

OPENPRIMARIES  
EDUCATION FUND

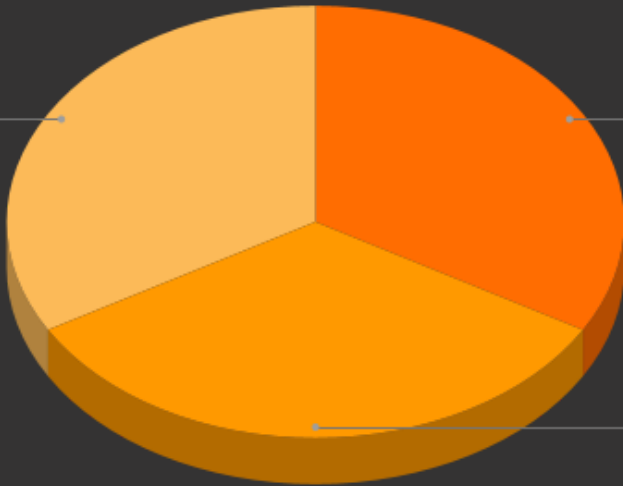
STUDENTS FOR  
OPEN  
PRIMARIES

# YOUNG VOTER SURVEY

# WHO IS COVERED IN THE SURVEY

Students for Open Primaries conducted a survey of 1,000 American young people across the country between June 1, 2022 and October 1, 2022. We asked them a series of eleven questions about how they view the current state of American elections, political affiliation, and their support for change. Respondents were roughly split between Millennial voters (23-39 yrs old), and voting age or close to voting age Gen Z voters (16-22 yrs old).

30-39  
33.3%



16-22  
33.3%

22-30  
33.3%

1000

unique survey responses received

ALL

regardless of party and sex were permitted to complete the survey

122

days the survey was active and available for



# KEY

# HIGHLIGHTS

- A supermajority of young people (65%) consider themselves independent and unaffiliated with either major party.
- 69% of young people feel neither the Republican or Democratic Parties represent them.
- 80% of young voters believe elected leaders are more loyal to their party than their constituents.
- 80% of young people believe closed primaries are a problem impacting young voters.
- 85% of young voters think we need to reform the way we elect our leaders in America today and support a move to nonpartisan open primaries.



# 3 OUT OF 4

voters plan to vote in the next Primary  
(or 78.7% of survey respondents)



# 38.8 MILLION

will be locked out of the next major Primary

"Partisan Affiliations of Registered Voters." Ballotpedia, [https://ballotpedia.org/Partisan\\_affiliations\\_of\\_registered\\_voters](https://ballotpedia.org/Partisan_affiliations_of_registered_voters).

