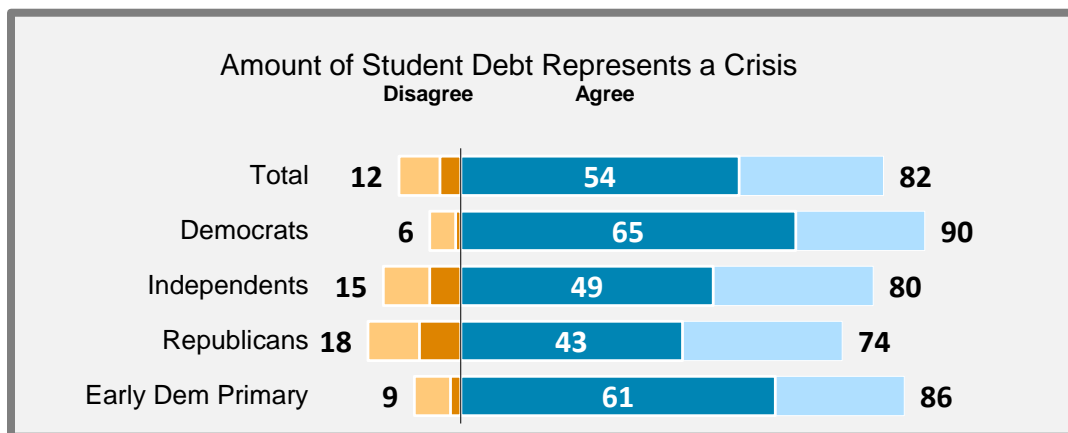


To: Interested Parties  
 From: Celinda Lake, David Mermin, and Sahil Mehrotra, Lake Research Partners  
 Bob Carpenter, Chesapeake Beach Consulting  
 Re: New Poll Shows Voters Oppose Dept of Education and CFPB Rollback of Student Loan Protections  
 Date: September 16, 2019

**A recent poll<sup>1</sup> conducted by Lake Research Partners and Chesapeake Beach Consulting shows concern about the level of student debt in the United States and opposition to recent Department of Education and Consumer Financial Protection Bureau actions to weaken protections for students.**

Over four in five (82%) voters agree that the amount of student loan debt in the United States represents a crisis, and a majority (54%) strongly agree.<sup>2</sup>

- Across parties, a majority of voters agree that the amount of student loan debt represents a crisis, with 90% of Democrats, 80% independents, and 74% of Republicans in agreement. This represents a substantial increase over responses in 2018<sup>3</sup> where 71% of Democrats, 67% independents, and 57% of Republicans were in agreement.



- Majorities of Black and Latinx voters, white voters, those making under \$50,000 a year, those under age 30, women, men and military households strongly agree that the current amount of student loan debt in the United States represents a crisis. More than three-quarters of all the groups listed strongly agree or somewhat agree that the current amount of student loan debt represents a crisis.

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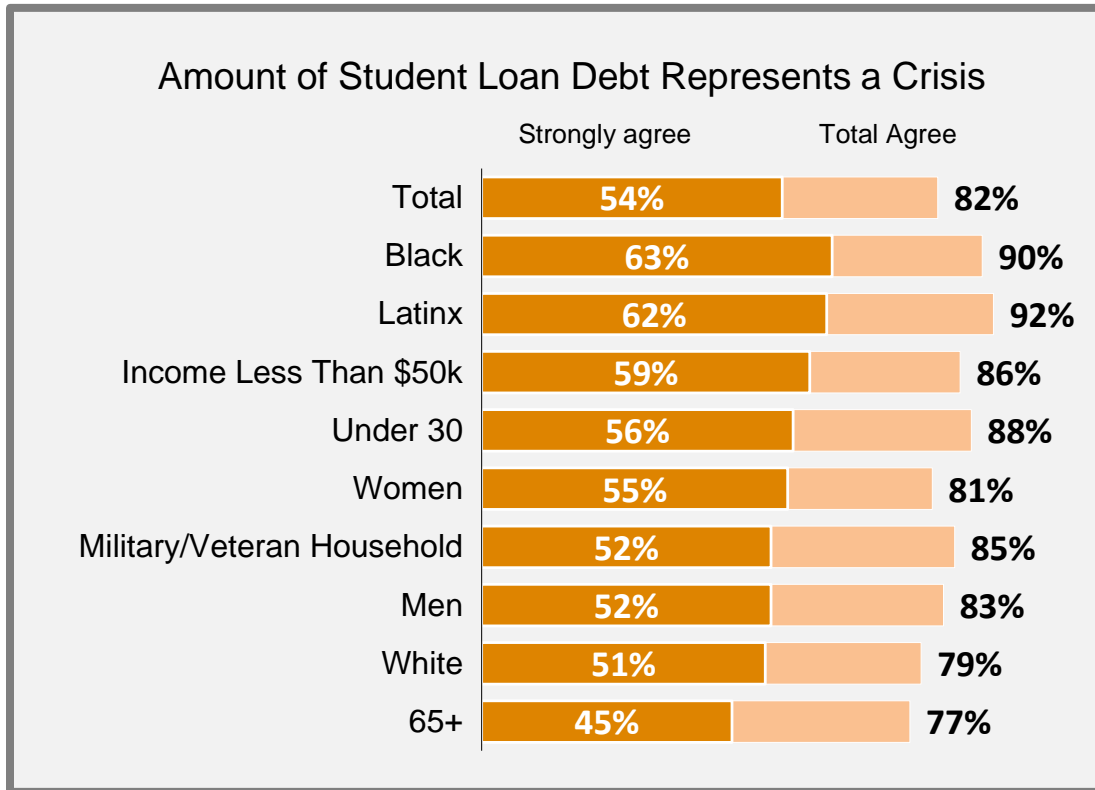
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 Jonathan Voss

