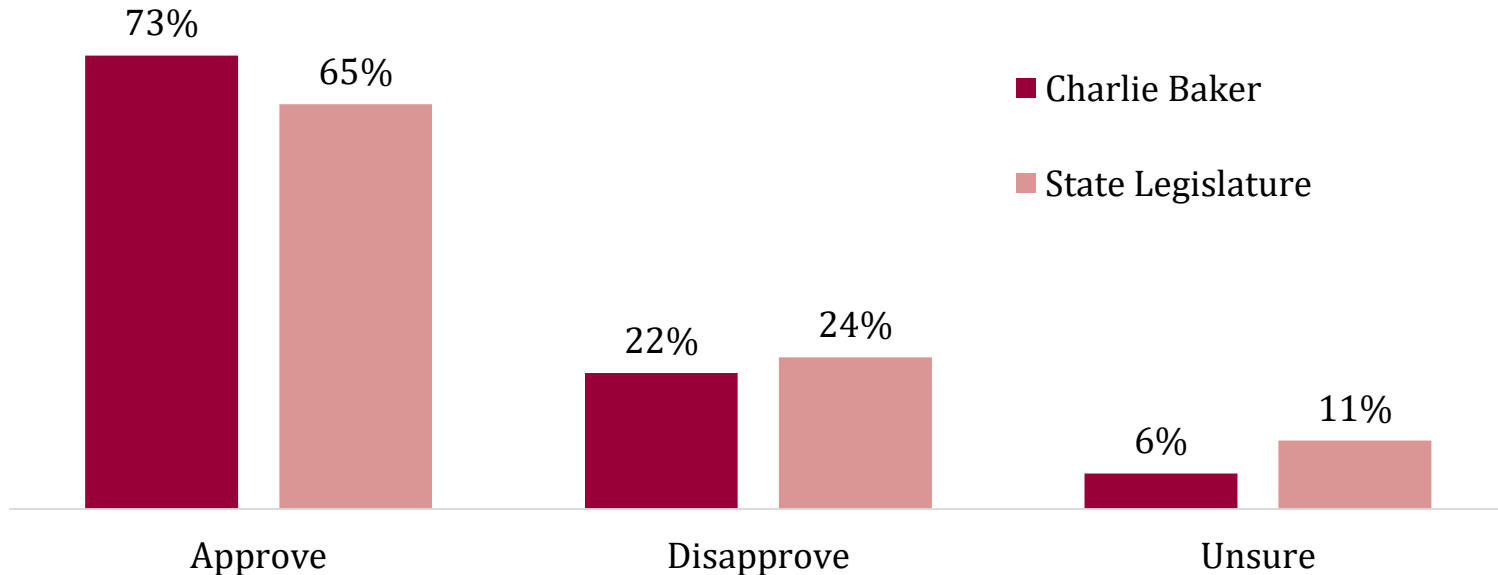
Key findings

- Broad agreement that upper-income taxpayers and large businesses pay too little, including *among* upper-income residents.
 - Support for 4% surtax on incomes > \$1 million is highest among upper-income voters.
 - Highest priority for all regarding taxes is “Making sure all taxpayers, including corporations, are paying a fair amount of taxes.”
 - Much less support for more broad-based tax increases compared to taxes on high incomes, large businesses.
- While most rankings put Massachusetts in the middle of the pack, the perception that it is a high-tax state persists, particularly among white voters.

Approval ratings very high

- Both Governor Baker and the State Legislature currently enjoy sky-high job approval ratings.
- This is the all time best approval rating in MPG polling for the legislature.

Governor, Mass state legislature both have very high job approval ratings
% who say they approve / disapprove of the job each are doing.



Economic impact analysis

- Since the beginning of the pandemic, impacts have been most severe on those who could least afford it.

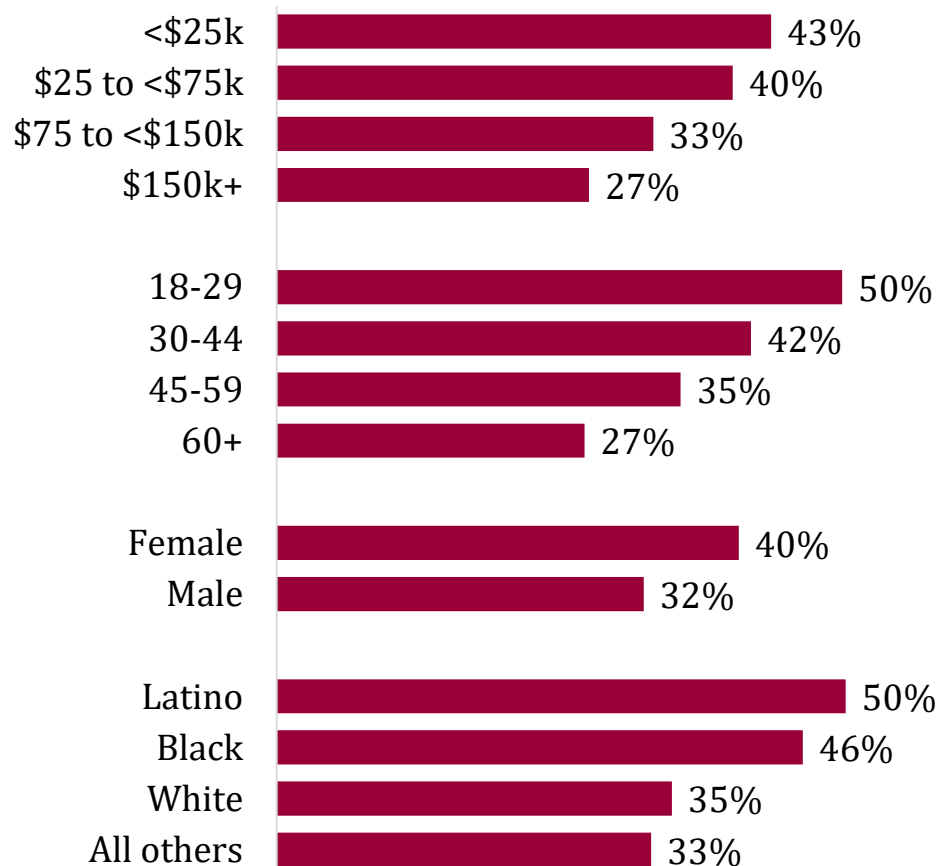
Economic impact composite distribution*	
Categories (total score)	
No impact (0)	35%
Some negative impact (1)	29%
More negative impacts (2)	16%
Most negative impacts (3+)	20%

1 point assigned if respondent has lost a job, wages/hours, been furloughed, gotten food assistance, been unable to pay rent/mortgage, applied for unemployment, or lost insurance

COVID's economic impact

- Since the beginning of the pandemic, impacts have been most severe on those who could least afford it.
- Lower income, young people, women, and people of color all more likely to have experienced 2 or more economic impact factors.

