



Sacred Heart
UNIVERSITY



Institute for Public Policy Statewide Poll - February 2021



Report of Findings

March 2, 2021

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Sacred Heart
UNIVERSITY



Our Story

Sacred Heart University's Institute for Public Policy and GreatBlue Research partner to analyze salient issues facing the State of Connecticut. This collaboration combines the academic excellence of a top-rated private University and the research design, analysis and reporting expertise of GreatBlue Research.

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Areas of Investigation

The Sacred Heart University Institute for Public Policy leveraged a dual-methodology quantitative research approach to address the following areas of investigation:

- Thoughts on the quality of life in Connecticut
- Governor Ned Lamont's job approval ratings
- Sentiment regarding the legalization of Marijuana
- Thoughts on COVID-19 and the distribution of the vaccine
- Thoughts on public health insurance in Connecticut
- Thoughts on COVID-19 distribution
- Thoughts on current Connecticut state-funded pensions
- Demographic profiles of respondents

Research Methodology Snapshot

Methodology Dual mode (phone and digital survey)**	No. of Completes 1,000	No. of Questions 42*	Sample Procured by GreatBlue
Target Connecticut residents	Margin of Error +/- 3.02%	Confidence Level 95%	Research Dates February 16 - 24, 2021

* This represents the total possible number of questions; not all respondents will answer all questions based on skip patterns and other instrument bias.

** Supervisory personnel, in addition to computer-aided interviewing platforms, ensure the integrity of the data is accurate.

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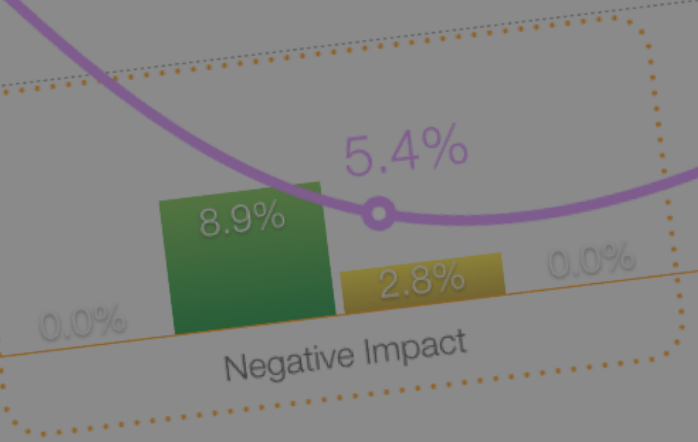
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71.5%
would still purchase
at an increased
price point



SHU Institute for Public Policy - February 2021 Headlines

- ❖ In February 2021, 68.3% of surveyed Connecticut residents reported their quality of life in the State as being either “excellent” (16.8%) or “good” (51.5%), which marked a slight decrease from the 69.1% who reported the same in October of 2020.
 - A decreased frequency of February 2021 respondents expressed the belief that the quality of life in Connecticut is “declining” (16.9%), compared to the rate of those who reported the same in October 2020 (18.3%).
- ❖ An increased rate of Connecticut residents surveyed in February 2021 (55.9%) reported to “approve” of how Ned Lamont is handling his job as governor, which is higher than the 53.5% of respondents who reported the same in October 2020.
 - 38.6% approval among Republicans (18.0% unsure)
 - 49.0% approval among Unaffiliated voters (27.1% unsure)
 - 51.3% approval among Independent voters (23.1% unsure)
 - 77.2% approval among Democrats (14.4% unsure)
- ❖ During the COVID-19 pandemic, high frequencies of respondents reported to “approve” of the way Ned Lamont is handling “communication to the public” (73.6% over 71.2% in October 2020) and his “overall response and handling of the COVID-19 crisis” (70.7% over 67.0% in October 2020).
 - 58.3% reported they “approve” of the way Governor Lamont is “addressing a plan for Connecticut residents and families” (consistent with 58.3% in October 2020).
 - 51.2% reported they “approve” of the way Governor Lamont is “addressing a plan for businesses in the state” (from 53.1% in October 2020).

SHU Institute for Public Policy - February 2021 Headlines

- ❖ The majority of Connecticut residents surveyed in February 2021 (66.2%) support the legalization of marijuana use and possession in CT for adults 21 and older.
 - Of note, 40.8% of survey respondents agree marijuana is a 'gateway drug' that leads to using other drugs/substances.
- ❖ The majority of Connecticut residents surveyed in February 2021, 71.8%, report believing marijuana has either "fewer effects" (37.5%) or "the same amount of effects" (34.3%) as alcohol.
 - Of note, 73.4% of survey respondents indicated they believe marijuana has fewer effects than other drugs, such as heroin, amphetamines, and prescription pain medications, while 12.7% reported "the same amount of effects," 4.1% reported "more effects" and 9.8% were unsure.
- ❖ If marijuana were legalized, 62.1% of surveyed residents would support the erasure of criminal records for those previously convicted of recreational offenses/possession.
- ❖ 57.5% of Connecticut residents surveyed indicated they would support executive orders to prevent housing evictions. Of note, 82.0% report believing that eviction moratoriums have had an impact on landlords in the State.
- ❖ 44.1% of surveyed Connecticut residents indicated they do not believe the homeless population should be prioritized for the COVID-19 vaccine.
 - 57.7% of indicated that when considering which of the homeless population should receive the COVID-19 vaccine, both "age" and "risk factors (medical conditions)" should be prioritized.

SHU Institute for Public Policy - February 2021 Headlines

- ❖ When respondents were asked what should be implemented or considered to keep the homeless population safe from the spread of the virus, 26.5% reported protocols to distribute “Government provided Personal Protection Equipment),” 21.3% reported “ensure a protocol to provide immediate access to vaccines” and 18.0% indicated “ensure COVID education through facilities like shelters and food pantries.”
- ❖ 45.8% of surveyed Connecticut residents support the ability for individuals to choose not to receive a vaccine based on their religious beliefs.
- ❖ When respondents were asked to estimate what percentage of Connecticut businesses have closed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, 7.6% indicated less than 20%, 13.2% indicated 20% to 29%, 11.2% indicated 30% to 39%, 9.9% indicated 40% to 49% and 18.9% indicated 50% or more. Of note, 39.2% of respondents reported being unsure.
- ❖ 48.2% of respondents indicated being aware of the programs available to CT businesses that provide funding as a result of the pandemic.
 - Of note, when asked to indicate how long financial assistance should be given to businesses as a result of the pandemic, 61.7% indicated either “for the next 6 months” (25.9%) or “for the next year” (35.8%).
 - 50.1% of respondents indicated believing the State has supported businesses well during the pandemic.

SHU Institute for Public Policy - February 2021 Headlines

- ❖ When surveyed Connecticut residents were prompted to describe their level of health insurance prior to the pandemic, 28.2% indicated being "insured with a PPO plan (preferred provider organization)" and 24.1% indicated being insured through "Medicare." When asked to describe their current level of health insurance, 27.0% indicated they were "insured with a PPO plan" and 24.6% indicated "Medicare."
- ❖ 91.0% of surveyed Connecticut residents reported their current health insurance package covered "medical" services, 75.4% indicated "prescription drug" services, 66.7% indicated "dental" services and 63.0% indicated "vision" services.
- ❖ When asked how strongly they support or oppose an increase in the amount of government sponsored healthcare options, 66.8% indicated they either "strongly support" (33.9%) or "somewhat support" (32.9%) the initiative.
- ❖ 42.2% of surveyed Connecticut residents indicated being aware of the potential impacts of eliminating state-funded retirement, while 43.8% were not aware and 14.0% were unsure. Comparatively, 39.4% of survey participants reported being aware of the stability level of the CT State Employee Retirement Fund.
- ❖ 54.3% of surveyed Connecticut residents indicated they believe Connecticut state pensions should be reformed, 32.5% indicated they were unsure and 13.2% indicated state pensions should not be reformed.
- ❖ 41.0% of respondents indicated they support the elimination of income and capital gains taxes to prevent tax-free pensions, rather than "paying in" to help stabilize the budget.