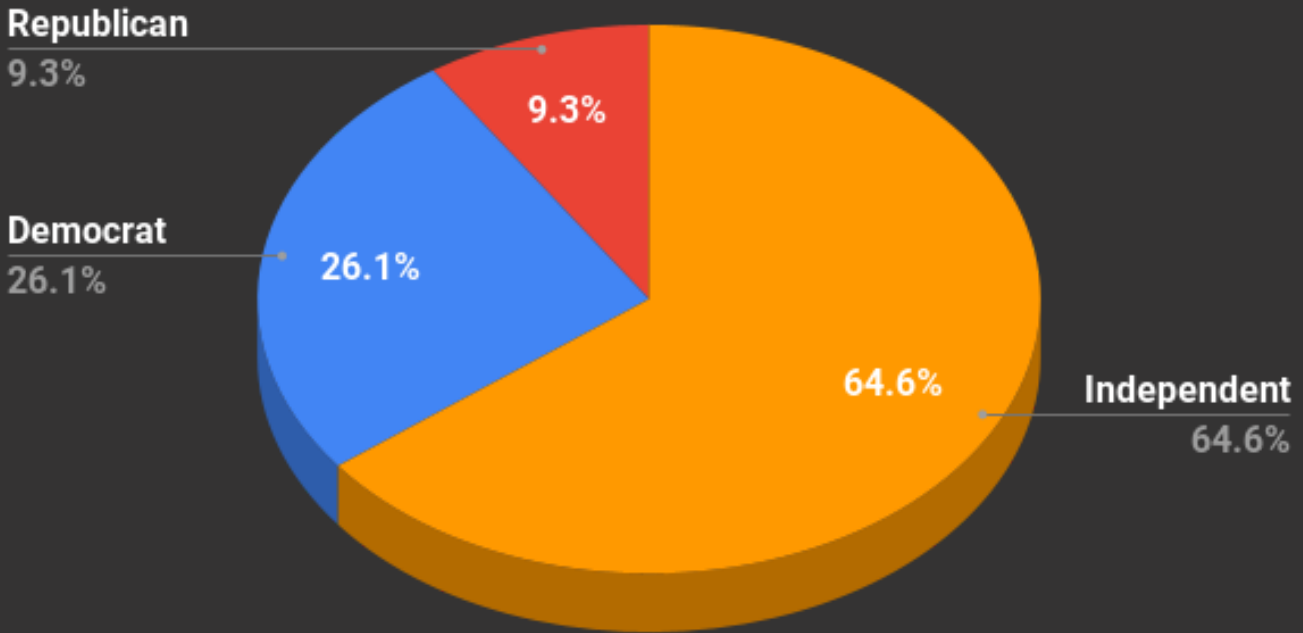


# **SURVEY** **RESULTS**

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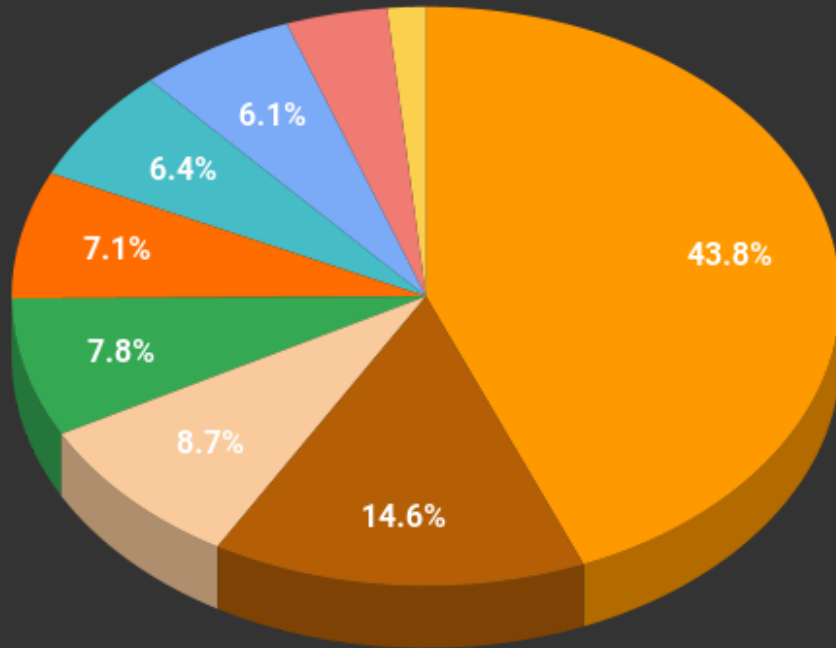
# QUESTION 1

Do you consider yourself an independent voter, Republican or Democrat?



# QUESTION 2

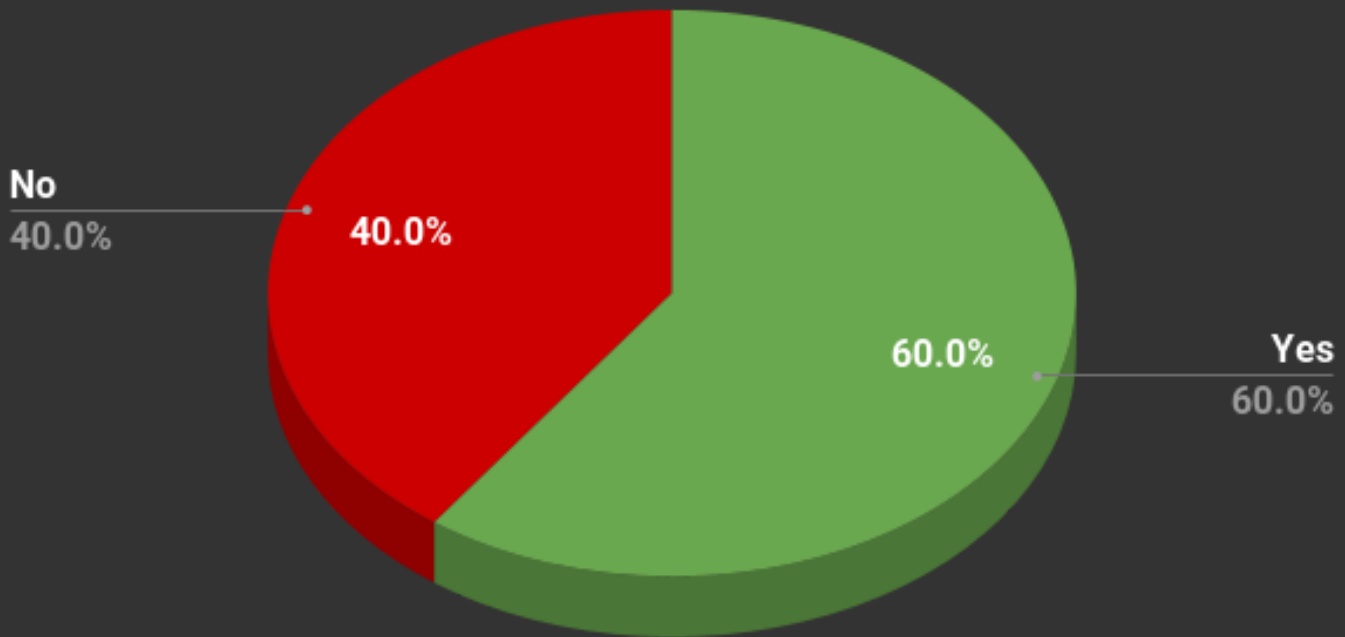
If you identify as independent which statement best describes why?