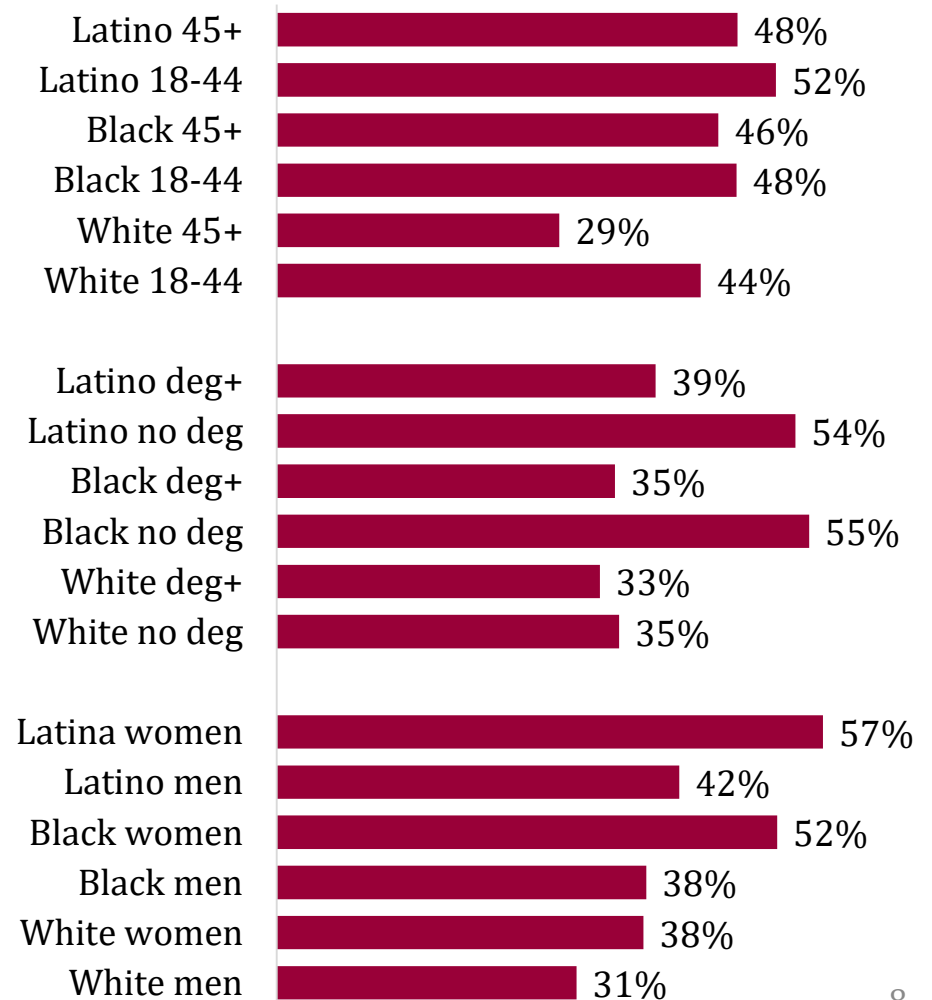
Demographics of economic impacts in Mass. *% in the "more " or "most" impact categories, by demographic grouping*



Economic impacts, in detail

- The economic impacts of the pandemic have been severe on people of color without degrees and women.
- Older white voters and men have experienced relatively fewer impacts.

Demographics of economic impacts in Mass.
% in the “more “ or “most” impact categories, by demographic grouping



Priorities for state government

- Health care, education, and the economy have long been at or near the top of voters' priority lists and are there again.

Health care, education, job training top list of priorities going forward

% who say each is very or somewhat important

	Very important	Somewhat important
Lowering the cost of health care	66%	21%
Increasing access to health care, including mental health services	60%	27%
Improving the K-12 public schools	56%	30%
Providing skills training for workers who have lost their jobs during the pandemic	55%	31%
Reducing the cost of housing	53%	27%
Making public higher education more affordable for residents	52%	32%
Investing in roads, bridges, and public transportation like subways, trains, buses	51%	34%
Strengthening social safety net programs for the state's poorest residents	49%	33%
Expanding access to affordable child care	47%	35%
Providing aid to cities and towns	47%	38%
Addressing and preparing for the effects of climate change	45%	30%
Increasing opportunities for home ownership for low-income residents	43%	34%
Investing in small business development	43%	42%
Investing in communities of color	41%	32%
Increasing state contracts with women and minority-owned businesses	35%	34%

Major priorities differences

- Black and Latino voters have a much longer list of priorities for lawmakers to focus on.