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71.5%

would still purchase
at an increased
price point

5.4%

8.9%

2.8%

0.0%

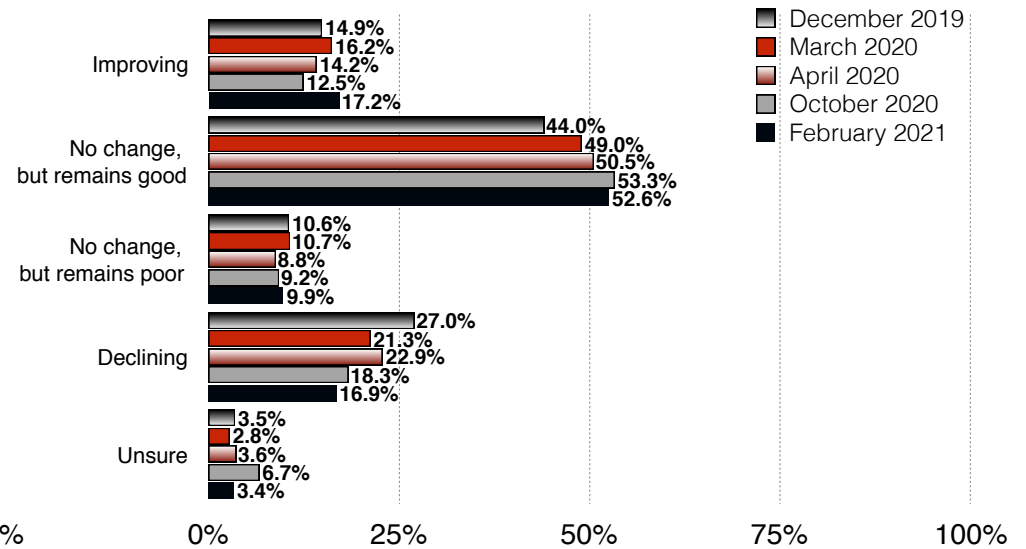
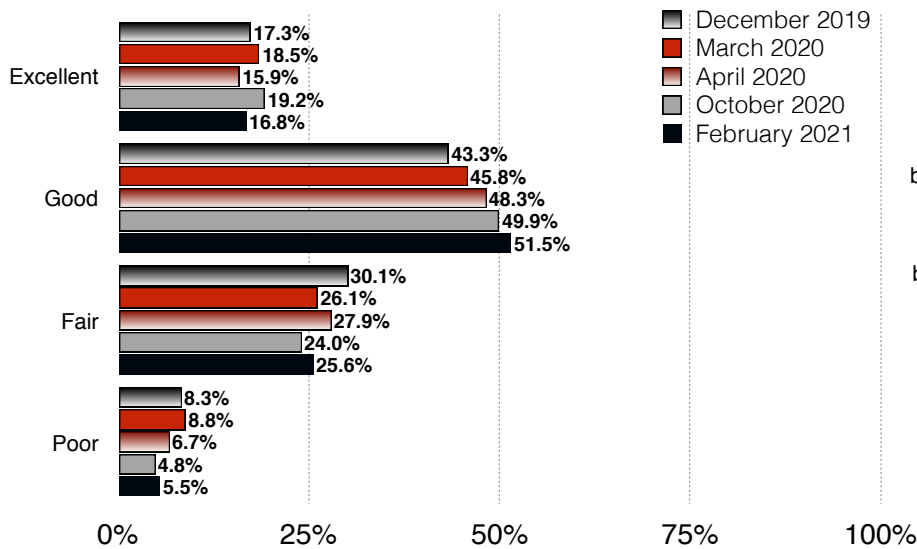
Negative Impact

Boomers

Quality of Life in Connecticut

The majority of Connecticut residents surveyed in February 2021, 68.3%, reported their quality of life in the State as being either “excellent” (16.8%) or “good” (51.5%), which marked a slight decrease from the 69.1% who reported the same in October of 2020. Of note, a decreased frequency of February 2021 respondents expressed the belief that the quality of life in Connecticut is “declining” (16.9%), compared to the rate of those who reported the same in October 2020 (18.3%).

- ❖ A lower frequency of respondents earning less than \$50,000 annually, 57.1%, reported their quality of life as either “excellent” (10.9%) or “good” (46.2%) when compared to those earning \$150,000 or more per year (88.3%).
- ❖ Respondents ages 18-34 reported their quality of life is “improving” at a 31.3% frequency, which is the highest rate among all age segments.



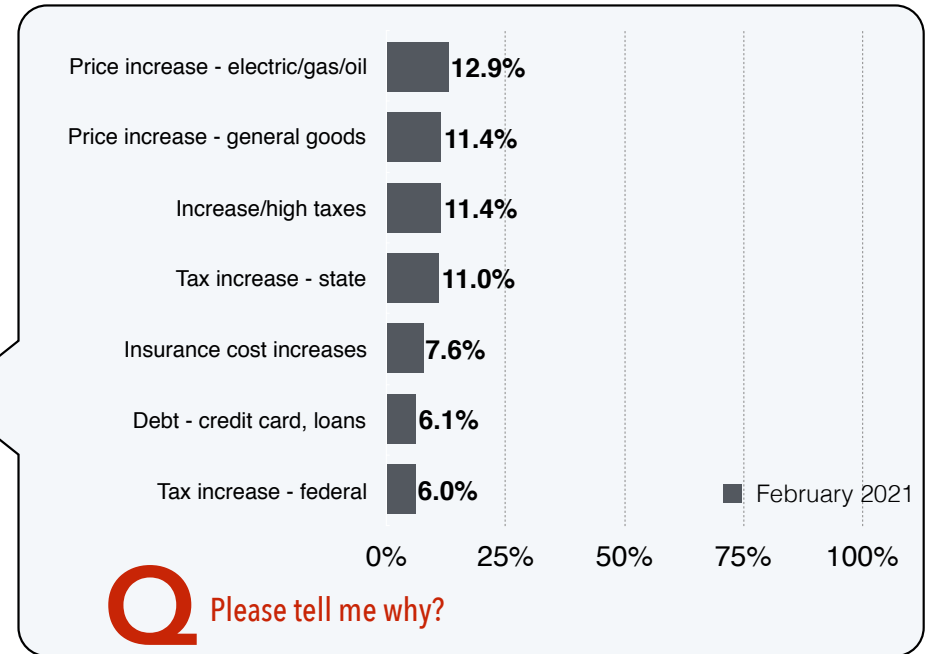
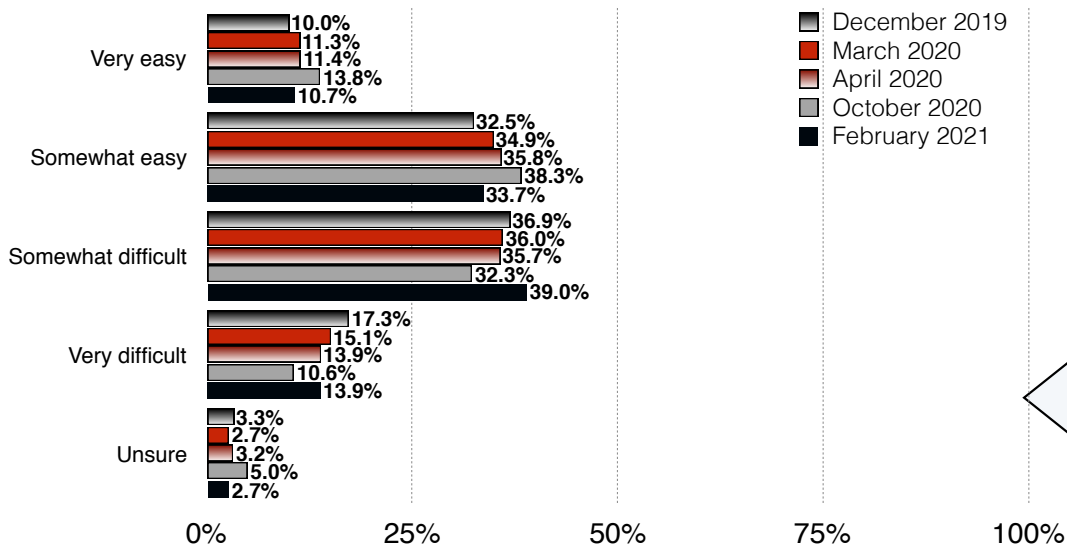
Q How would you rate your overall quality of life in Connecticut? Would you say...

Q Would you say, overall, your quality of life in Connecticut is...

Quality of Life in Connecticut

In February 2021, 44.4% of surveyed residents (from 52.1% in October 2020) reported it being either "very easy" (10.7%) or "somewhat easy" (33.7%) to maintain their standard of living out of their household income today, while 52.9% (over 42.9% in October 2020) reported it being "difficult" to maintain their standard of living.

- ❖ Roughly two-thirds of respondents earning under \$50,000 (67.4%) reported it being "difficult" to maintain their standard of living (over 59.7% in October 2020).
- ❖ 64.3% of respondents ages 45-64 reported it being "difficult" to maintain their standard of living (over 49.9% in October 2020).