- I'd rather vote for the person, not the party.
- Both parties have lost touch with the American people.
- I like to think for myself.
- The parties are corrupt.
- It's a way that I can protest the two-party system.
- Other
- The parties have hijacked our government.
- I don't want to be put in a category or taken for granted.
- I get into fewer fights with my family.

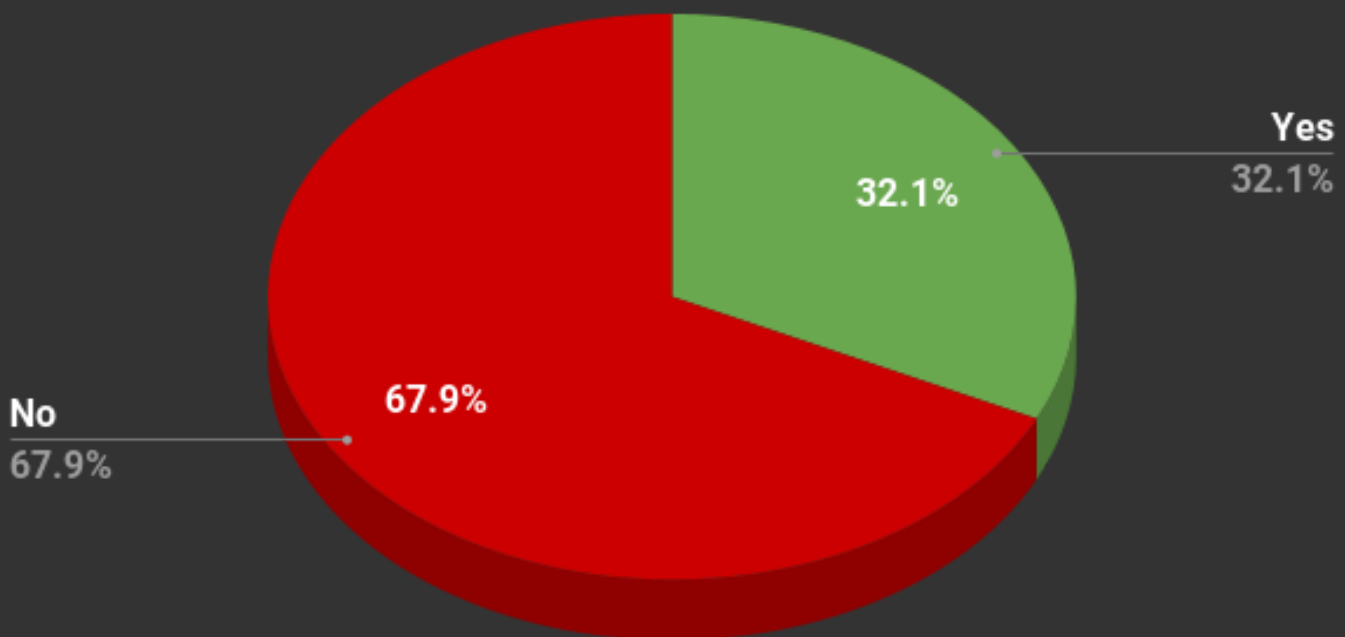
# QUESTION 3

Did you feel you need to join a party in order to participate politically?