Top priorities draw some agreement, other sharp differences

% who rated each as “very important”, by race and ethnicity

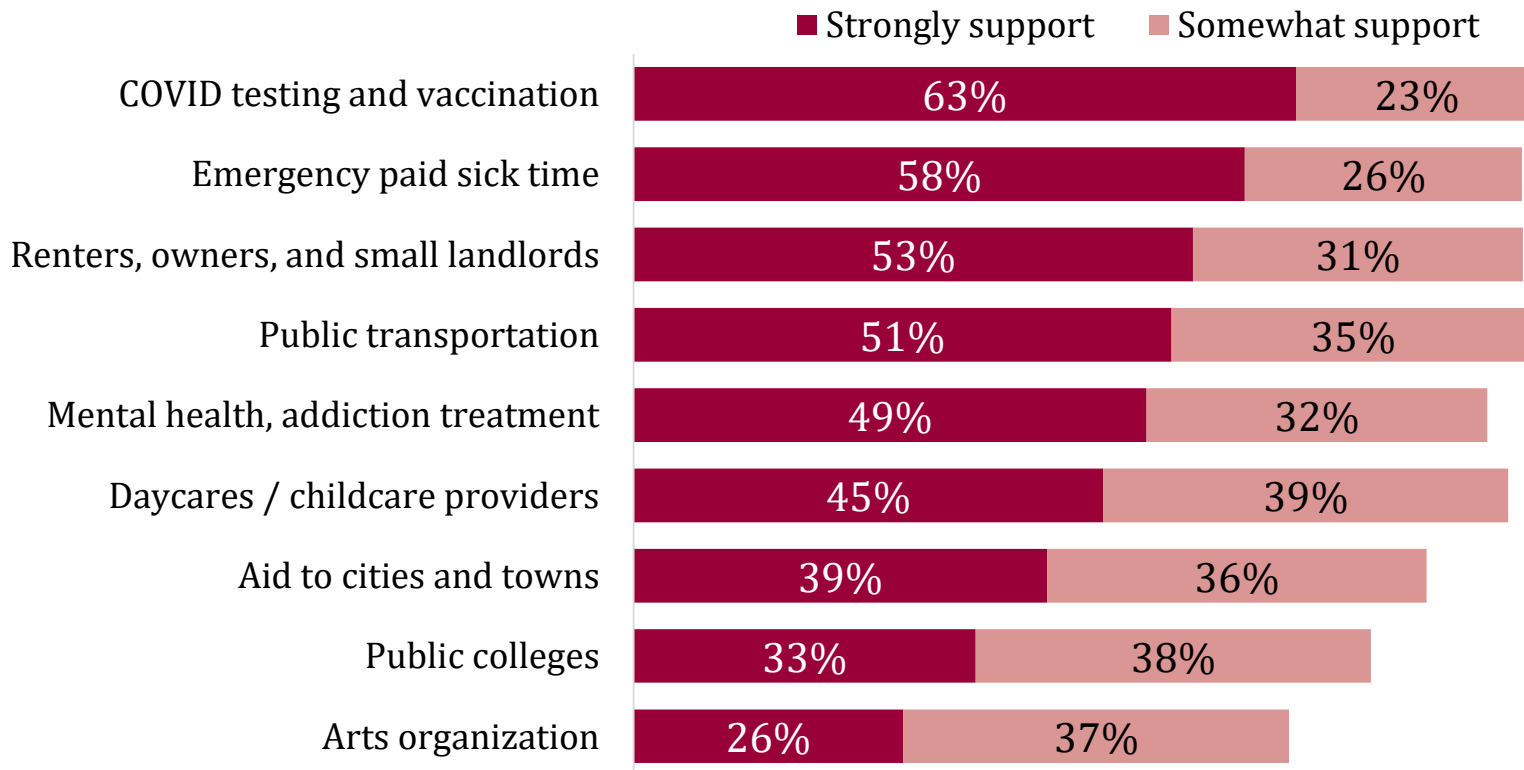
	Overall	White	Black	Latino	All others
Lowering the cost of health care	66%	66%	72%	67%	57%
Increasing access to health care, including mental health services	60%	60%	70%	68%	48%
Improving the K-12 public schools	56%	55%	66%	69%	45%
Providing skills training for workers who have lost their jobs	55%	53%	63%	70%	50%
Reducing the cost of housing	53%	52%	65%	63%	43%
Making public higher education more affordable for residents	52%	50%	64%	65%	45%
Investing in roads, bridges, and public transportation	51%	51%	58%	58%	42%
Strengthening social safety net programs for the state’s poorest residents	49%	48%	60%	57%	40%
Expanding access to affordable child care	47%	45%	64%	64%	32%
Providing aid to cities and towns	47%	46%	60%	60%	29%
Addressing and preparing for the effects of climate change	45%	43%	59%	57%	35%
Increasing opportunities for home ownership for low-income residents	43%	40%	61%	61%	40%
Investing in small business development	43%	41%	57%	55%	39%
Investing in communities of color	41%	37%	67%	60%	31%
Increasing state contracts with women and minority-owned businesses	35%	31%	63%	56%	29%

Support for broad COVID response

- Voters support a range of emergency funding responses to the pandemic.

Voters express support for a broad range of emergency funding measures

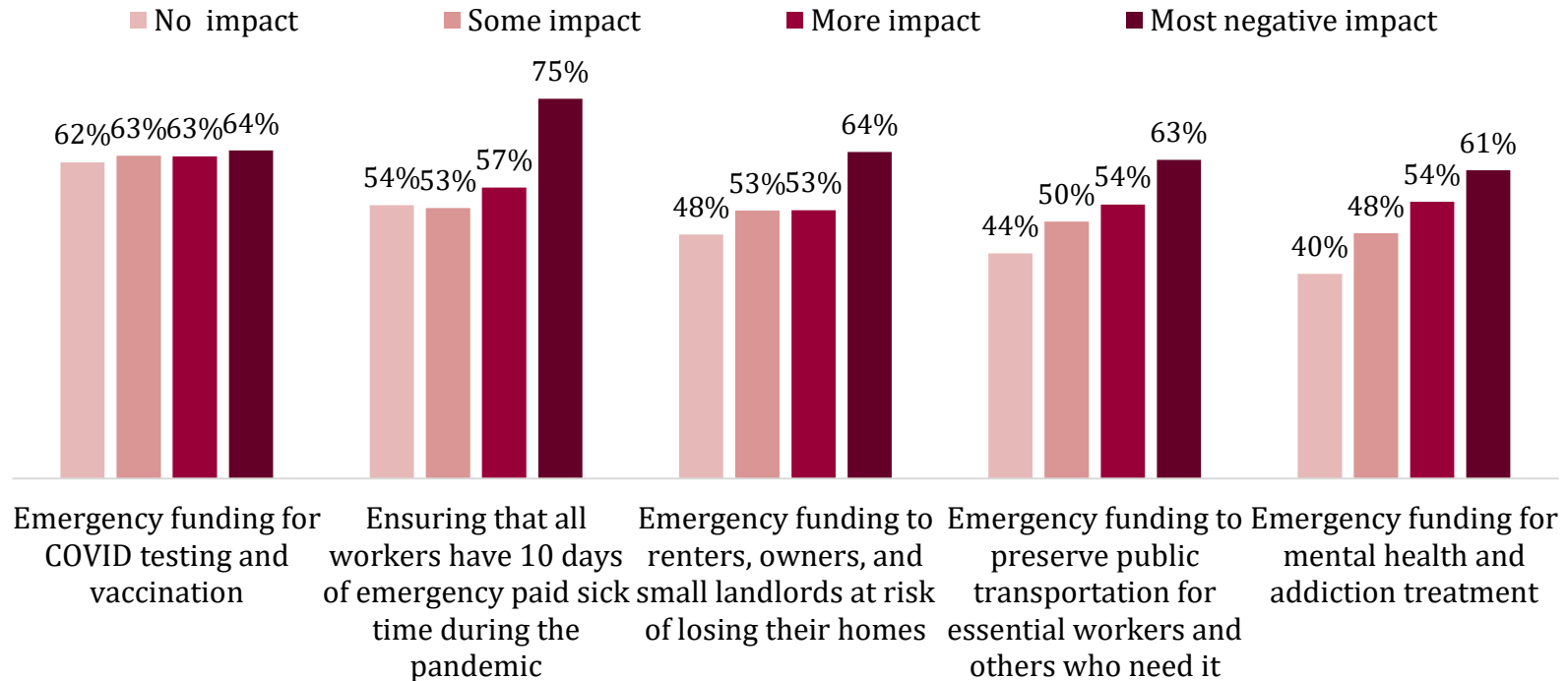
% who strongly / somewhat support emergency funding for each of the following