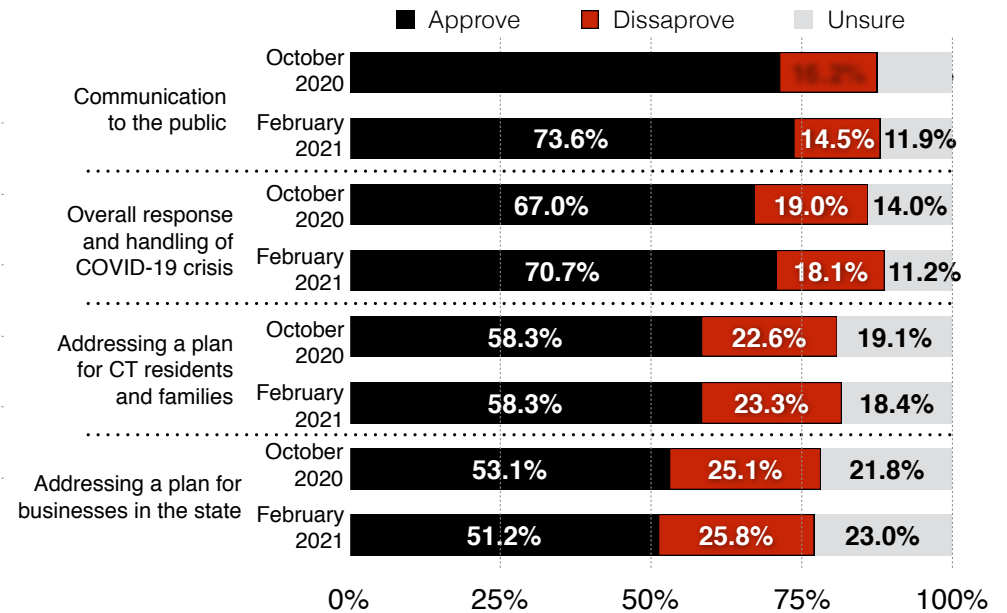
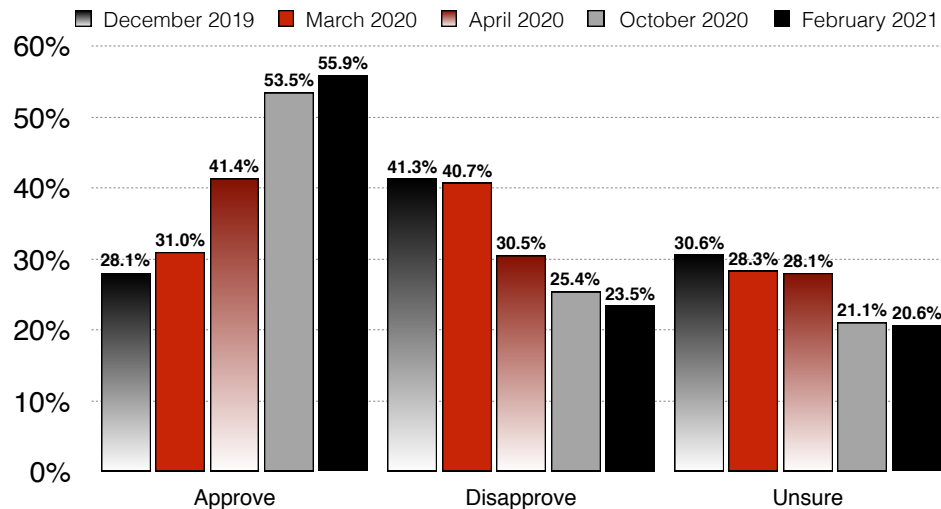
Q Overall, how easy or difficult are you finding it to maintain your standard of living out of your total household income today. Would you say...

Q Please tell me why?

Governor's Approval Rating

55.9% of Connecticut residents surveyed in February 2021 reported they "approve" of how Ned Lamont is handling his job as governor, which is higher than the 53.5% of respondents who reported the same in October 2020. Approval ratings have continually increased over 28.1% in December of 2019.

- ❖ Rates of approval regarding the way Ned Lamont is handling his job as governor increased for both Democrats (77.2% over 70.6% in October 2020) and Republicans (38.6% over 37.3% in October 2020).
- ❖ 44.9% of respondents ages 18-34 currently "approve" of Governor Lamont's overall response to COVID-19, compared to 67.3% of those ages 65 or older.
- ❖ 50.8% of respondents earning under \$50,000 per year currently "approve" of Governor Lamont's overall response to COVID-19, compared to 63.9% of those earning \$150,000 or more.



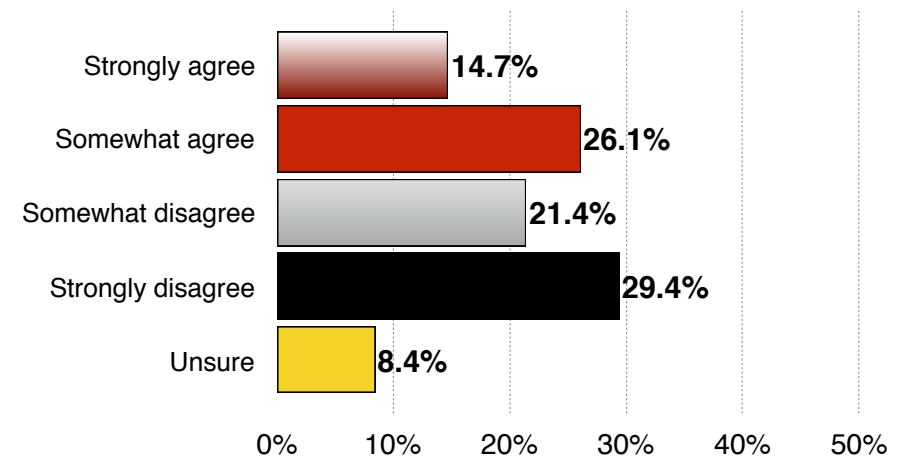
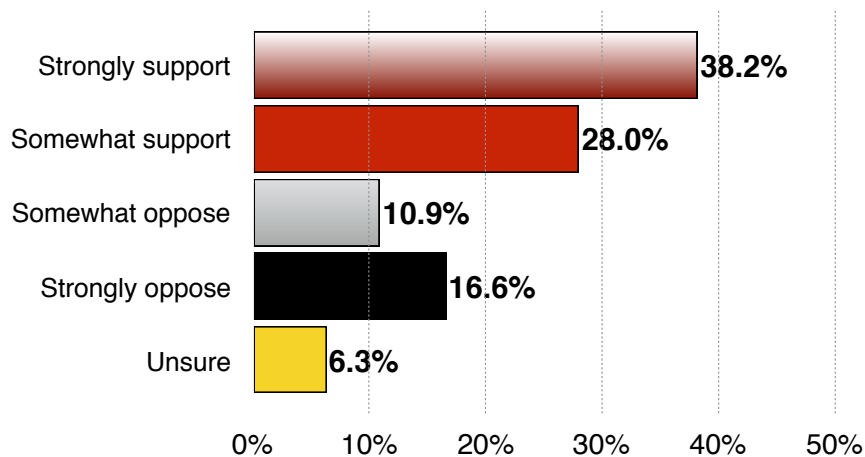
Q Since he took office in January 2019, overall do you approve or disapprove of the way Ned Lamont is handling his job as governor?

Q Please indicate if you approve or disapprove of the way Ned Lamont has handled the following issues related to COVID-19...

Legalization of Recreational Marijuana

The majority of Connecticut residents surveyed in February 2021, 66.2%, reported they “strongly support” (38.2%) or “somewhat support” (28.0%) the legalization of marijuana use and possession in CT for adults 21 and older. Of note, 40.8% of survey respondents “strongly agree” (14.7%) or “somewhat agree” (26.1%) marijuana is a ‘gateway drug’ that leads to using other drugs/substances.

- ❖ A higher frequency of respondents ages 18-34 (84.4%) reported they support the legalization of marijuana in CT when compared to those age 65 or older (52.5%).
- ❖ Democratic respondents (76.9%) were significantly more likely to support the legalization of marijuana than Republican respondents (51.5%).



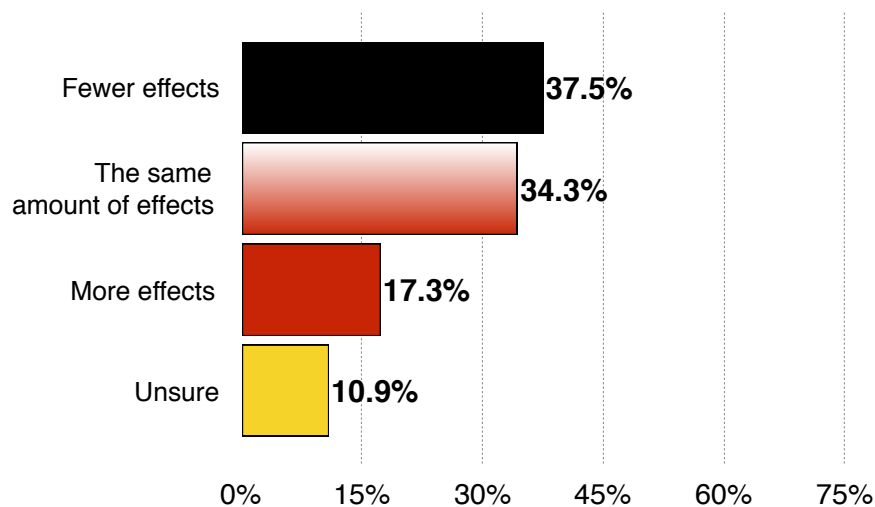
Q How strongly do you support the legalization of marijuana in CT for use and possession of adults 21 and older?

Q How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “Marijuana is a ‘gateway drug’ that leads to using other drugs/substances.”

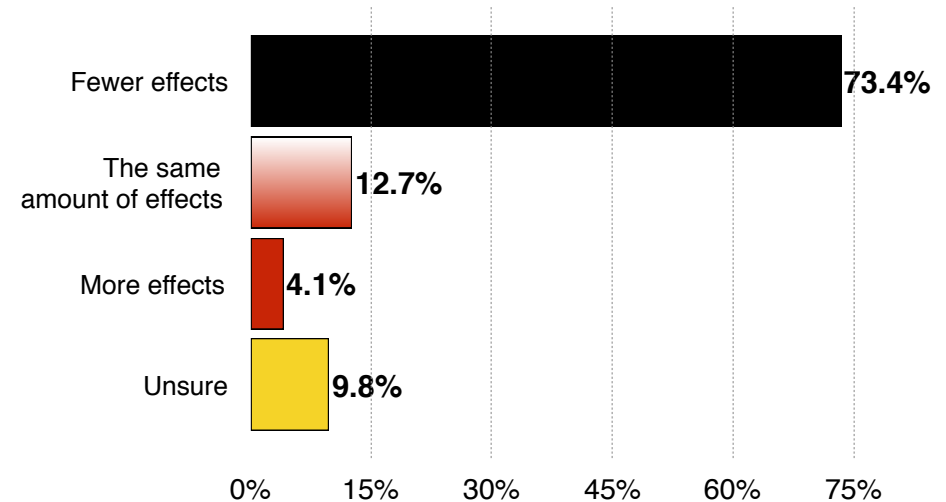
Legalization of Recreational Marijuana cont.