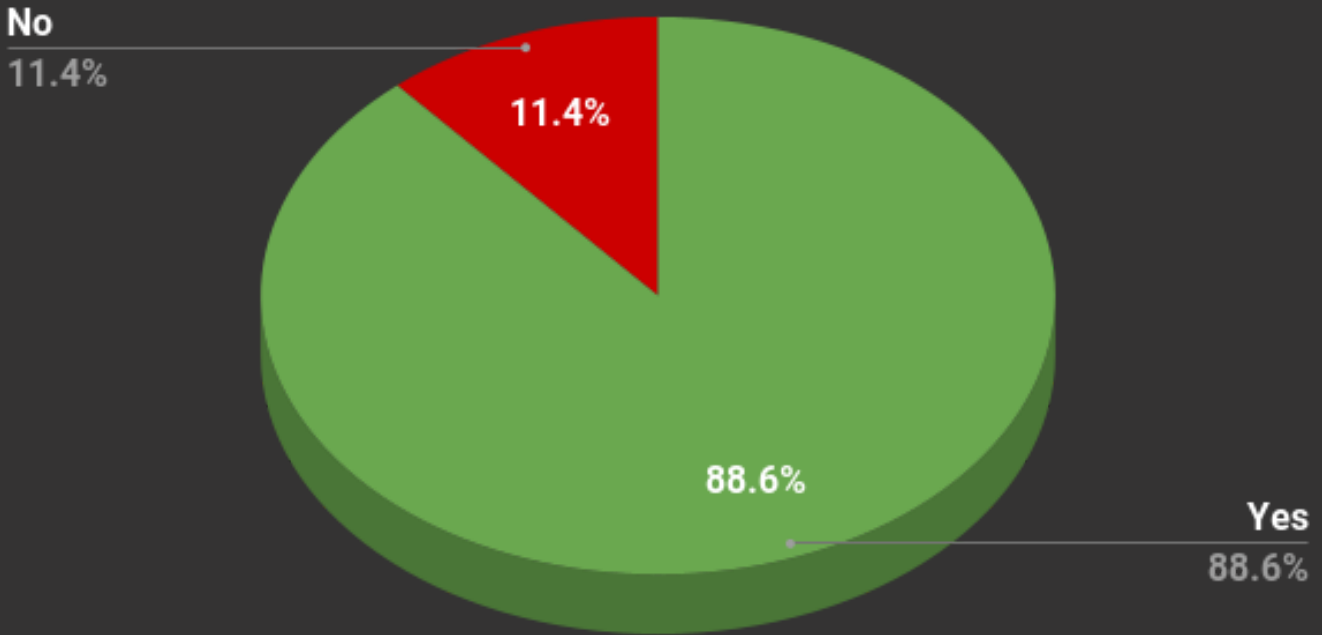
# QUESTION 4

Do you feel that either of the two major parties (Republicans/Democrats) represents you?



# QUESTION 5

Right now over 30 million Independent/No Party Affiliation Americans are locked out of primary elections in states with closed primaries (primary elections only open to Democrats and Republicans). Over 50% of Millennial & Gen Z voters do not identify with either major party and are locked out of voting in the first round of elections in closed primary states. Do you think that's a problem impacting young voters?



## CASE STUDY: FLORIDA AMENDMENT 3 (2020)

### **FULCRUM** How open primaries got the most votes and still got rejected in FL by Steve Hough, Florida Fair and Open Primaries

"In 1998, Floridians overwhelmingly voted for an amendment that allowed every voter to vote in a primary election when only one party fields candidates and would face no opposition in the general election. It passed with 64 percent support.

Upon passage, the political parties sought an opinion on whether write-in candidates constituted opposition. **Since then, party leaders have enlisted bogus write-in candidates so that they could keep their primaries closed.**

Twenty years later, the convening of the Florida Constitution Revision Commission produced an outcry for open primaries. During public hearings, open primaries became the second-most popular issue raised — right behind the automatic restoration of voting rights for formerly incarcerated citizens.

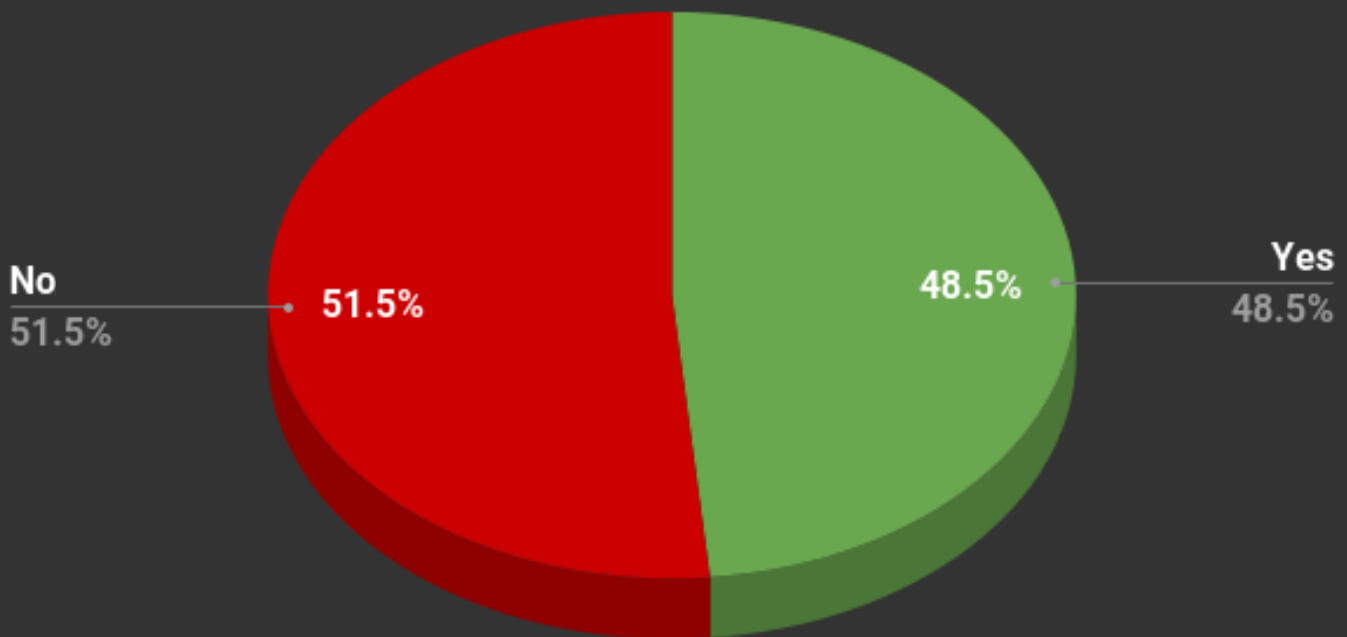
Some polling was conducted and we were feeling good about our prospects of winning. Then a bomb went off. It was no secret that both major parties opposed Amendment 3. But in August they went nuclear.