COVID impacts and response

- Those dealing with the most impacts of COVID are most likely to strongly support top response measures.

Those experiencing the most impact from COVID support a more robust response
% who strongly support emergency funding among those who have experienced _____ from COVID



COVID response, by race

- Some agreement on state government top emergency responses to COVID pandemic.
- Black and Latino voters support a much broader range of emergency responses to the impacts of the COVID pandemic.

Black, Latino voters support a broader set of responses

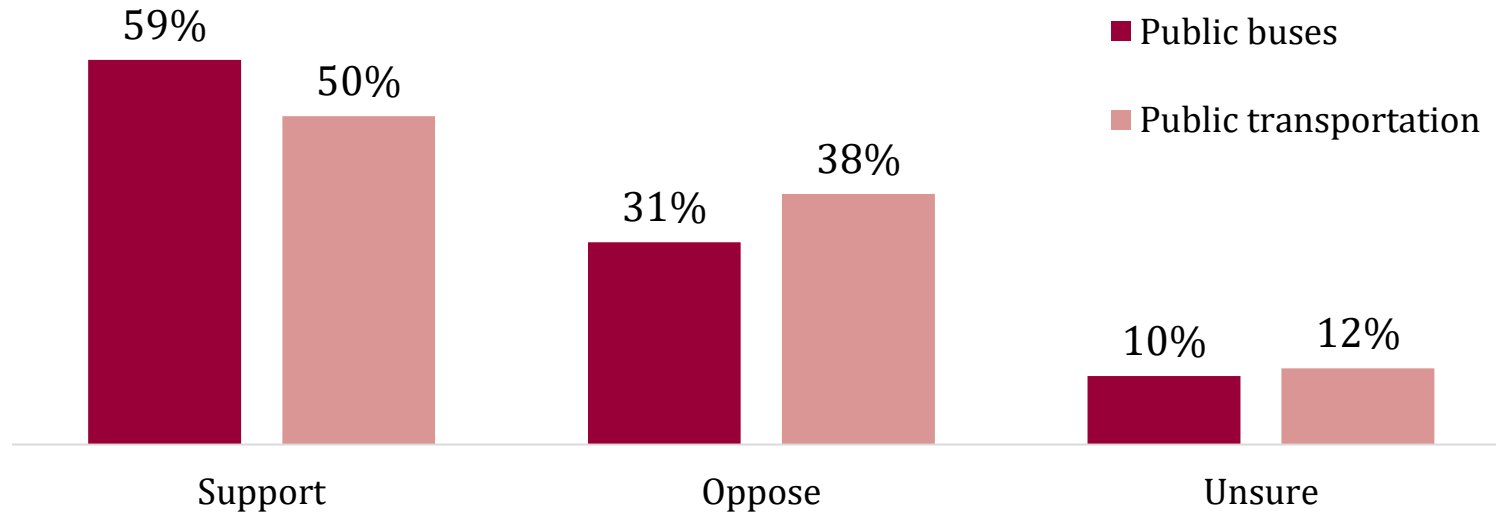
% who “strongly support” each state gov. emergency response to COVID

	Overall	White	Black	Latino	All others
Emergency funding for COVID testing and vaccination	63%	64%	68%	67%	49%
Ensuring that all workers have 10 days of emergency paid sick time during the pandemic	58%	58%	70%	64%	46%
Emergency funding to renters, owners, and small landlords at risk of losing their homes	53%	53%	65%	58%	42%
Emergency funding to preserve public transportation for essential workers and others who need it	51%	50%	61%	66%	36%
Emergency funding for mental health and addiction treatment	49%	47%	57%	60%	47%
Emergency state funding for daycares and other childcare providers to keep them from closing permanently	45%	43%	59%	58%	38%
Emergency aid to cities and towns to help them balance their budgets	39%	37%	54%	53%	35%
Funding public colleges to keep them afloat during the pandemic	33%	30%	46%	53%	25%
Emergency state funding for arts organization like museums, music venues, and theaters until they can reopen safely	26%	24%	35%	34%	24%

Make transit free?

- Net support for eliminating public transit fares, higher still for focusing on bus fares.