The majority of Connecticut residents surveyed in February 2021, 71.8%, reported they believe marijuana has either “fewer effects” (37.5%) or “the same amount of effects” (34.3%) as alcohol. Of note, 73.4% of survey respondents indicated they believe marijuana has fewer effects than other drugs, such as heroin, amphetamines, and prescription pain medications, while 12.7% reported “the same amount of effects,” 4.1% reported “more effects” and 9.8% were unsure.

- ❖ A higher frequency of respondents ages 18-34 (61.6%), reported they believe the effects of marijuana are fewer than alcohol, when compared to those age 65 or older (22.5%).
- ❖ Of note, a higher frequency of those earning less than \$50,000 annually (71.2%), reported they believe the effects of marijuana are fewer than other drugs such as heroin, amphetamines, and prescription pain medicines, when compared to those earning \$150,000 or more per year (82.4%).



Q Compared to alcohol, do you believe that marijuana has the same amount of effects, less effects, or more effects?

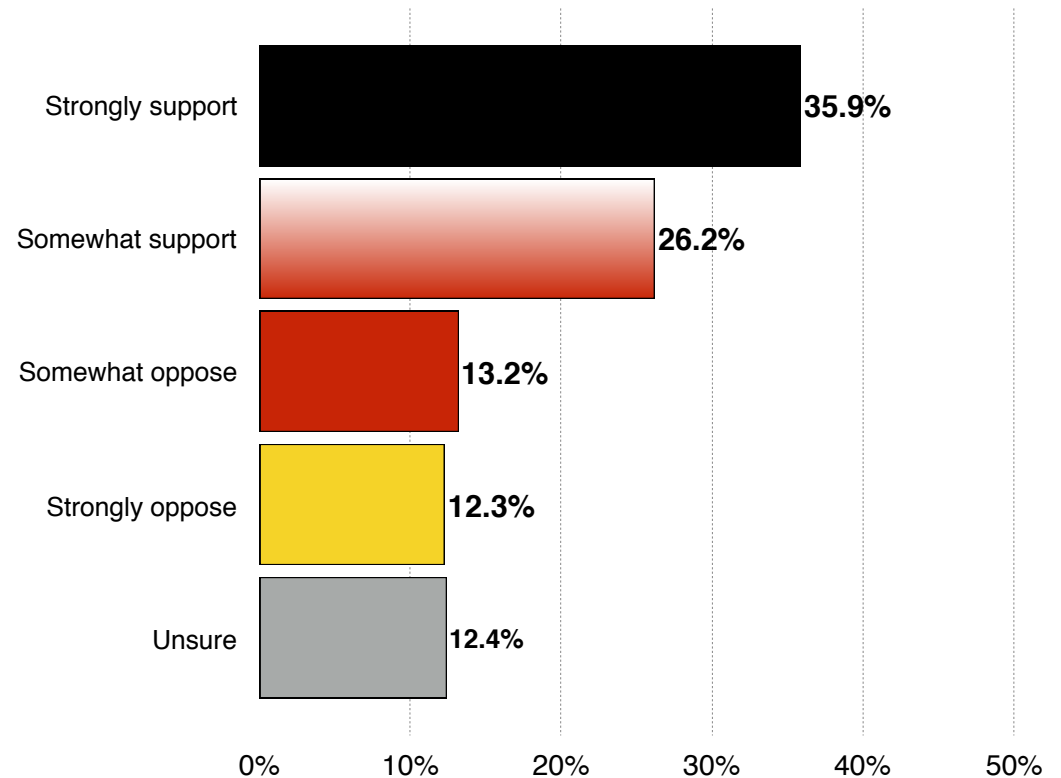


Q Compared to other drugs such as heroin, amphetamines, and prescription pain medicines, do you believe that marijuana has the same amount of effects, fewer effects, or more effects?

Legalization of Recreational Marijuana cont.

If marijuana were legalized, 62.1% of respondents would either “strongly support” (35.9%) or “somewhat support” (26.2%) the erasure of criminal records for those previously convicted of recreational offenses/possession. Comparatively, 25.5% of surveyed Connecticut residents indicated they would “strongly oppose” (12.3%) or “somewhat oppose” (13.2%), and 12.4% were unsure.

- ❖ A higher frequency of respondents ages 18-34 (76.3%), reported they support the erasure of criminal records for those previously convicted of recreational offenses/possession related to marijuana, when compared to those age 65 or older (54.6%).
- ❖ Democratic respondents (72.9%) were more likely to support erasure of these criminal records, when compared to Republican respondents (49.4%).



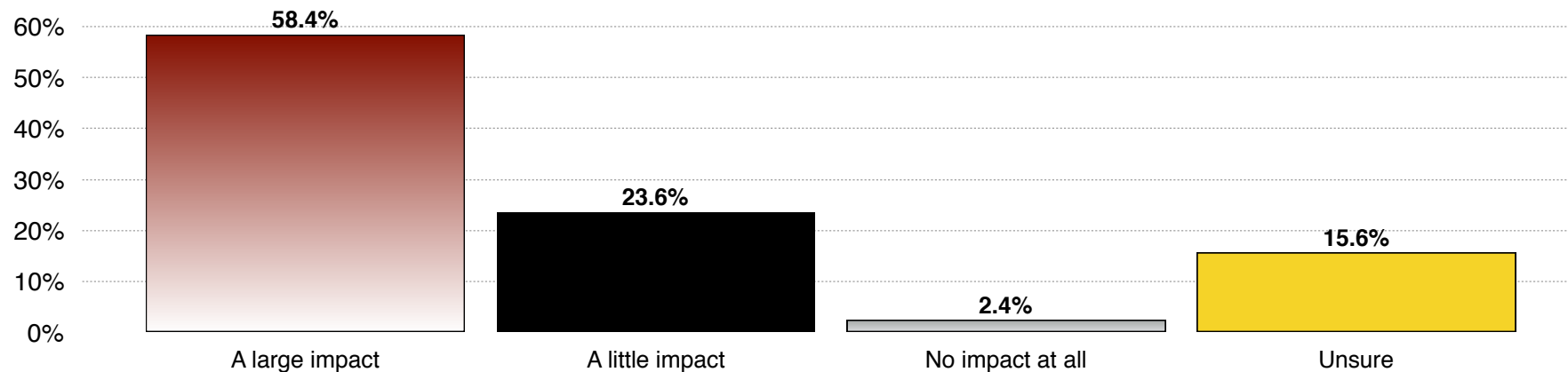
Q If marijuana is legalized, how strongly do you support or oppose the erasure of criminal records for those previously convicted of recreational offenses/possession?

COVID-19: Housing Evictions

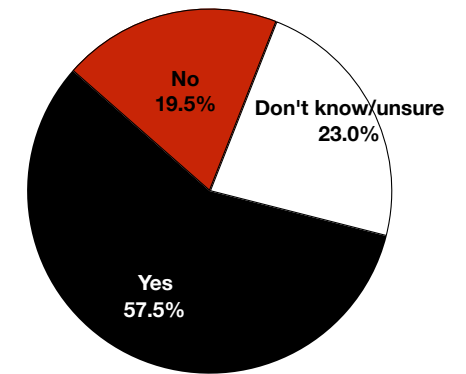
57.5% of Connecticut residents surveyed indicated they would support executive orders to prevent housing evictions. Of note, the strong majority reported they believe that eviction moratoriums have had either “a large impact” (58.4%) or “a little impact” (23.6%) on landlords in the State.

- ❖ A higher frequency of Democratic respondents (70.6%), reported they support executive orders to prevent housing evictions, when compared Republican respondents (49.4%).
- ❖ A higher frequency of male respondents (61.6%), reported they believe eviction moratoriums due to COVID-19 have had a large impact on landlords in Connecticut, when compared to female respondents (56.3%).

Q To what degree do you think landlords in Connecticut have been impacted by eviction moratoriums in the state?