Mailers paid for by the Florida Democratic Party blanketed the state claiming that Amendment 3 would disadvantage black voters. The Republican Party of Florida followed suit with mailers claiming the amendment was being promoted by "leftists".

**Despite the parties' aggressive smear campaigns, our effort still received 57% of the vote. That is a clear majority and, in my book, a huge win."**

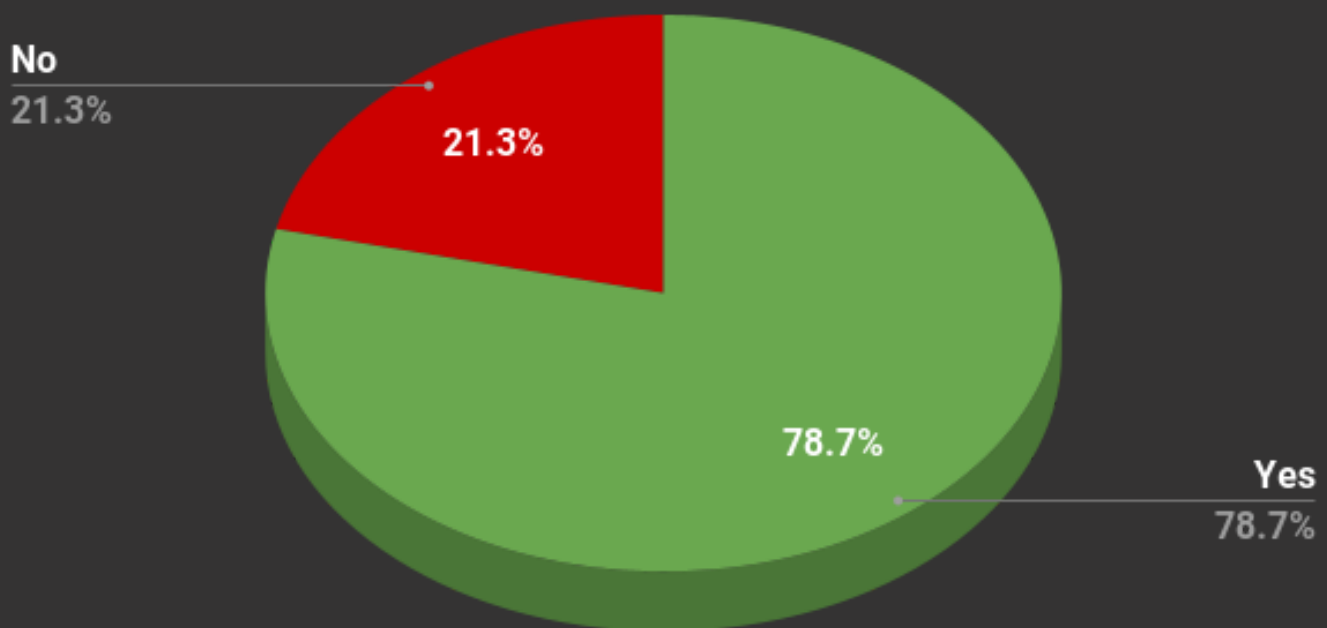
# QUESTION 6

Do you know whether you live in a state with an open or closed primary?