Voters express net support for the idea of eliminating public transit fares
% who support /oppose eliminating fares for public buses or all of public transportation

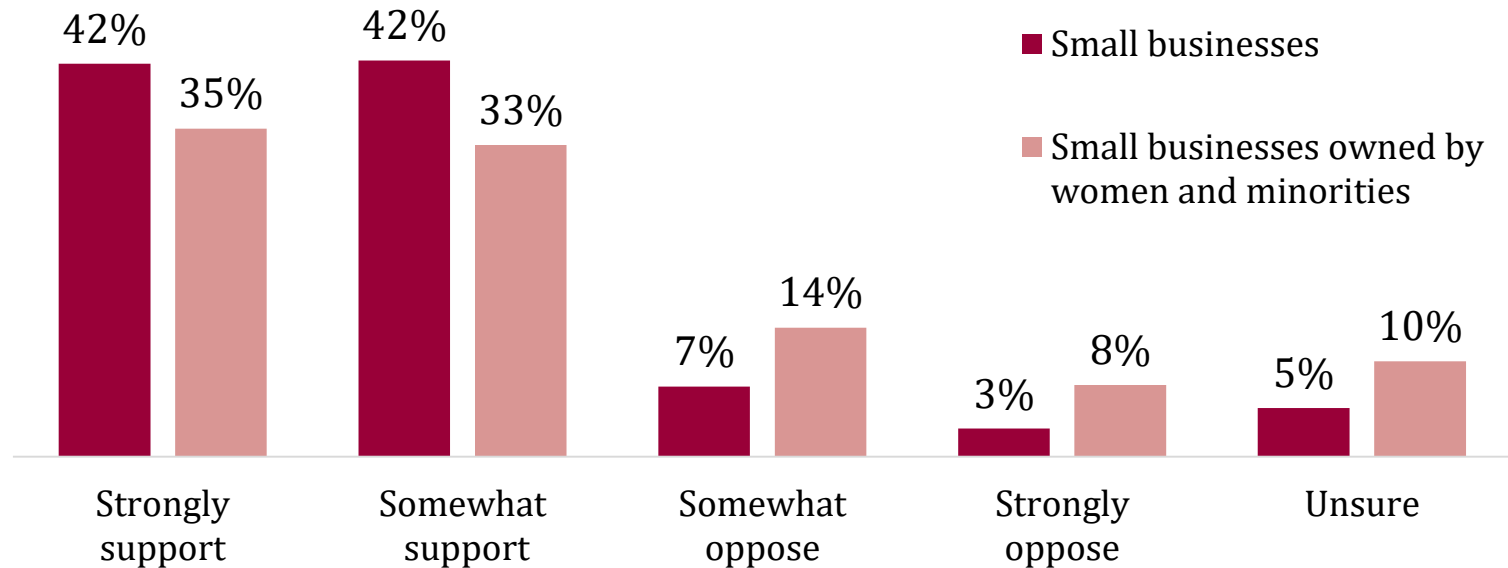


Emergency small business funding

- Voters support the idea of giving emergency funding to businesses, as has been done with recent state policies.

Support for emergency funding measures for small businesses

% who support /oppose emergency funding for each of the following

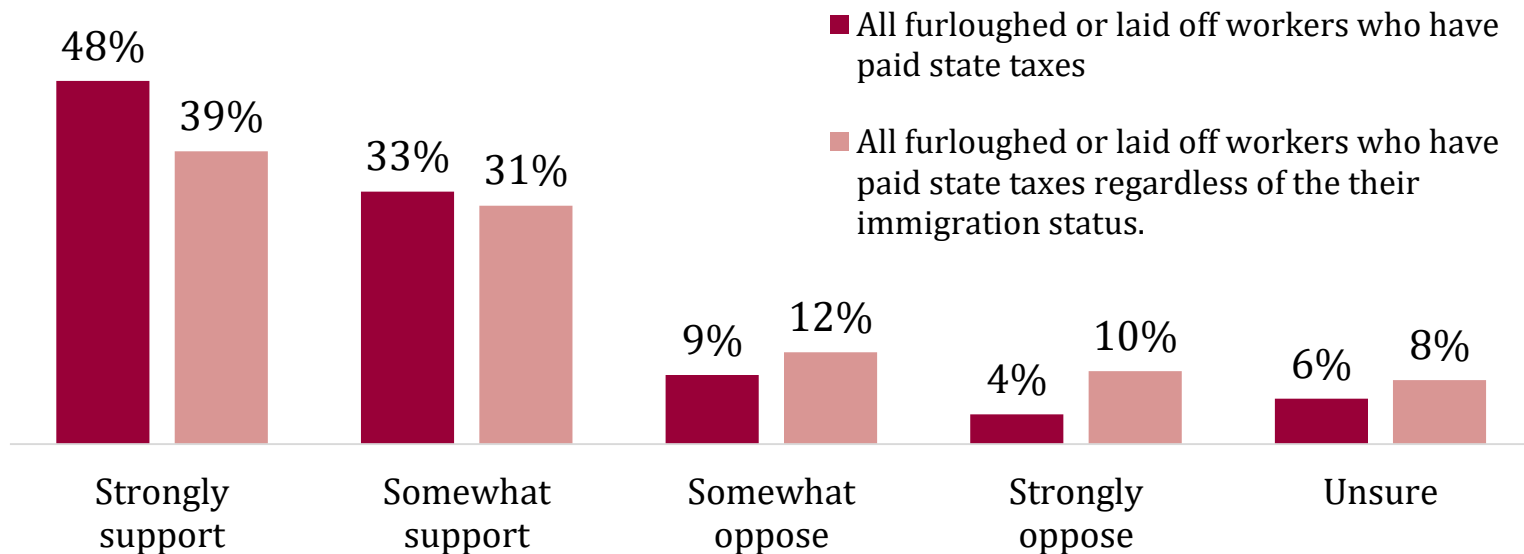


Extending emergency benefits

- Voters support extending emergency benefits to furloughed / laid off workers.

Support for emergency benefits for furloughed / laid off workers

% who support /oppose emergency funding for each of the following



Tax policy priorities

- Fairness tops the list of potential priorities moving forward in terms of tax policy to support state budget.

Fairness, using funds well identified as most important priorities

% of voters who called each very / somewhat important to tax policy moving forward

	Very important	Somewhat important
Making sure all taxpayers, including corporations, are paying a fair amount of taxes	65%	22%
Making the best use of existing funds before raising new taxes	64%	22%
Encouraging businesses to bring investment and jobs to Massachusetts	60%	28%
Keeping taxes and fees on lower income residents as low as possible	57%	28%
Making sure cities and towns benefit from new taxes	55%	31%
Putting a price on carbon to encourage a shift to cleaner energy sources	34%	35%
Using taxes to discourage unhealthy behaviors like smoking, drinking, or unhealthy eating	25%	31%

Tax priorities by race

- There is broad agreement on many tax policy priorities, though more Black and Latino voters prioritize protecting lower income residents from tax hikes, pricing carbon, and taxing unhealthy behaviors.