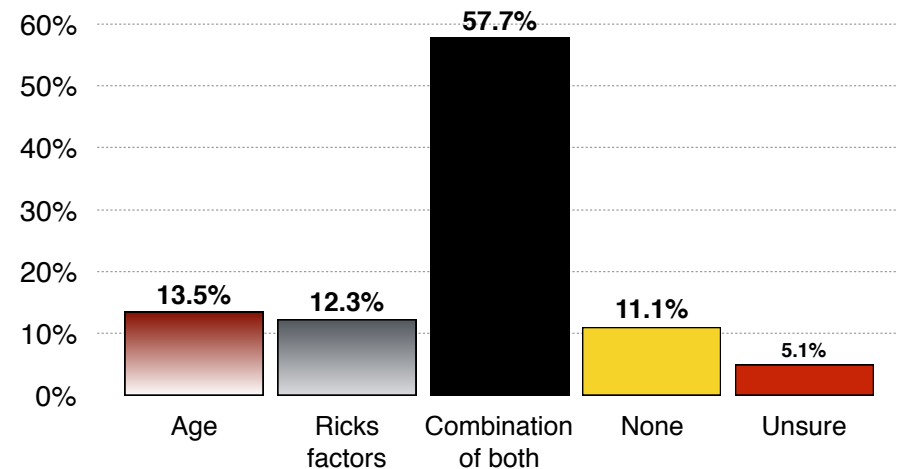
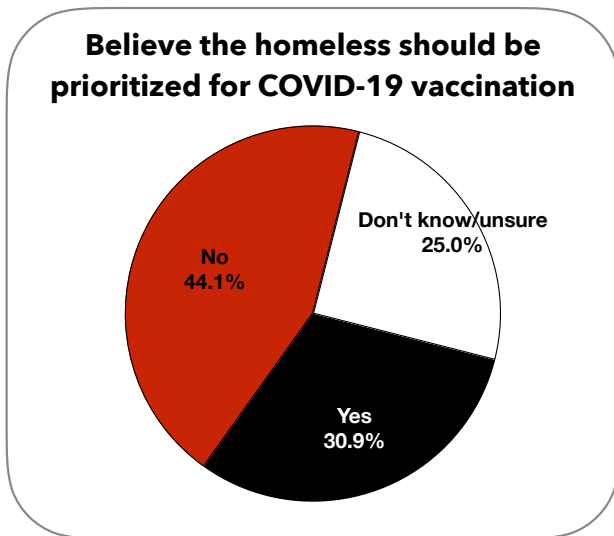
Support for executive orders to prevent housing evictions



COVID-19: Homeless Population Vaccines

44.1% of surveyed Connecticut residents indicated not believing the homeless population should be prioritized for the COVID-19 vaccine, while 30.9% reported they should be prioritized and 25.0% were unsure. 57.7% of surveyed residents indicated that when considering which of the homeless population should receive the COVID-19 vaccine, both "age" and "risk factors (medical conditions)" should be prioritized. 13.5% reported "age" should be prioritized and 12.3% indicated "risk factors (medical conditions)."

- ❖ A higher frequency of Democratic respondents (39.5%), reported they believe the homeless population should be prioritized for the COVID-19 vaccination, when compared Republican respondents (27.9%).

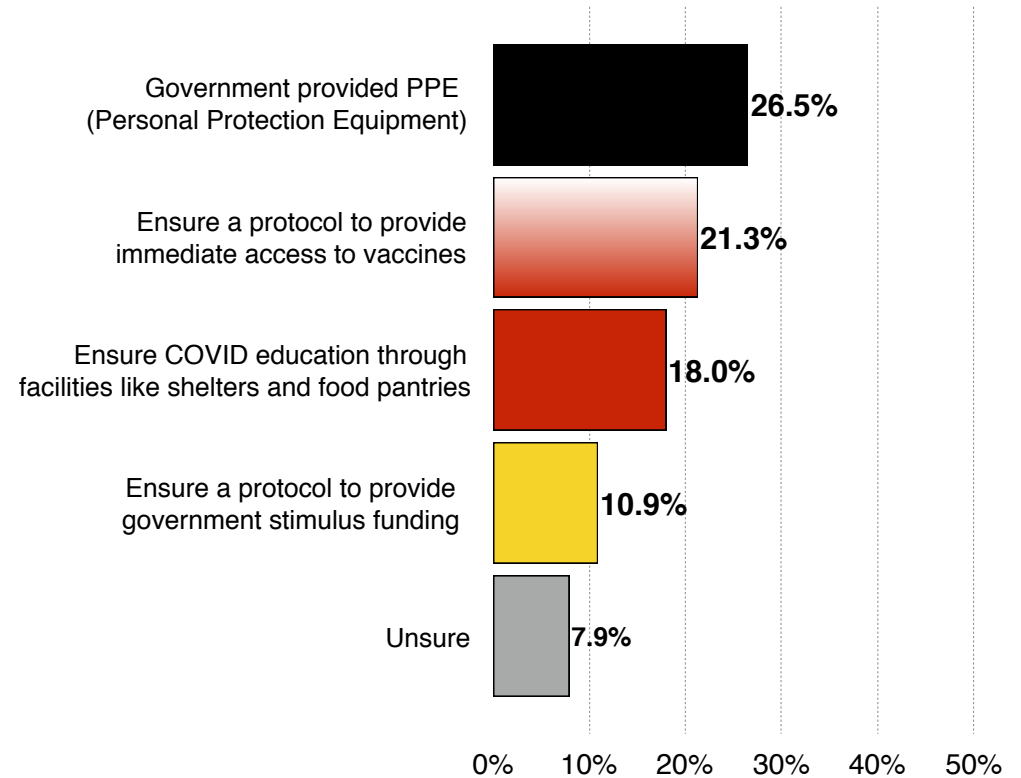


Q In terms of prioritizing the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine, do you think the homeless population should be considered for a vaccine based on age, based on risk factors (medical condition), or a combination of both?

COVID-19: Homeless Population Protocols

When respondents were asked what should be implemented or considered to keep the homeless population safe from the spread of the virus, 26.5% reported protocols to distribute “Government provided Personal Protection Equipment),” 21.3% reported “ensure a protocol to provide immediate access to vaccines” and 18.0% indicated “ensure COVID education through facilities like shelters and food pantries.”

- ❖ A higher frequency of respondents ages 18-34 (33.8%), reported “Government provided PPE” should be implemented or considered to keep the homeless population safe from the spread of the virus, when compared to those age 65 or older (18.3%).
- ❖ Comparatively, those age 65 or older (26.1%), reported “a protocol to provide immediate access to vaccines” should be implemented or considered to keep the homeless population safe from the spread of the virus, when compared to those ages 18-34 (14.6%).

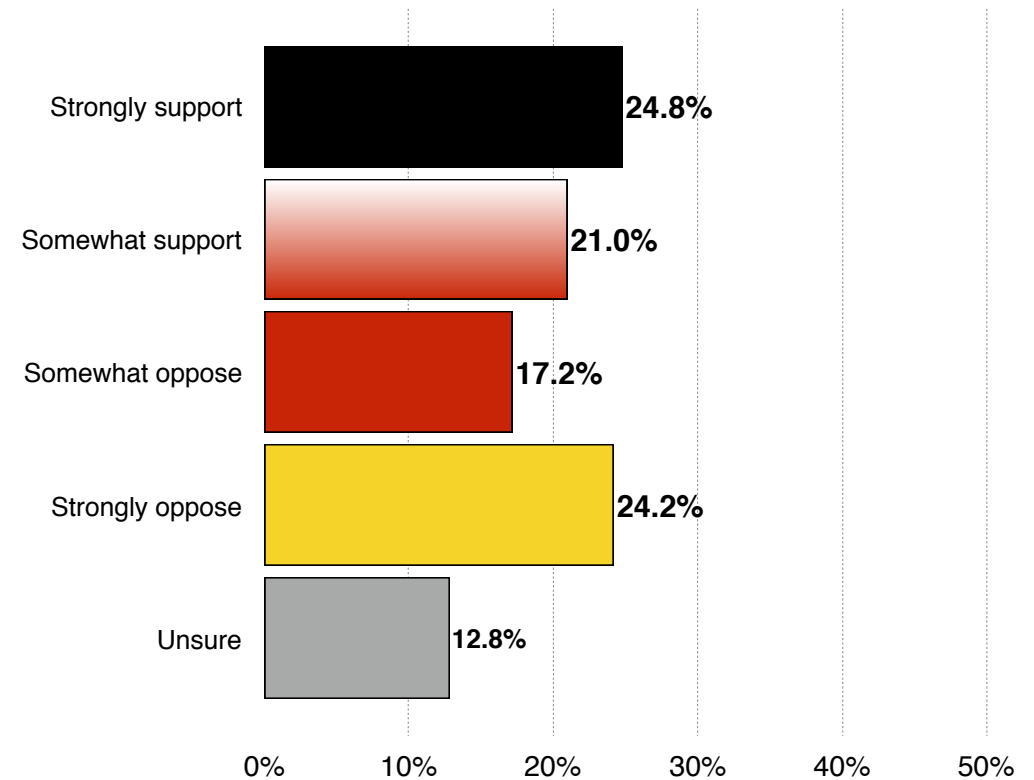


Q In thinking about the homeless population, what, if any, COVID-19 protocols should be implemented or considered to keep these individuals safe from the spread of the virus?

COVID-19: Vaccine and Religious Beliefs

45.8% of surveyed Connecticut residents would either “strongly support” (24.8%) or “somewhat support” (21.0%) the ability for individuals to choose not to receive a vaccine based on their religious beliefs. Comparatively, 41.4% of surveyed Connecticut residents indicated they would “strongly oppose” (24.2%) or “somewhat oppose” (17.2%), and 12.8% were unsure.