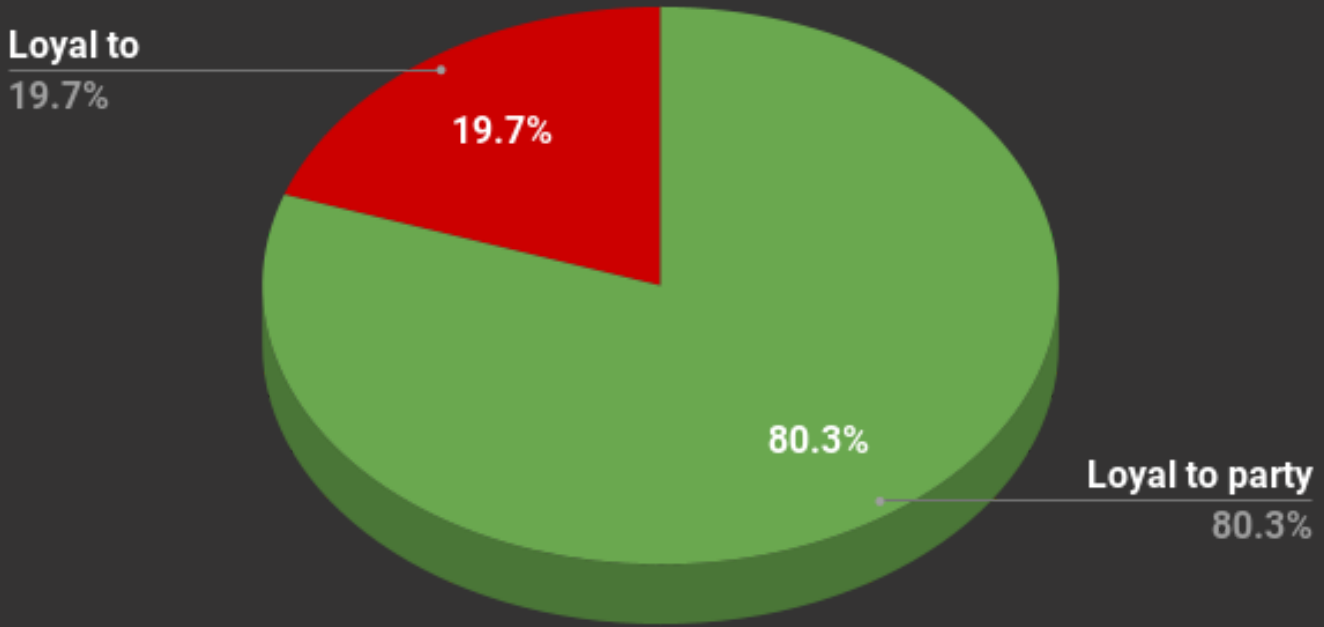
# QUESTION 7

Do you plan on voting in your state's primary election this year?



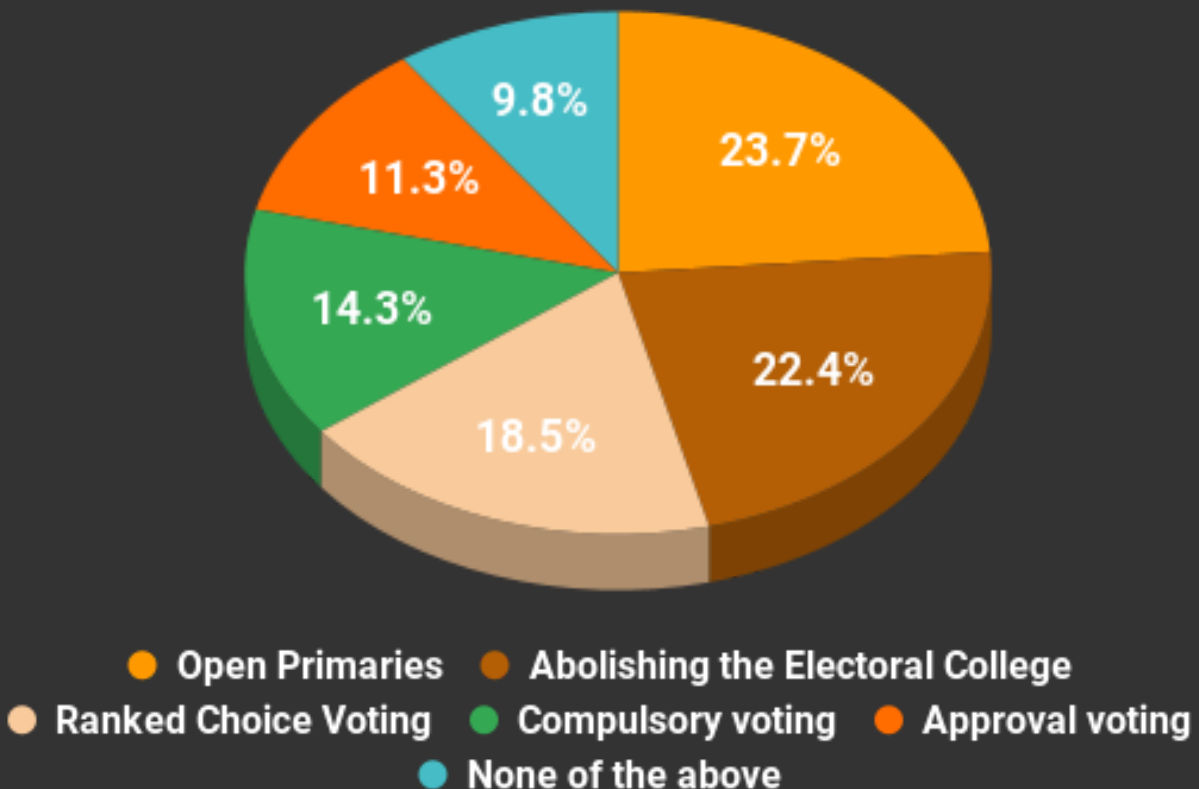
# QUESTION 8

Do you think elected officials in your State Legislature and Congress are mainly loyal to the community or mainly loyal to the political party they belong to?