Overlap, some differences in most important priorities

% who called each very important to tax policy moving forward (diffs > 6 points highlighted)

	Overall	White	Black	Latino
Making sure all taxpayers, including corporations, are paying a fair amount of taxes	65%	66%	70%	67%
Making the best use of existing funds before raising new taxes	64%	66%	67%	59%
Encouraging businesses to bring investment and jobs to Massachusetts	60%	60%	65%	66%
Keeping taxes and fees on lower income residents as low as possible	57%	57%	68%	65%
Making sure cities and towns benefit from new taxes	55%	55%	62%	56%
Putting a price on carbon to encourage a shift to cleaner energy sources	34%	32%	46%	48%
Using taxes to discourage unhealthy behaviors like smoking, drinking, or unhealthy eating	25%	23%	35%	34%

Perceptions of tax levels

- While most rankings put Massachusetts in the middle of the pack, the perception of a high tax state persists, particularly among white voters.

Most think Massachusetts tax levels are higher than in other states

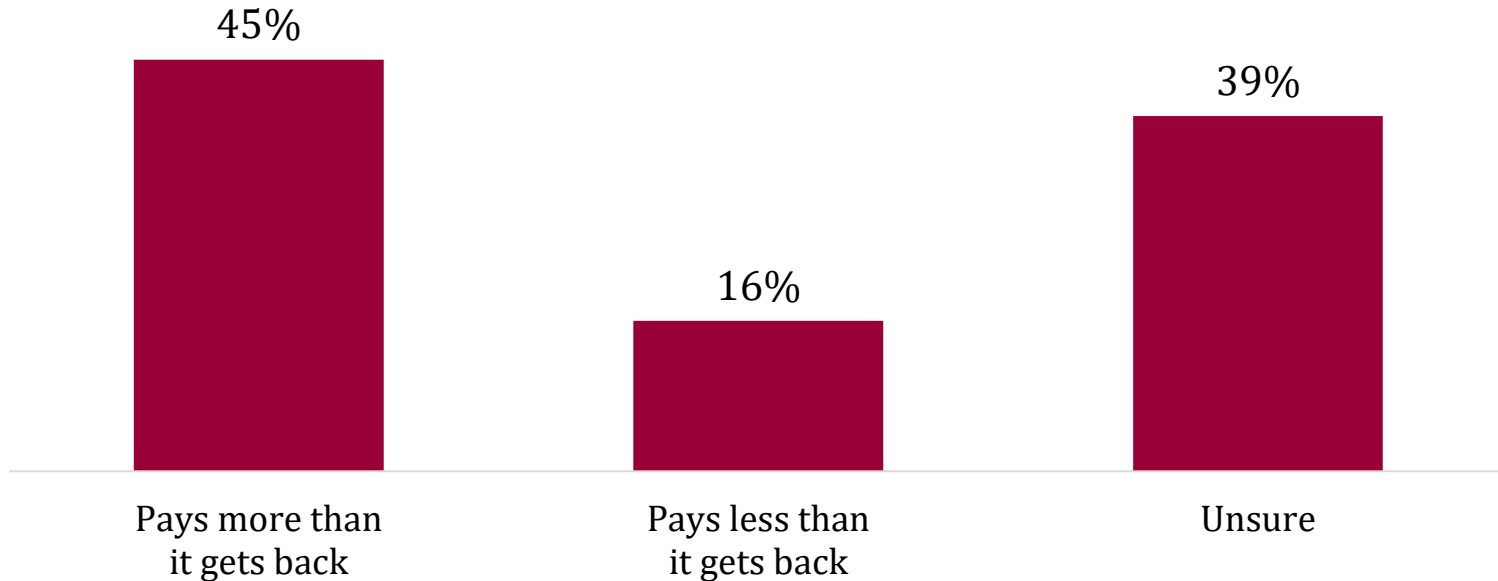
% who think state and local taxes in Massachusetts are ...

	Overall	White	Black	Latino	All others
Higher than in most other states	55%	59%	40%	45%	36%
About average compared to other states	26%	24%	35%	30%	35%
Lower than in most other states	6%	4%	10%	9%	15%
<i>Unsure</i>	<i>14%</i>	<i>14%</i>	<i>14%</i>	<i>15%</i>	<i>15%</i>

Who thinks they get more

- Most either think their community pays more than they get back, or are unsure, even where definitively not correct.

Most don't think their community gets back what it pays or are unsure
% who their community _____ compared to what it pays