- ❖ Republican respondents (52.4%) were significantly more likely to support an individual’s ability to choose not to take the vaccine based on religious beliefs than Democratic respondents (44.1%).
- ❖ Additionally, a higher frequency of those earning less than \$50,000 annually (50.8%), reported they support the choice to take choose not to receive the vaccine based on religious beliefs, when compared to those earning \$150,000 or more per year (44.6%).

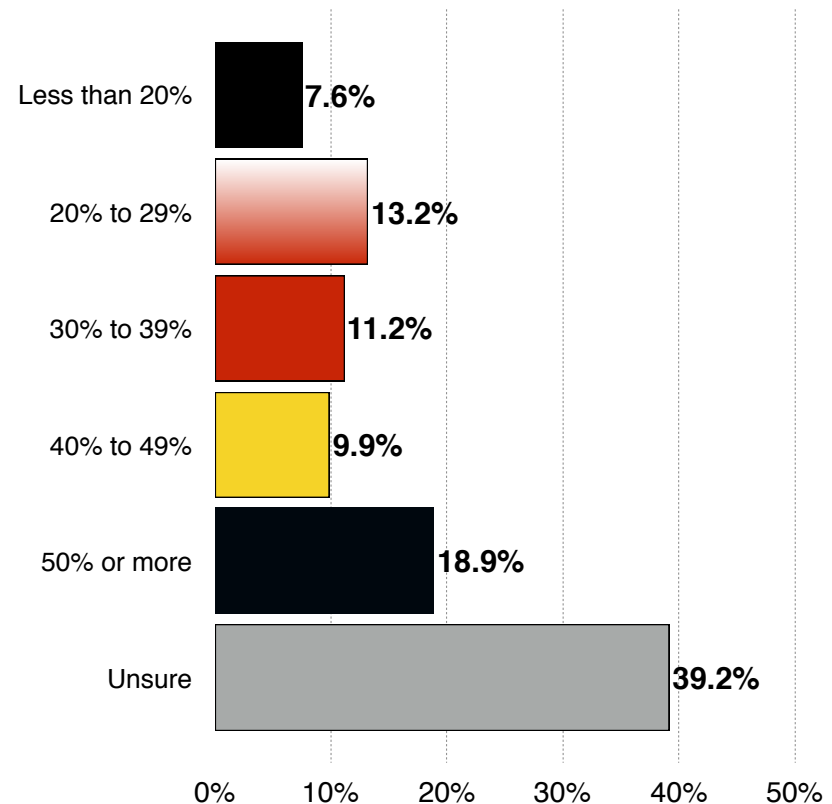


Q The Connecticut State Legislature is reviewing a bill that would remove religious exemptions related to vaccines. How strongly do you support the ability for individuals to choose not to receive a vaccine based on their religious belief?

COVID-19: Business Closure Impact

When respondents were asked to estimate what percentage of Connecticut businesses have closed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, 7.6% indicated less than 20%, 13.2% indicated 20% to 29%, 11.2% indicated 30% to 39%, 9.9% indicated 40% to 49% and 18.9% indicated 50% or more. Of note, 39.2% of respondents reported that they were unsure.

- ❖ Of note, a higher frequency of those earning less than \$50,000 annually (43.5%), reported they were unsure, when compared to those earning \$150,000 or more per year (27.7%).

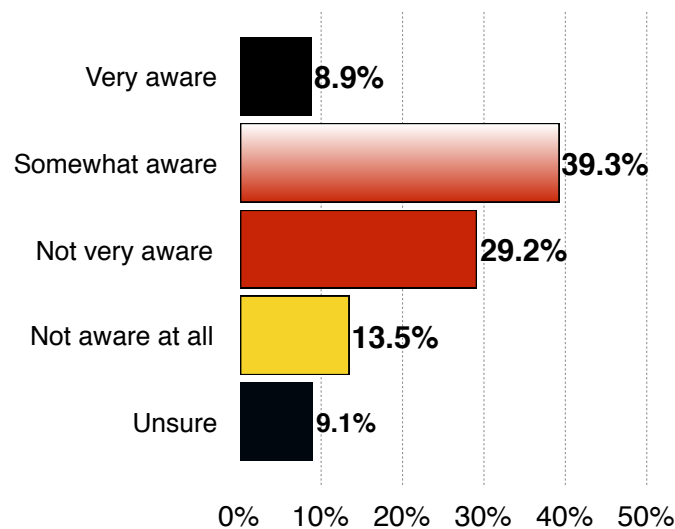


Q What percentage (%) of Connecticut businesses do you think closed as a result of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic?

COVID-19: Financial Assistance Programs

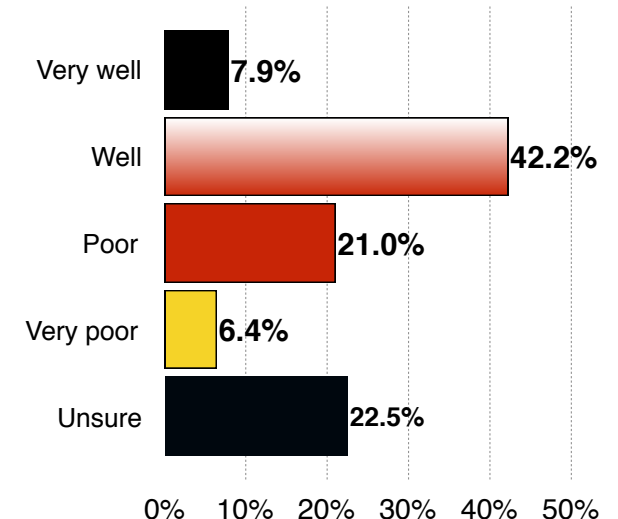
48.2% of respondents were “very aware” (8.9%) or “somewhat aware” (39.3%) of the programs available to CT businesses that provide funding as a result of the pandemic. When asked to indicate how long financial assistance should be given to businesses as a result of the pandemic, 61.7% indicated either “for the next 6 months” (25.9%) or “for the next year” (35.8%). Also of note, 50.1% of respondents indicated they believe the State has supported businesses “very well” (7.9%) or “well” (42.2%) during the pandemic.

❖ Of note, a higher frequency of Democratic respondents (63.4%), reported they believe the state of Connecticut has supported businesses in the state during the pandemic well, when compared to Republican respondents (41.7%).



Feb 2021

For the next month	3.0
For the next 3 months	10.2
For the next 6 months	25.9
For the next year	35.8
Beyond the next year	12.1
Financial assistance should end now	1.7
Don't know / unsure	11.3



Q How aware are you of the programs available to CT businesses that provide funding as a results of the pandemic?

Q How long should financial assistance due to COVID-19 be made available to businesses?

Q How well do you believe the state of Connecticut has supported businesses in state during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Public Health Insurance

When surveyed Connecticut residents were prompted to describe their level of health insurance prior to the pandemic, 28.2% indicated they were "insured with a PPO plan (preferred provider organization)" and 24.1% indicated they were insured through "Medicare." Comparatively, when asked to describe their current level of health insurance, 27.0% indicated they were "insured with a PPO plan" and 24.6% indicated "Medicare."

- ❖ Of note, a higher frequency of those earning \$150,000 or more per year (42.9%) reported they were "insured with a PPO plan (preferred provider organization)," when compared to those earning less than \$50,000 (16.3%).

	Feb 2021
Insured with a PPO plan (preferred provider organization)	28.2
Medicare	24.1
Insured with an HMO plan (health maintenance organization)	13.9
Medicaid	10.3
Insured with a POS plan (point-of-service)	3.9
Insured with an HDHP plan (high-deductible health plan)	3.8
Insured with an HSA (health savings account)	3.4
Not insured prior to the COVID-19 pandemic	3.3
Insured with an EPO plan (exclusive provider organization)	1.6
Other	1.2
Don't know / unsure	6.3

	Feb 2021
Insured with a PPO plan (preferred provider organization)	27.0
Medicare	24.6
Insured with an HMO plan (health maintenance organization)	14.4
Medicaid	11.5
Insured with an HDHP plan (high-deductible health plan)	4.3
Insured with an HSA (health savings account)	3.7
Insured with a POS plan (point-of-service)	3.5
Not insured prior to the COVID-19 pandemic	2.4
Insured with an EPO plan (exclusive provider organization)	2.1
Other	1.4
Don't know / unsure	5.1

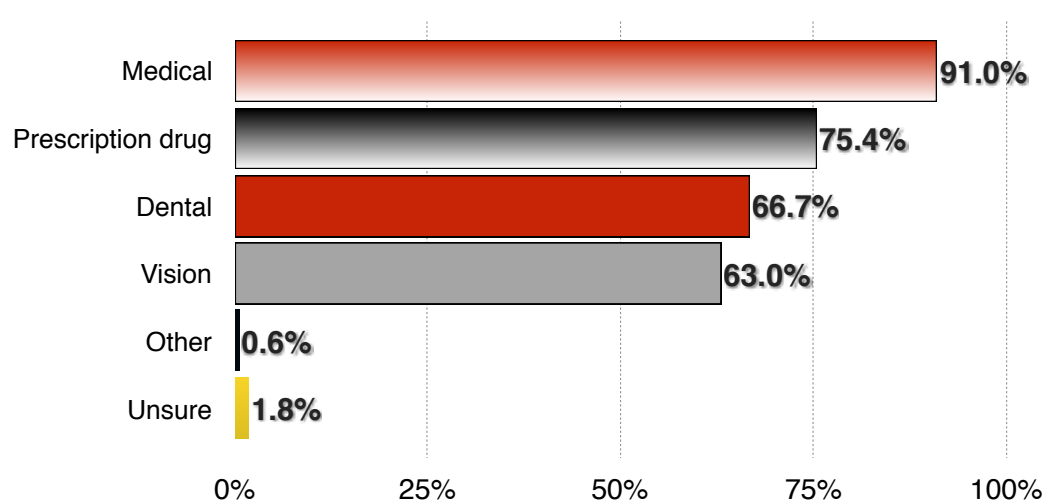
Q How would you describe your level of health insurance, prior to COVID-19?

