

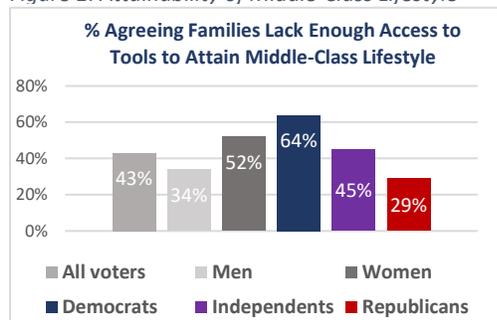


DATE: September 10, 2018
 TO: Holland Children’s Institute
 FROM: Ben Lazarus and Yu-Ming Liou
 RE: Nebraska Statewide Issues Survey - Views on Supporting and Growing the Middle Class

Many Voters Worry Middle-Class Lifestyle Is Out of Reach for Nebraska Families Today

Results from a recent Holland Children’s Institute poll of 600 registered Nebraska voters¹ show

Figure 1: Attainability of Middle-Class Lifestyle



widespread worry that families in the state may not be able to attain a middle-class lifestyle. When asked whether Nebraska families had enough access to the tools and services they needed to attain a middle-class lifestyle, responses were sharply divided along partisan and gender lines, as shown in *Figure 1*, with Republicans (29 percent) and men (34 percent) less likely than Democrats (64 percent) and women (52 percent) to say they don’t have enough access. Nonetheless, more than four-in-ten voters overall think families lack enough access.

Broad Agreement That State Investment Should Support the Middle Class

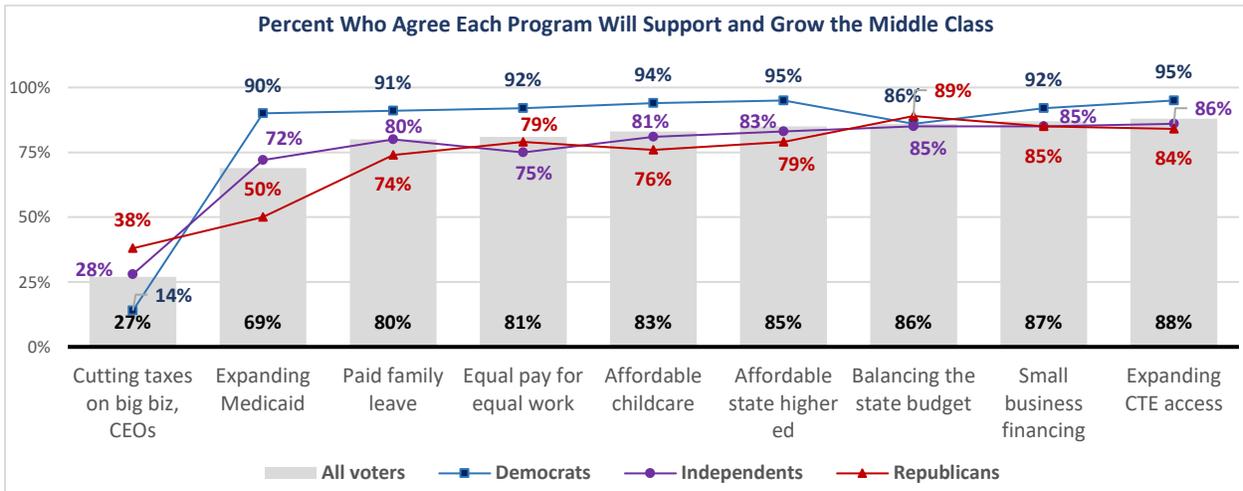
At the same time, we find evidence of a strong consensus around values of economic fairness among Nebraskans. Voters think it’s important to preserve access into the middle class and they think that government should help. Nearly six-in-ten voters (57 percent) agree more with the statement there have been too many cuts to core services because we keep prioritizing tax cuts for corporations than the notion that low taxes for corporations drive Nebraska’s economy (38 percent agree more). Even more striking is the consensus opinion (69 percent agree more) that the best way to support Nebraska’s middle class is to focus more on investments in small business, working families, and children as compared to 27 percent who would prefer to see the state focus on cutting taxes and regulations on large businesses.

Broad and Deep Consensus on Economic Policies to Support the Middle Class

When we ask voters which policies will support and grow the middle class and workforce in Nebraska, we find evidence for a remarkable consensus across the political spectrum (see *Figure 2* on page 2). Respondents are particularly supportive of creating more accessible career and vocational educational programs (88 percent agree - 9 percent disagree), ensuring tuition is affordable at state colleges and

¹ TargetSmart designed and administered this telephone survey conducted by professional interviewers. The survey reached 600 adults, age 18 or older, who indicated they were registered to vote in Nebraska. The survey was conducted from July 25-29, 2018. The sample was randomly selected from TargetSmart’s enhanced voter file. The data were weighted by gender, age, party registration, and region by congressional district to ensure an accurate reflection of the population. The overall margin of error is ±4.0%. The margin of error for subgroups is larger and varies. Percentage totals may not add up precisely due to rounding.