<sup>1</sup> Lake Research Partners and Chesapeake Beach Consulting designed and administered this survey that was conducted between July 15-23, 2019 online. The survey reached a total of 1,000 likely November 2020 voters nationwide with an additional oversample of N=400 likely Democratic Primary voters in Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada, and South Carolina (N=100 per state). Data were weighted slightly by gender, party identification, age, race, education level, household income, 2016 self-reported vote, and region. The margin for error is +/- 3.1% and larger for subgroups.

<sup>2</sup> The current total amount of outstanding student loan debt in the U.S. is one point five trillion dollars (\$1,500,000,000,000), owed by more than 40 million Americans. Do you agree or disagree that the amount of student loan debt represents a crisis?

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.responsiblelending.org/sites/default/files/nodes/files/research-publication/crl-afr-poll-studentlending-aug2018.pdf>



In recent years, the Department of Education has proposed or carried out a number of actions to weaken protections for student borrowers. A majority of voters find these actions concerning. Voters are most concerned about permitting higher penalty fees to be charged to borrowers struggling to repay their loans, making it harder for state and federal law enforcement agencies to pursue wrongdoing by student loan servicers, and blocking debt relief to thousands of student borrowers who were defrauded by for-profit schools. At least half of Democrats and independents are very concerned with each of these.<sup>4</sup>

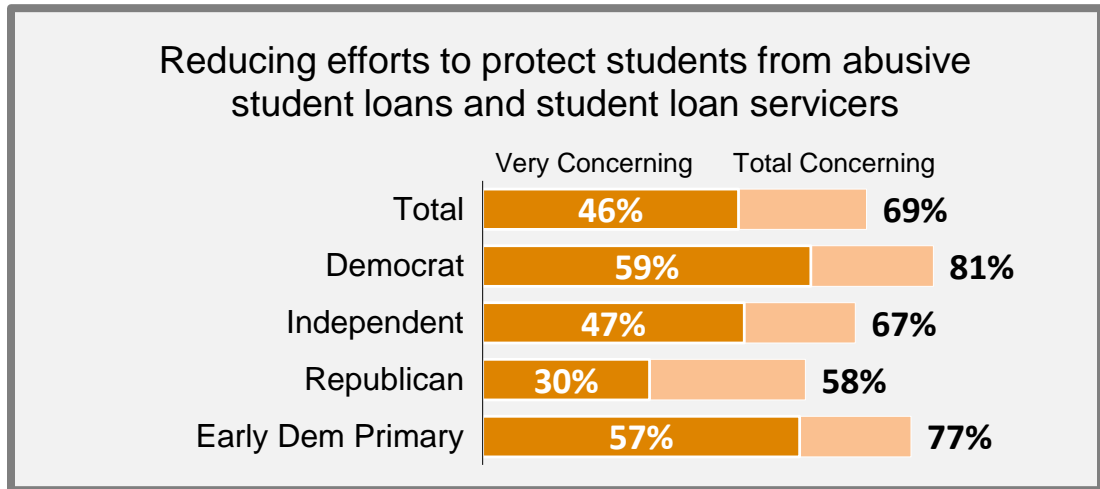
\*Split sampled

<sup>4</sup> Now here are some actions taken in recent years by the federal Department of Education, which provides loans to students and oversees companies who collect on those loans. For each, please indicate if the action is very concerning, somewhat concerning, a little concerning, or not at all concerning:

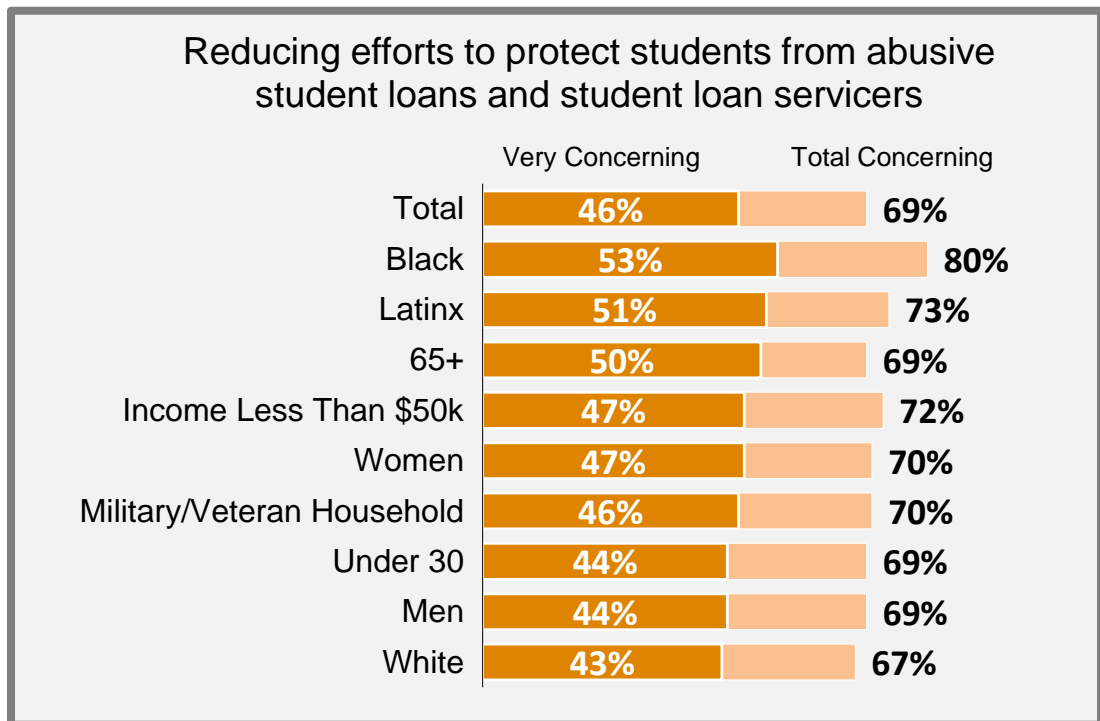
<b>% Total Concerning (% Very Concerning)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Democrat</b>	<b>Independent</b>	<b>Republican</b>
Permitted higher penalty fees to be charged to borrowers struggling to repay their loans.	<b>71 (48)</b>	80 (59)	66 (50)	63 (35)
Made it harder for state and federal law enforcement agencies to pursue wrongdoing by student loan servicers.	<b>70 (47)</b>	75 (56)	70 (50)	64 (37)
Blocked debt relief for thousands of student borrowers who were defrauded by for-profit colleges or whose schools closed while they were enrolled.	<b>70 (45)</b>	79 (56)	67 (51)	63 (32)
Removed penalties on for-profit colleges that left students with unaffordable debt loads.*	<b>68 (43)</b>	78 (52)	67 (50)	58 (31)
Removed penalties on for-profit colleges that left students with unaffordable debt loads relative to the incomes they were able to achieve after graduating.*	<b>66 (44)</b>	77 (52)	65 (56)	55 (30)
Ended affordable loans for low-income students that didn't charge interest until the students left school.	<b>66 (44)</b>	77 (56)	67 (50)	53 (29)
Weakened oversight and standards for the federal office that oversees federal grants and loans to cover student tuition, fees, and other expenses	<b>66 (40)</b>	75 (50)	64 (39)	56 (28)
Proposed eliminating a loan forgiveness program for public service workers with student debt.	<b>62 (38)</b>	73 (46)	59 (42)	50 (28)

\* Split sampled

A majority of voters are also concerned by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau’s reduction of efforts to protect students from abusive student loans and student loan servicers.<sup>6</sup> Majorities of Democrats (81%), independents (67%) and Republicans (58%) are concerned, and 59% of Democrats are very concerned. Concern is also high among likely Democratic Primary voters in early-voting states.