Q How would you describe your level of health insurance, today?

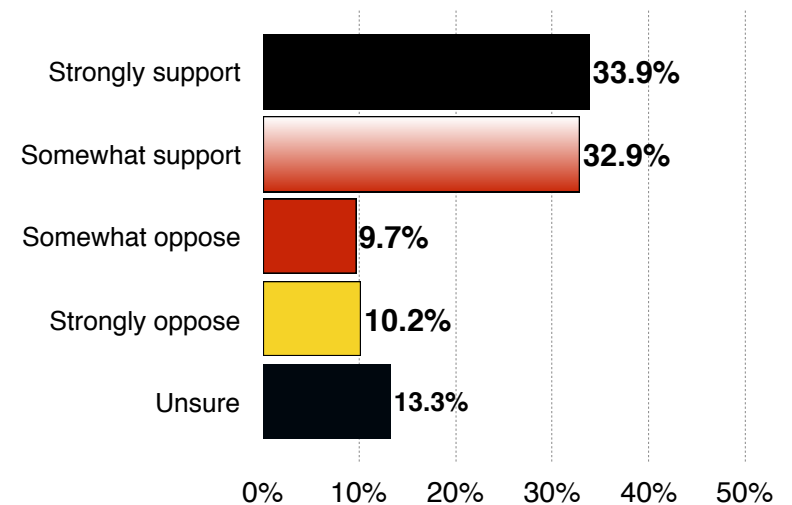
Health Insurance

91.0% of surveyed Connecticut residents reported their current health insurance package covered “medical” services, 75.4% indicated “prescription drug” services, 66.7% indicated “dental” services and 63.0% indicated “vision” services. When asked how strongly they support or oppose an increase in the amount of government sponsored healthcare options, 66.8% indicated they either “strongly support” (33.9%) or “somewhat support” (32.9%) the initiative.

- ❖ Democratic respondents (87.6%) were significantly more likely to indicate they support the increase in the amount of government sponsored options of healthcare, in comparison to Republican respondents (47.7%).
- ❖ Additionally, a higher frequency of those earning less than \$50,000 annually (71.2%), reported they support increased government sponsored healthcare options, when compared to those earning \$50,000 to less than \$100,000 per year (64.0%).



Q What services are included in your health insurance package? Please select all that apply.

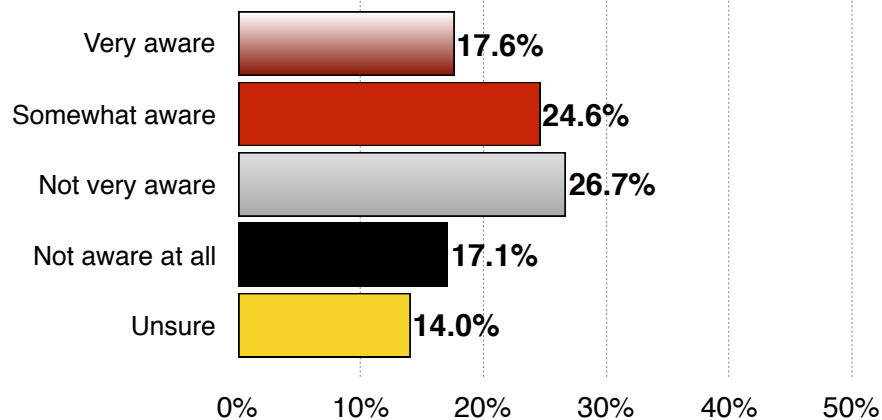


Q How strongly do you support or oppose an increase in the amount of government sponsored options of healthcare?

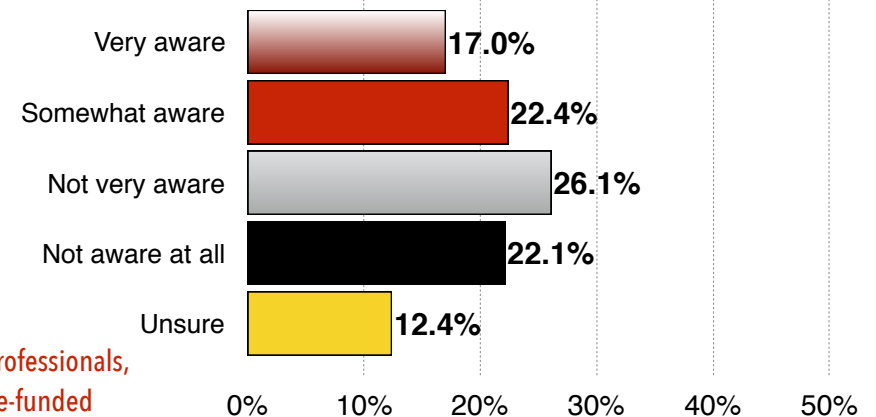
Budget and Pensions

42.2% of surveyed Connecticut residents indicated being “very aware” (17.6%) or “somewhat aware” (24.6%) of the potential impacts of eliminating state-funded retirement, while 43.8% were “not very aware” (26.7%) or “not at all aware” (17.1%) and 14.0% were unsure. Comparatively, 39.4% of survey participants reported being “very aware” (17.0%) or “somewhat aware” (22.4%) of the stability level of the CT State Employee Retirement Fund, while 48.2% were “not very aware” (26.1%) or “not aware at all” (22.1%) and 12.4% were unsure.

- ❖ Male respondents (52.6%) were more likely to indicate they were aware of the potential impacts of eliminating state-funded retirement, in comparison to female respondents (32.8%).
- ❖ Additionally, a higher frequency of those earning \$150,000 or more per year (62.2%), reported they were aware, when compared to those earning less than \$50,000 annually (35.1%).



Q Throughout the United States of America, the State pension funding gap for all 50 states is more than \$1 trillion. Currently, Connecticut is one of 20 states with the lowest-funded pension plans, caused by a lack of funding from long-term investment returns. Prior to this survey, how aware are you of the stability level for CT State Employee Retirement Fund?

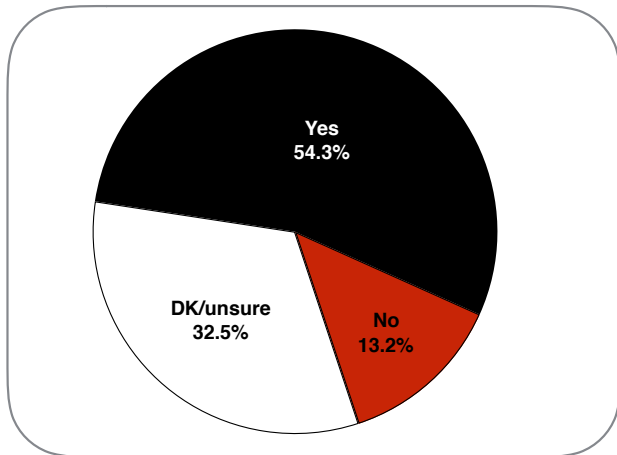


Q Nearly 100,000 (50,000 retired/49,000 active) state employees including teachers, education professionals, social workers, and frontline service providers are eligible or are receiving benefits from the state-funded retirement system. How aware are you of the potential impacts of eliminating state-funded retirement?

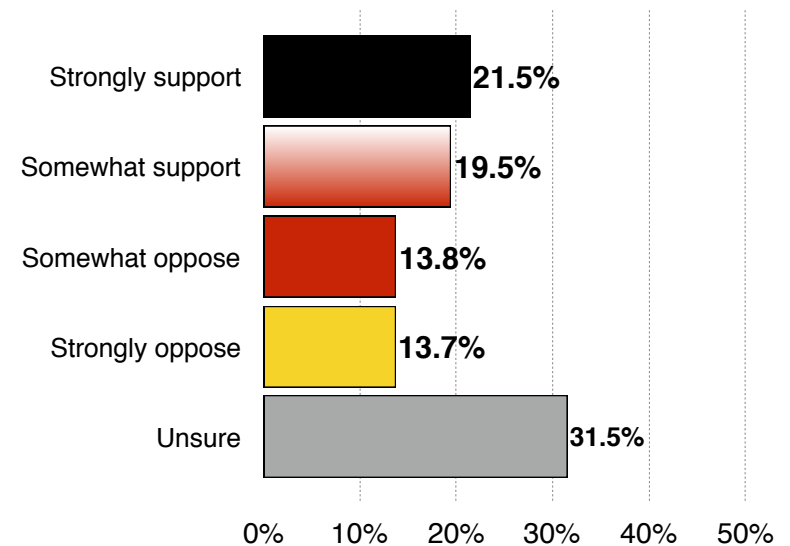
Budget and Pensions cont.