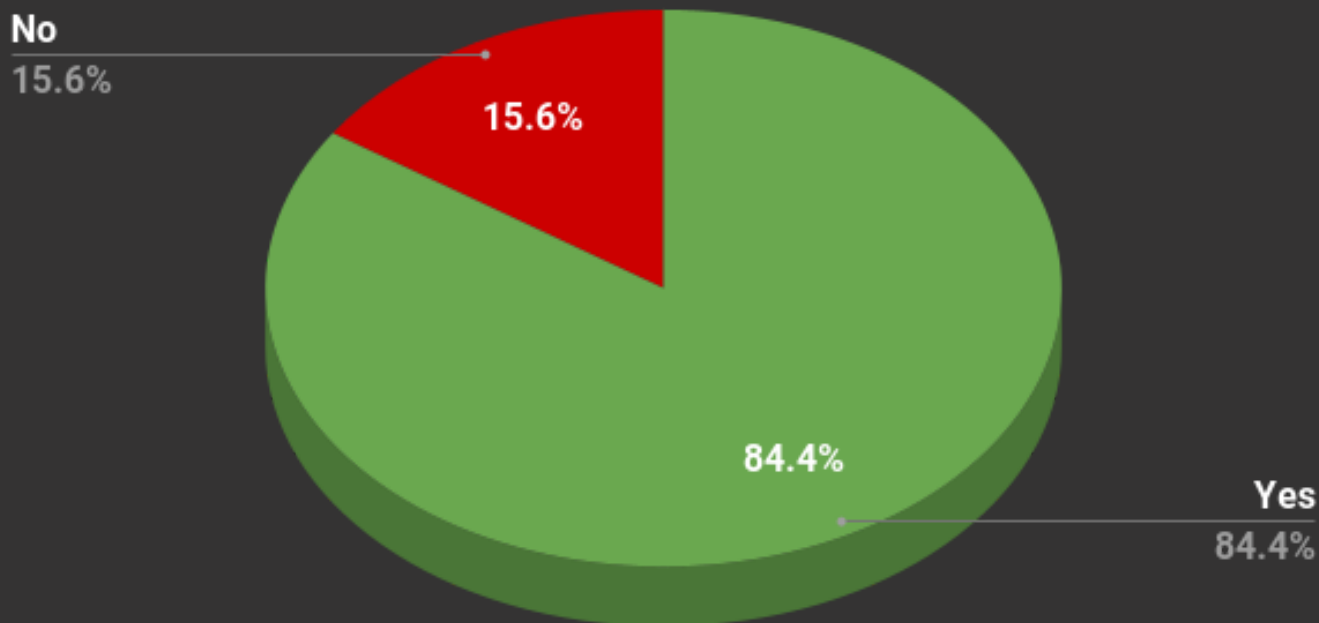
# QUESTION 9

Which one of these terms are you familiar with?