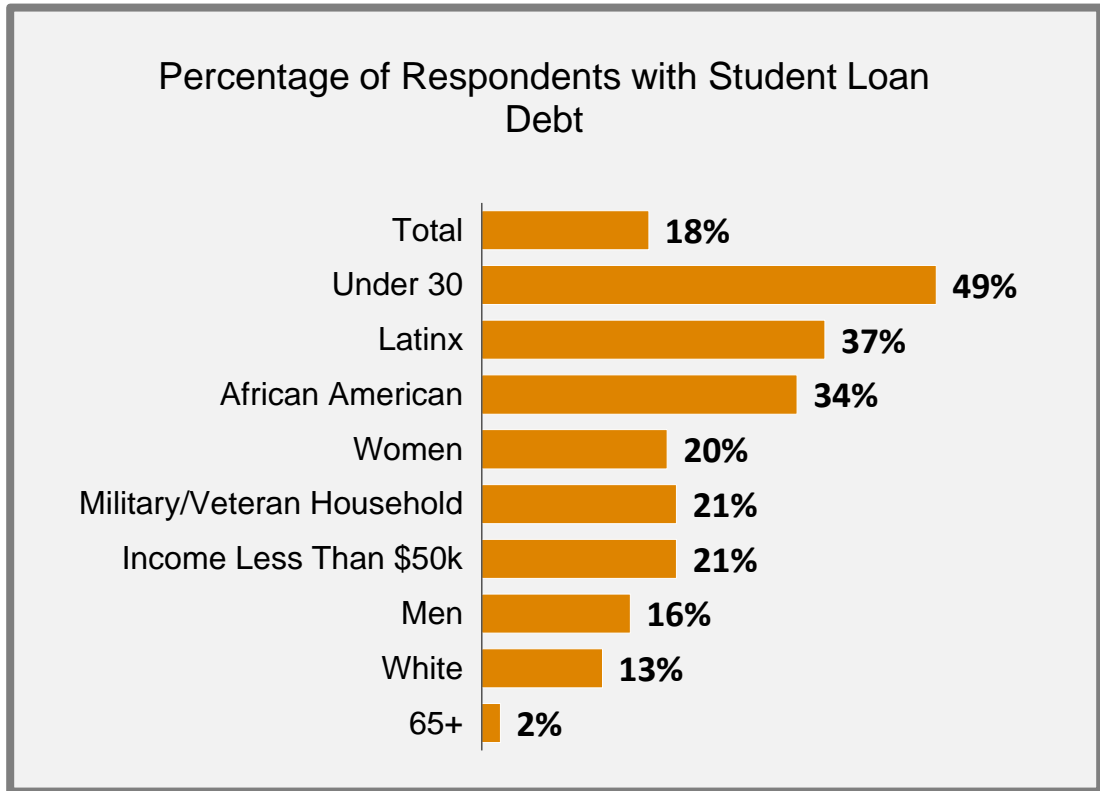
- Majorities among Black and Latinx voters are very concerned by the CFPB’s reduction in efforts to protect students.



<sup>6</sup> Now here are some actions the leadership of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has taken or proposed recently. For each, please indicate if the statement is very concerning, somewhat concerning, a little concerning, or not at all concerning: Reducing efforts to protect students from abusive student loans and student loan servicers

The poll also revealed that nearly one in five likely voters surveyed currently have student loan debt, including higher numbers among voters who are Latinx, African American, women, and those in military or veteran households.<sup>7</sup>

- Nearly two in five (37%) Latinx respondents currently have student loan debt, along with over one in three African Americans (34%).



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Please contact Celinda Lake ([clake@lakeresearch.com](mailto:clake@lakeresearch.com)) or David Mermin ([dmermin@lakeresearch.com](mailto:dmermin@lakeresearch.com)) at 202-776-9066 or Bob Carpenter ([bobcarpenter1957@gmail.com](mailto:bobcarpenter1957@gmail.com)) for additional information about this research.

<sup>7</sup> Do you currently have any student loan debt?