Figure 2: Percent Who Agree That Each of the Following Will Support and Grow the Middle Class and Workforce in Nebraska

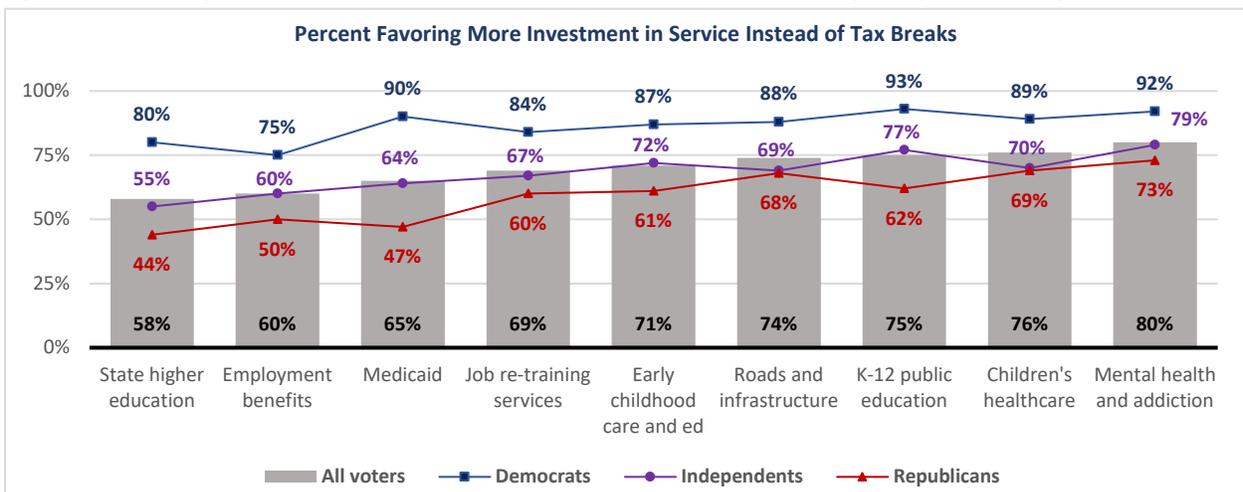


universities (85 percent agree - 12 percent disagree), expanding access to affordable, quality childcare (83 percent agree - 14 percent disagree), and ensuring everyone receives equal pay for equal work (81 percent agree - 15 percent disagree).

By contrast, cutting taxes for large corporations and CEOs attracts very little support, with only 27 percent of respondents agreeing that this would support and grow the middle class, while 71 percent disagree (52 percent strongly disagree). Voters also express very strong support for balancing the state budget (86 percent agree - 10 percent disagree) and for expanding access to financing to start a small business (87 percent agree - 10 percent disagree).

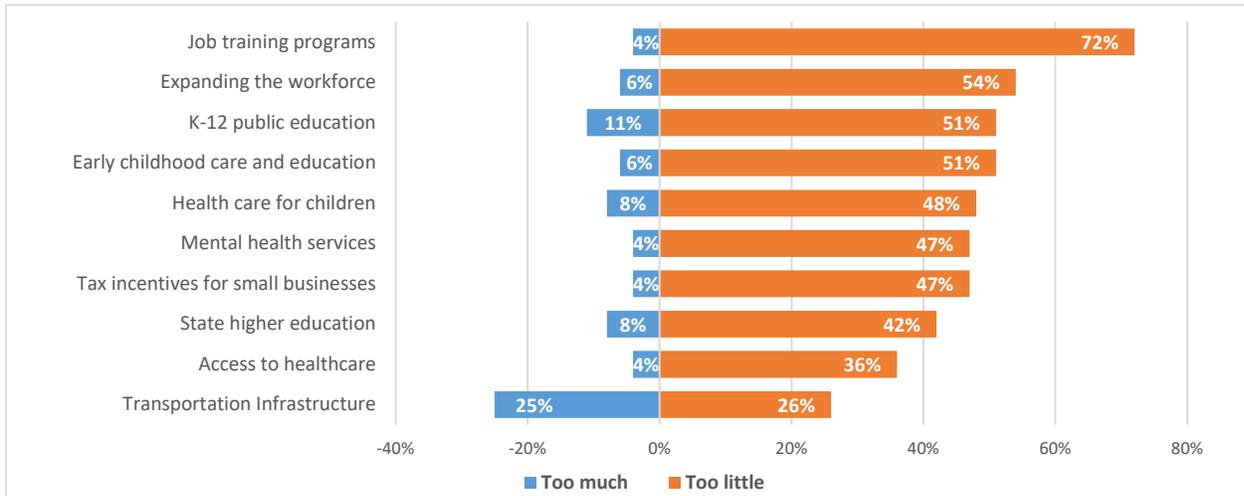
Similarly, voters across the partisan spectrum also overwhelmingly prefer increased investment in vital services over corporate tax breaks, as shown in Figure 3. Respondents are particularly supportive of investment in children’s healthcare (76 to 18 percent), K-12 public education (75 to 19 percent), mental health and addiction services (80 to 14 percent), and roads and infrastructure (74 to 20 percent) when posed as a choice between that government role and more investment in tax breaks for corporations.

Figure 3: Percent Prefer More State Investment in [X] Or More Investment in Tax Breaks for Corporations, Large Businesses



Given this consensus, it is unsurprising that consistent pluralities (and often majorities) of Nebraskans also believe that the state government is currently spending too little money on a variety of economic and social policy priorities (see *Figure 4*). In particular, voters believe that the state is underinvesting in job skills and training programs (72 percent too little), K-12 public education (51 percent), expanding the workforce (54 percent), and early childhood care and education (51 percent).

Figure 4: Percent Who Think the Nebraska State Government is Spending too Much or Too Little Money on [X]



Overall, results from this survey show that while Nebraska voters are divided on the extent of the current problem, many think families in the state currently lack the tools they need to gain entry into the middle class. At the same time, strong majorities agree that ensuring upward mobility is an important social value and that government investment should play a role in achieving that value. Moreover, across the political spectrum Nebraskans overwhelmingly agree that more state investment, not more tax cuts, are needed to support and grow the middle class.