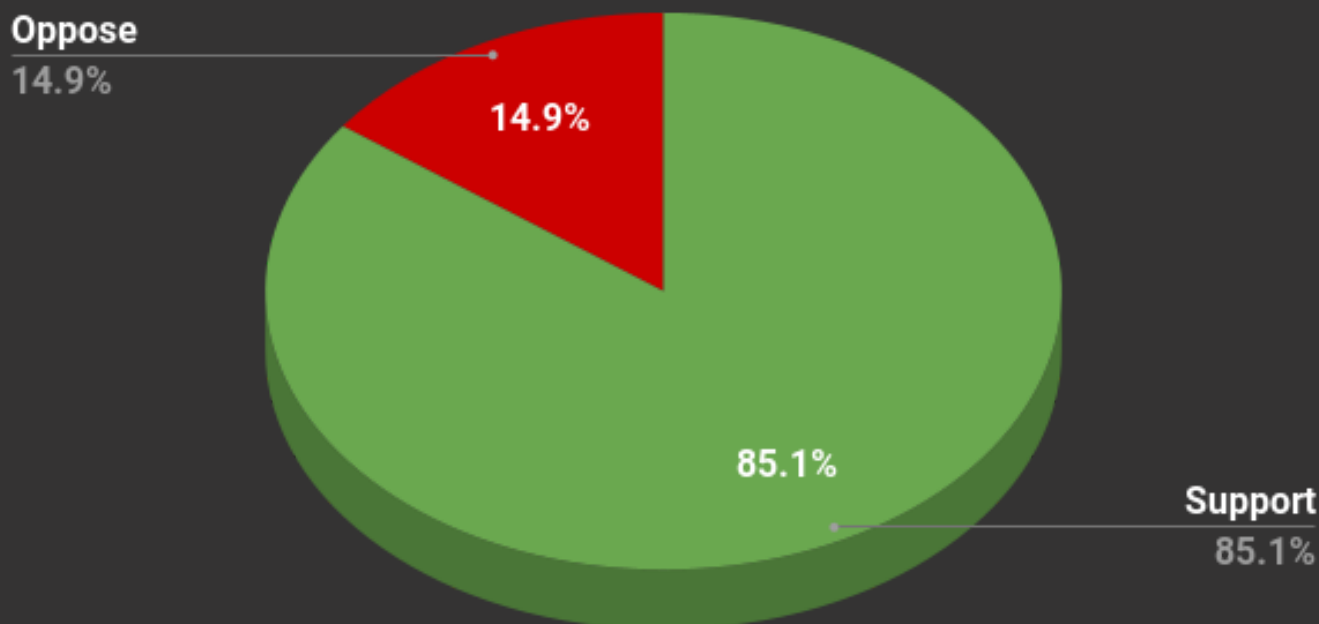
# QUESTION 10

Do you think that a change in how we elect our officials (electoral reform) is necessary?



# QUESTION 11

If there was a proposal to change your election system to a single open primary system in which all candidates compete on the same ballot and all voters get to participate and choose from all the candidates in the first round of voting--Would you oppose or support this proposal?



# FINAL FINDINGS

In this survey, we identify three critical through lines about young voters in America today:

- **They are increasingly rejecting partisanship and party affiliation altogether.** A growing number of young Americans, especially first-time voters, distrust party politics. More and more are rejecting registering with a party, believing that neither the Democratic Party nor the Republican Party represent them. Well over half of young Americans now view themselves as independent. Other surveys, including Pew Research, have found similar results.
- **They believe our primary election system is broken.** Young people believe our current system of party primaries, and closed party primaries in particular, are a significant issue for them. They believe they are producing elected leaders more accountable to their party than the voters and want to reform the system as a result. However, many of these voters are still unfamiliar with their own state's rules. More voter education of young people and their voting rights is necessary.
- **Young voters overwhelmingly support open primaries.** Young voters support open and nonpartisan primary systems as a key reform to make our system of elections more representative and democratic.

In 2020, for the first time, Millennials and Gen Z voters surpassed Baby Boomers and prior generations (older adults born in 1964 or earlier) as a share of all Americans eligible to vote. While their participation rates are still lower than older generations, that is changing rapidly. Young voters had historic turnout rates in both the 2018 midterms and 2020 general election, where half of young voters participated; the highest rate of young voter participation since the voting age was lowered to eighteen.

Researchers say the 2022 election had the second highest voter turnout among voters under 30 in at least the past three decades.

More than 8 million new young voters were eligible to participate in the 2022 midterm elections, where they were a decisive presence. By 2024, the two younger generations are expected to equal the older ones as a share of actual voters on Election Day. And by 2028, Millennials and Gen Z will dwarf the older generations as a share of **both** eligible and actual voters.

**All of which to say, we better start listening to young voters in terms of how they think about our system of elections and the role they see for themselves in navigating them.**

We hope this survey can begin a new conversation about reforming our primaries and ensuring the votes of our youngest voters are counted and meaningful.



# ABOUT STUDENTS FOR OPEN PRIMARIES



“Let All Voters Vote” is a simple motto. It’s also our mission.

Students for Open Primaries is a nationwide movement encompassing hundreds of youth volunteers from the streets of California to the steps of our Capitol and everything in between. We advocate for open and nonpartisan primary systems, fight efforts to close primaries, educate voters and policymakers on primary reform, and support efforts nationwide for election reform. Much of our focus, like the Young Voter Survey, is on the impacts that closed and partisan primaries have on young voters.

Our Student Ambassador (“SAP”) program connects aspiring young changemakers with active electoral reform movements across the country. The SAP also provides support to electoral reform movements through the Open Primaries organization and campaigns across the country.

Students for Open Primaries was founded in 2020 by Dariel Cruz-Rodriguez and Elena Ashburn, two high school students (now in college) who met while working on the campaign for “top two” nonpartisan primaries (Amendment 3) in their home state of Florida. With over half of young people politically independent and shut out of primary elections, they decided to create a political reform organization by and for students and other young people.

Students for Open Primaries is a project of the national nonprofit reform organization, Open Primaries.

Get involved with the open primaries movement and learn more about our programs at the Students for Open Primaries website.



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**A survey of the Open Primaries Education Fund conducted  
in partnership with Students for Open Primaries**

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**WE THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IN  
OPEN PRIMARIES**