

FACTANK

NEWS IN THE NUMBERS

FEBRUARY 21, 2020

Democrats overwhelmingly favor free college tuition, while Republicans are divided by age, education

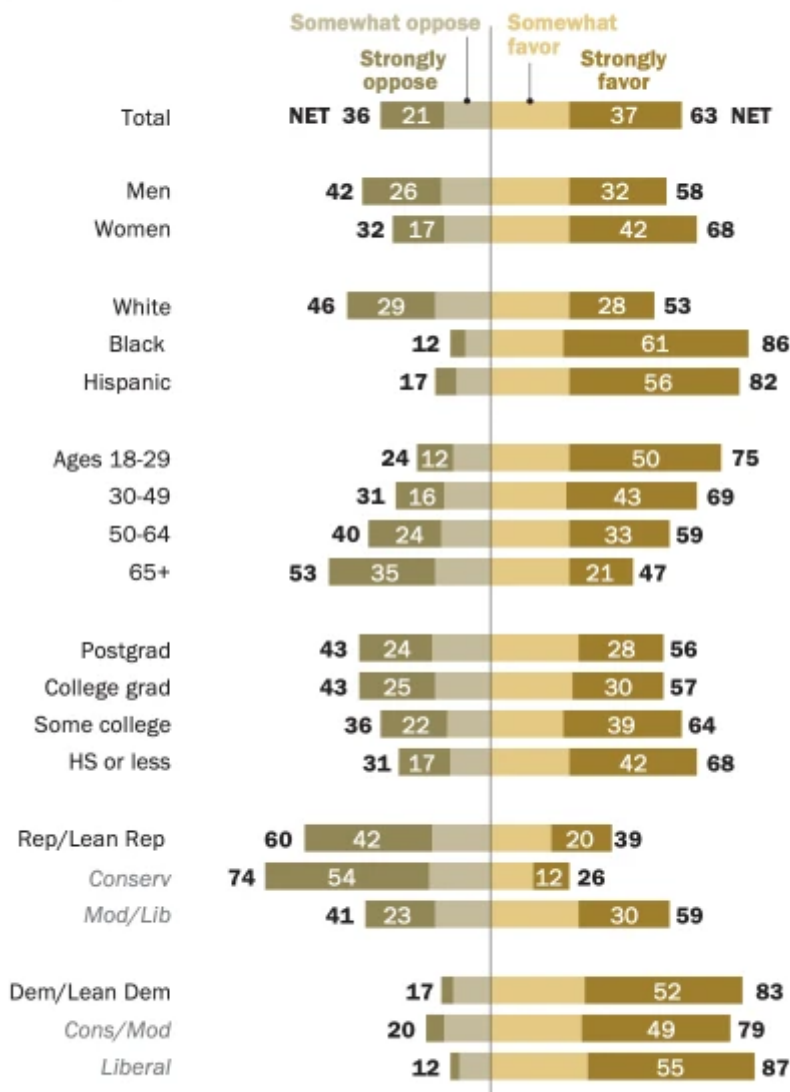
BY HANNAH HARTIG



Americans generally support making tuition free at public colleges and universities for all U.S. students. Above, students at Long Beach State University in California in 2017. (Scott Varley/Digital First Media/Torrance Daily Breeze via Getty Images)

Broad support for tuition-free college among women, young people, black and Hispanic adults

% who ___ making tuition at public colleges and universities free for all American students



Note: No answer responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 6-19, 2020.

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American adults generally support making tuition free at public colleges and universities for all U.S. students, yet there are sizable partisan and demographic differences in views of tuition-free college.

Republicans, in particular, are divided by age and educational attainment in opinions on this issue.

Among all U.S. adults, 63% favor making tuition at public colleges free, including 37% who *strongly* favor the proposal. Slightly more than a third oppose tuition-free college (36%), with 21% strongly opposed, according to a Pew Research Center conducted in January.