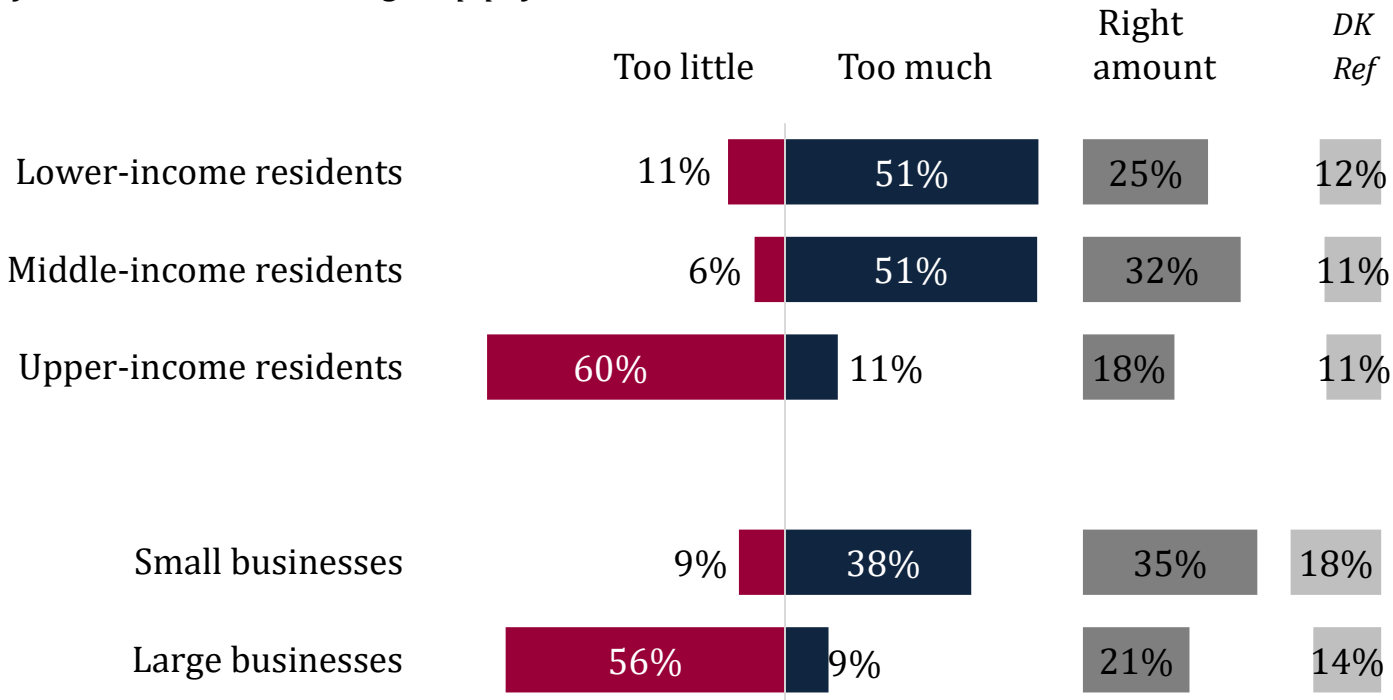


Who is paying too much / little

- Most think upper income residents and large businesses pay too little in taxes.

Sharp differences in views of who pays too much or too little in taxes

% of voters who think each group pays _____

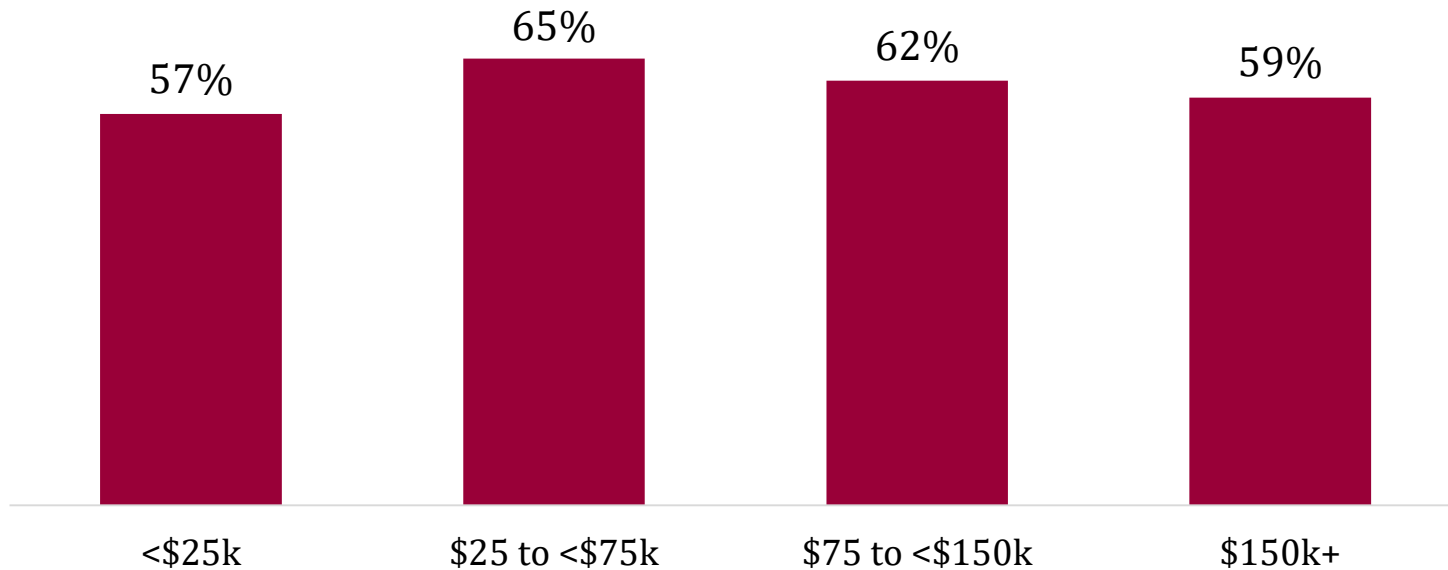


Agreement on who pays too little

- Higher-income voters in Massachusetts mostly agree with others that they pay too little in taxes.

Most upper income individuals agree with others that they pay too little

% of voters in each income category who think upper income residents pay too little in taxes