The majority of surveyed Connecticut residents (54.3%) indicated they believe Connecticut state pensions should be reformed, 32.5% indicated they were unsure and 13.2% indicated state pensions should not be reformed. Further, 41.0% of respondents indicated they "strongly support" (21.5%) or "somewhat support" (19.5%) the elimination of income and capital gains taxes to prevent tax-free pensions, rather than "paying in" to help stabilize the budget, while 27.5% reported they "somewhat oppose" (13.8%) or "strongly oppose" (13.7%) the elimination of tax withholdings and 31.5% were unsure.

- ❖ Male respondents (62.8%) were more likely to indicate State pensions should be reformed, in comparison to female respondents (46.8%).
- ❖ Additionally, a higher frequency of respondents age 65 or older (74.3%), reported State pensions should be reformed, when compared to those ages 18-34 (61.6%).



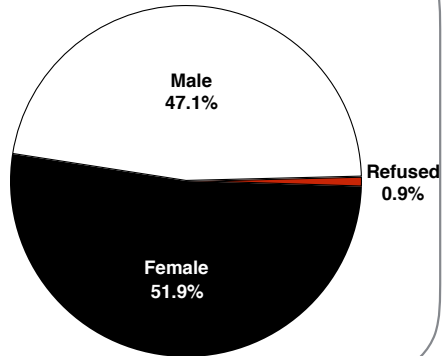
Q In your opinion, should State pensions be reformed?



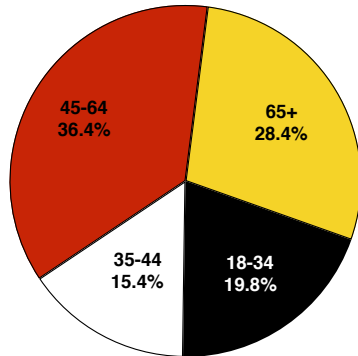
Q State pension distributions in Connecticut are currently subject to income tax withholdings. How strongly do you support or oppose the elimination of income tax and capital gains to prevent tax-free pensions, rather than "paying in" to help stabilize the budget?

Demographic Profile - February 2021

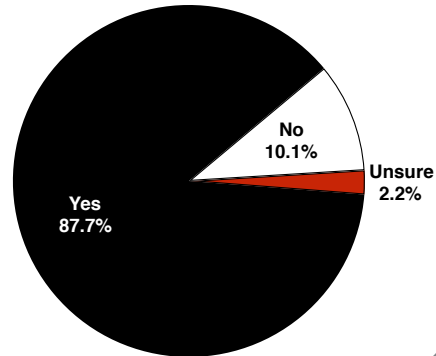
Gender



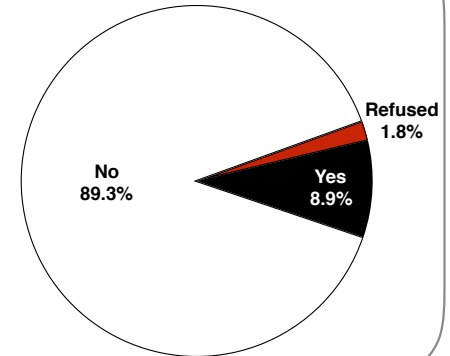
Age



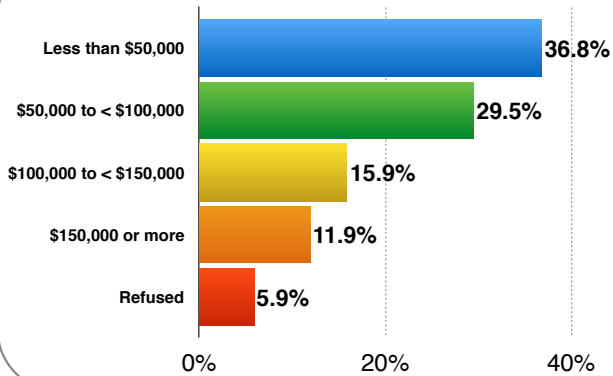
Registered to vote?



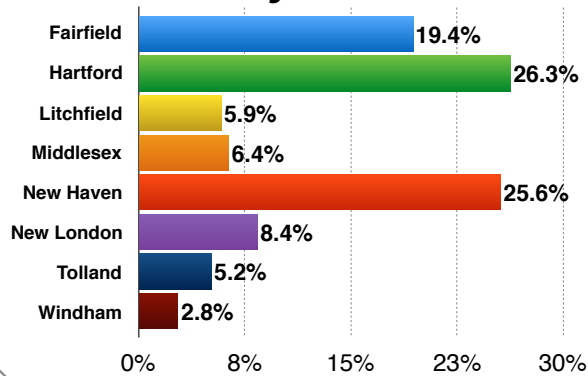
Hispanic/Latin Origin?



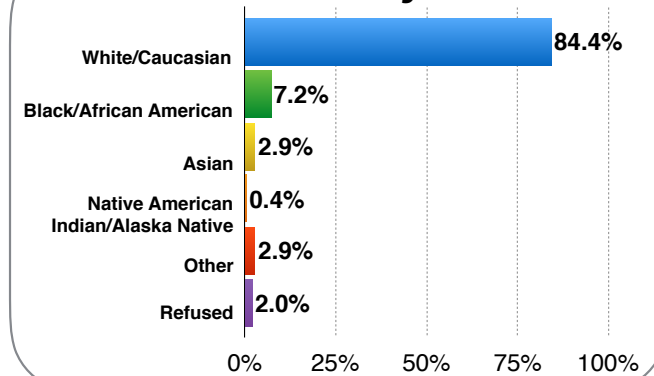
Income

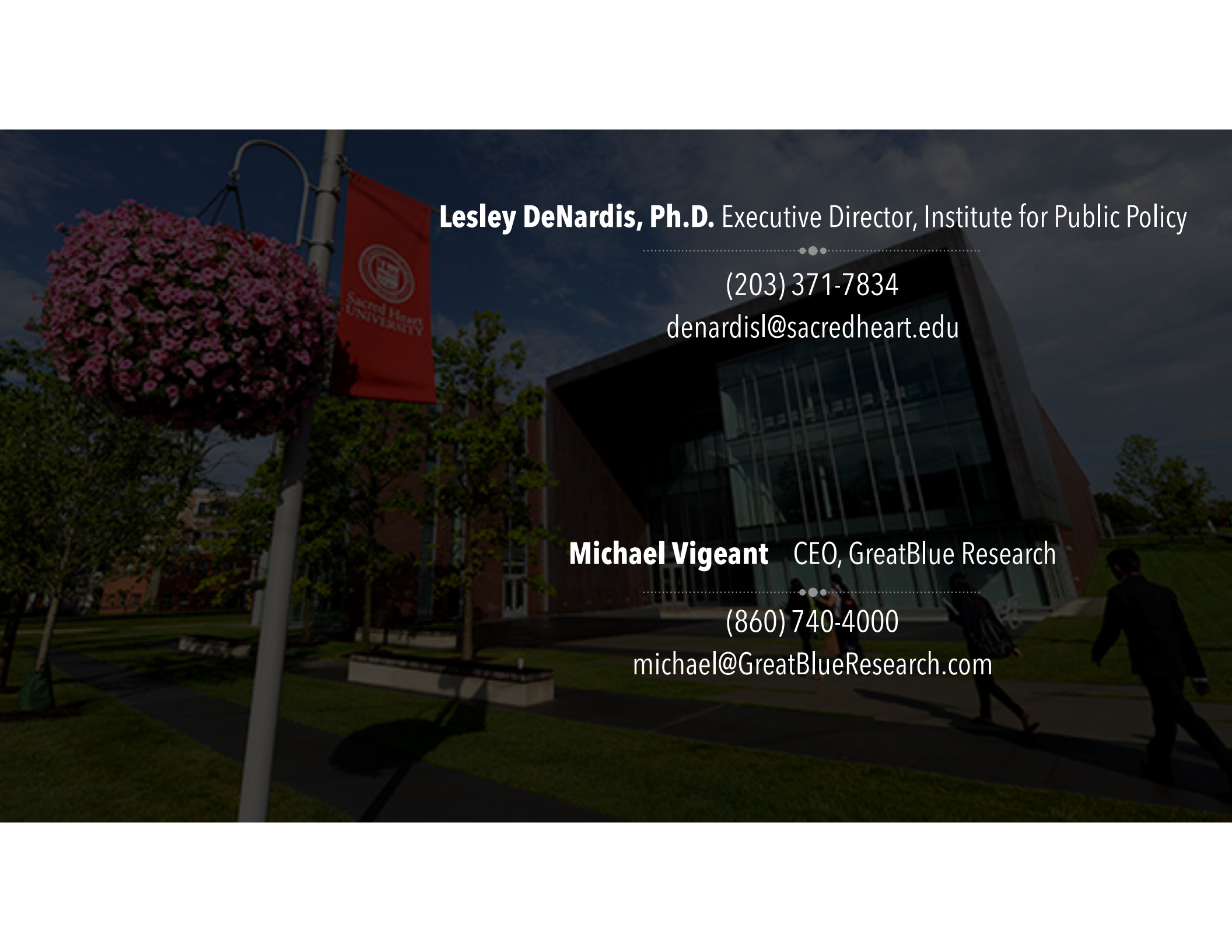


County of Residence



Ethnicity





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