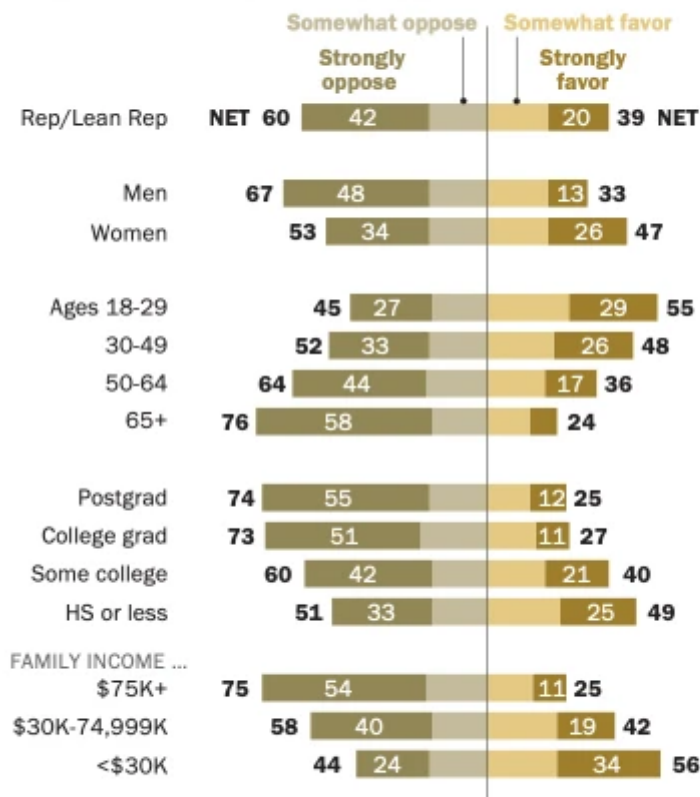
Large shares of black (86%) and Hispanic adults (82%) favor making college free for all Americans, compared with 53% of whites. And while 75% of adults under age 30 favor this proposal, it draws support from only about half (47%) of those ages 65 and older.

▼ **How we did this**

Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents overwhelmingly favor making college tuition free for all American students (83% support this). While 60% of Republicans and Republican leaners oppose making college tuition-free, 39% support this.

Among Republicans, age and educational differences in support for tuition-free college

% of Rep/Lean Rep who ___ making tuition at public colleges and universities free for all American students



Note: No answer responses not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 6-19, 2020.

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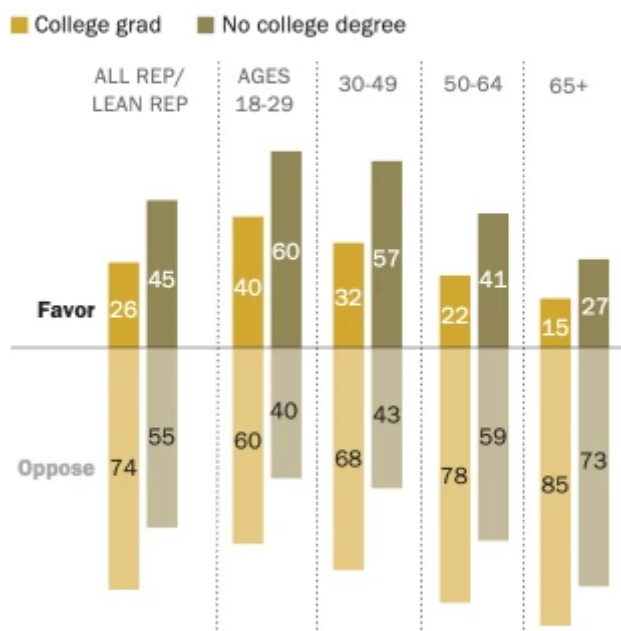
While Democrats largely favor free college tuition, the party’s 2020 presidential candidates differ in how intensely they feel about this issue. Democratic voters who support Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren for the party’s nomination are more likely than supporters of other candidates to strongly favor making tuition free for all students.

Republicans have their own differences: Those under age 30 are more than *twice* as likely as those 65 and older to support making college tuition free for all Americans (55% vs. 24%).

And while Republicans who have completed college are mostly opposed to making tuition free for all American students, the proposal draws more support from Republicans who do not have a four-year degree.

Younger, non-college Republicans are most supportive of free college tuition

% of *Rep/Lean Rep* who strongly/somewhat ___ making tuition at public colleges and universities free for all American students



Note: No answer responses not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 6-19, 2020.

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The differences among Republicans are particularly stark when combining age and educational attainment. Among Republicans under age 50 who have not completed college, 58% favor making college tuition free for all Americans. Among Republican college graduates, only 34% favor this.

Support for tuition-free college declines among older Republicans, regardless of whether or not they have completed college. However, even among Republicans who are ages 50 and older, those who have not completed college are less supportive.

Note: Here are the questions used for this report, along with responses, and its methodology.

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