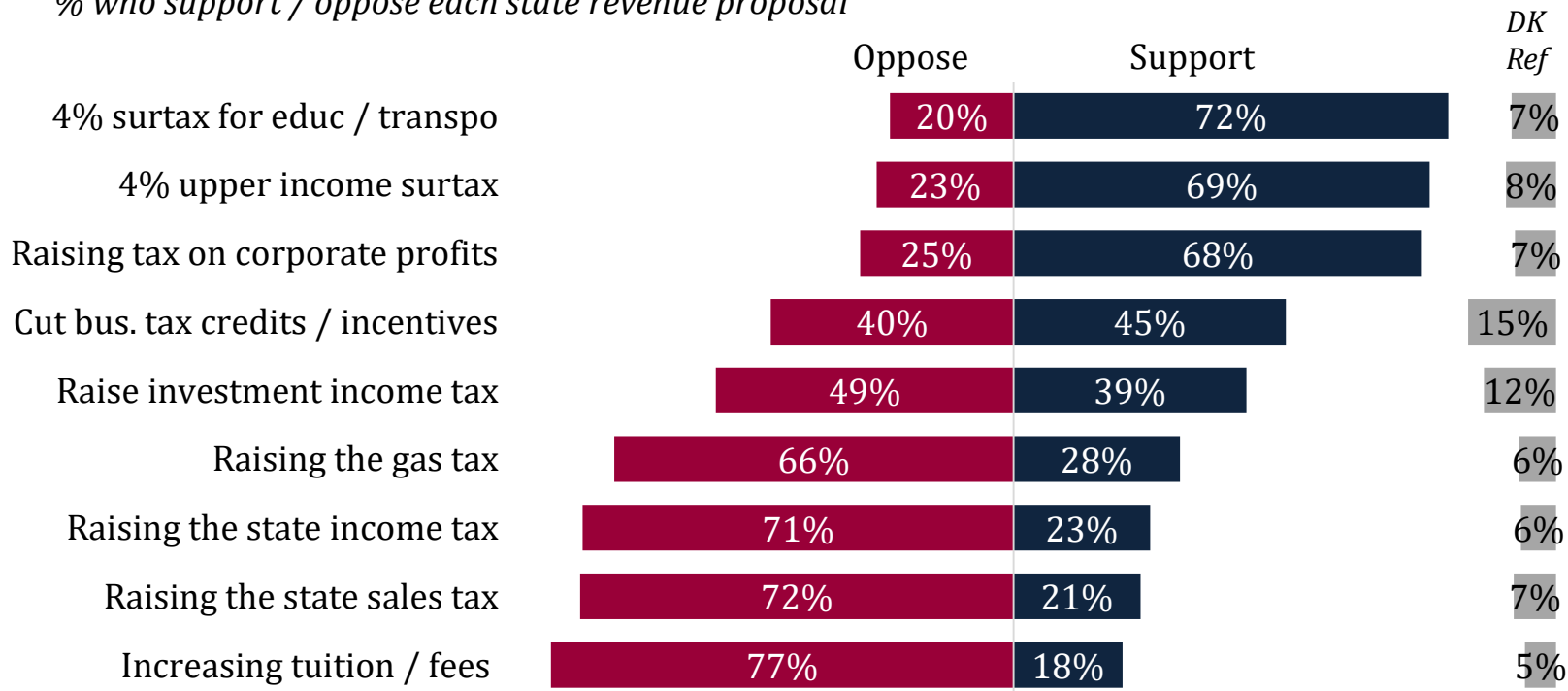


Support for revenue proposals

- Consistent with views of who pays too much / too little, voters support high income tax surcharge and new business taxes.

Support highest for taxes on incomes > \$1 million, corporate taxes

% who support / oppose each state revenue proposal

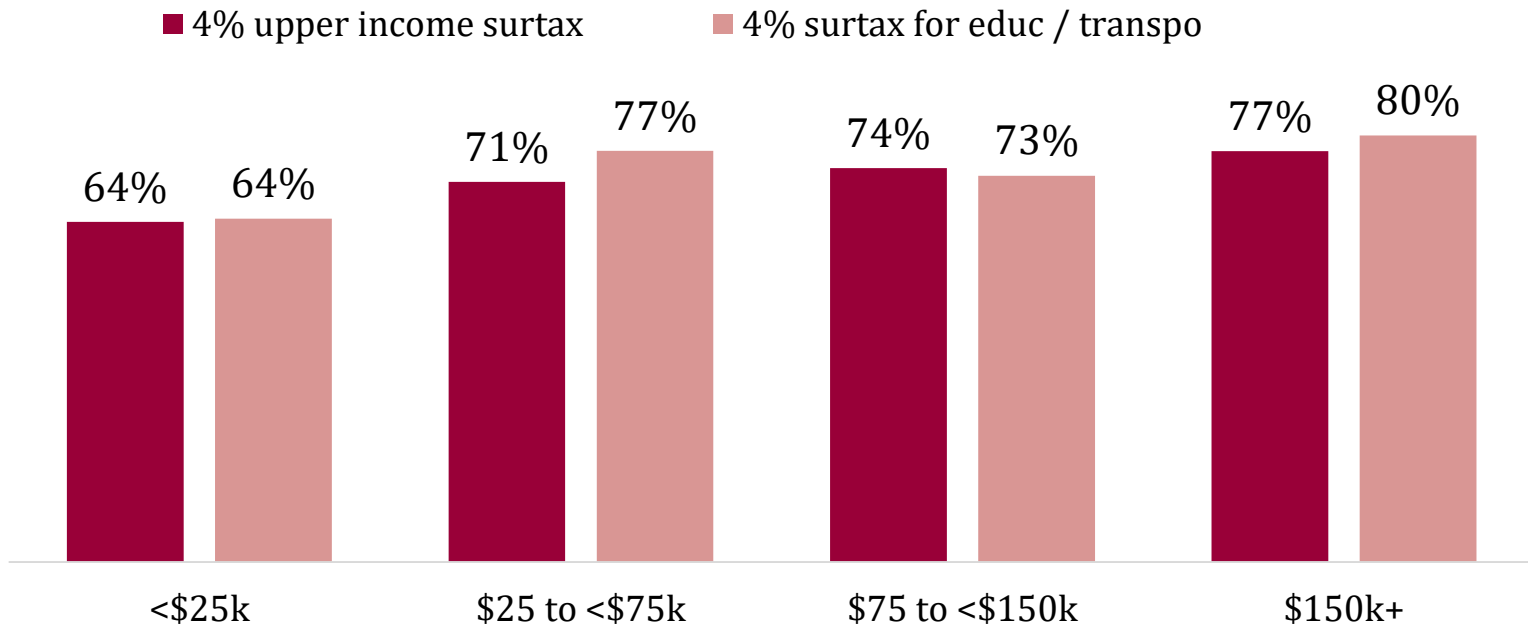


Views of 4% surtax, by income

- Higher-income voters are most likely to support the 4% surcharge on high incomes, the so-called “fair share amendment” or “millionaires’ tax.

Support highest for taxes on incomes > \$1 million, corporate taxes

% who say they support the 4% surtax on high incomes in Massachusetts



Views on revenue options

- Broad consistency on ordering of potential revenue sources, though total support levels differ somewhat.

Agreement across race groups on support for tax proposals

% who say they support each potential state tax / revenue proposal

	Overall	White	Black	Latino	All others
4% surtax for educ / transpo	72%	73%	70%	65%	69%
4% upper income surtax	69%	70%	69%	58%	77%
Raising the tax on corporate profits	68%	68%	71%	60%	67%
Cutting bus. tax credits and incentives	45%	45%	45%	51%	38%
Raising the gas tax	28%	27%	32%	31%	23%
Raising the state income tax	23%	21%	32%	33%	25%
Raising the state sales tax	21%	19%	30%	29%	21%
Increasing tuition / fees	18%	17%	22%	20%	27%



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