



# The Leadership Conference Education Fund

## Communicating about ESSA and Equity

### Lessons Learned from New Research

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# Purpose and Process

- Multi-phase research
  - Language Analysis
  - Elicitation Interviews
  - Focus Groups (8)
  - Dial Survey
- Promote desire for equity in education
  - Create intersecting narrative to connect race, class, and disability.
  - Understand differences by target audience
  - Test effect of messengers





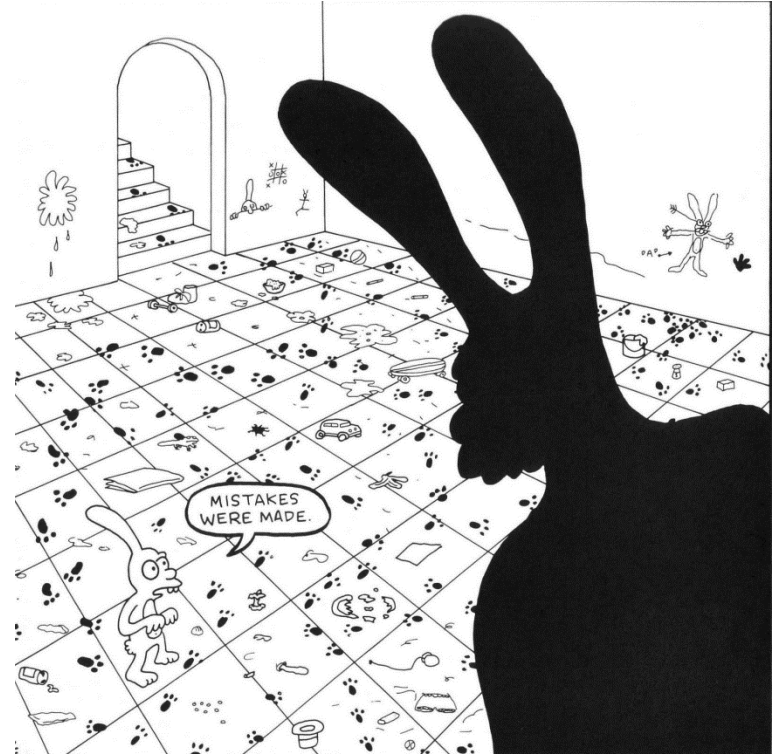
# Describing problem

...disparities begin to **emerge**

The racial wealth gap **is growing...**

Youth of color are  
disproportionately **targeted...**

Black children **experience** the least  
qualified teachers



# Describing advocacy

...seeks to inform

...works to ensure

...aims to bolster

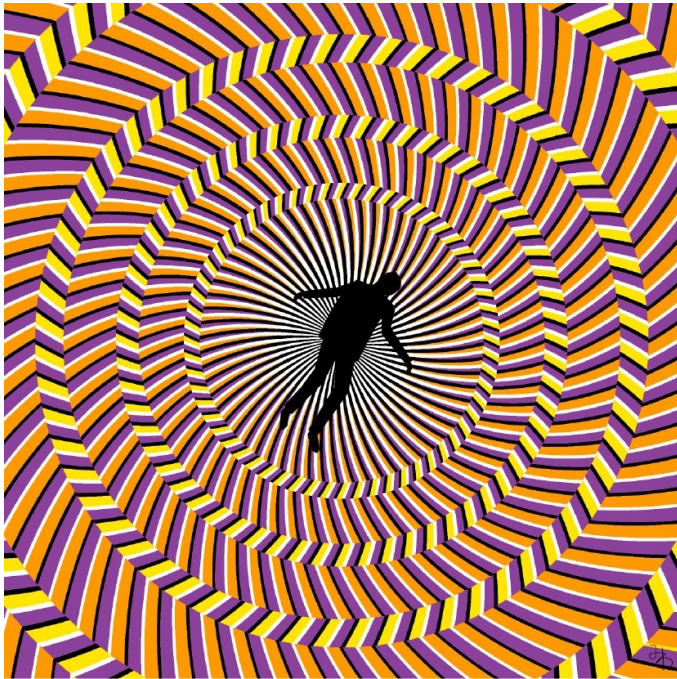
...seek to support and empower

...work to influence



The background of the image is a dark, black space filled with numerous small, white and light blue stars of varying sizes, creating a starry night sky effect.

**METAPHORS  
BE WITH YOU**



**“off balance”  
“off kilter”  
“distortions”**



**“gap”  
“chasm”  
“widening”**









# Base



- ✓ Believe a quality education is a shared responsibility
  - ✓ Believe in need for greater resources
  - ✓ Favor equity (more based on need) over equality (same resources to all)
- 
- 22% of US adults
  - More likely to be women, Democrats, Latino and younger

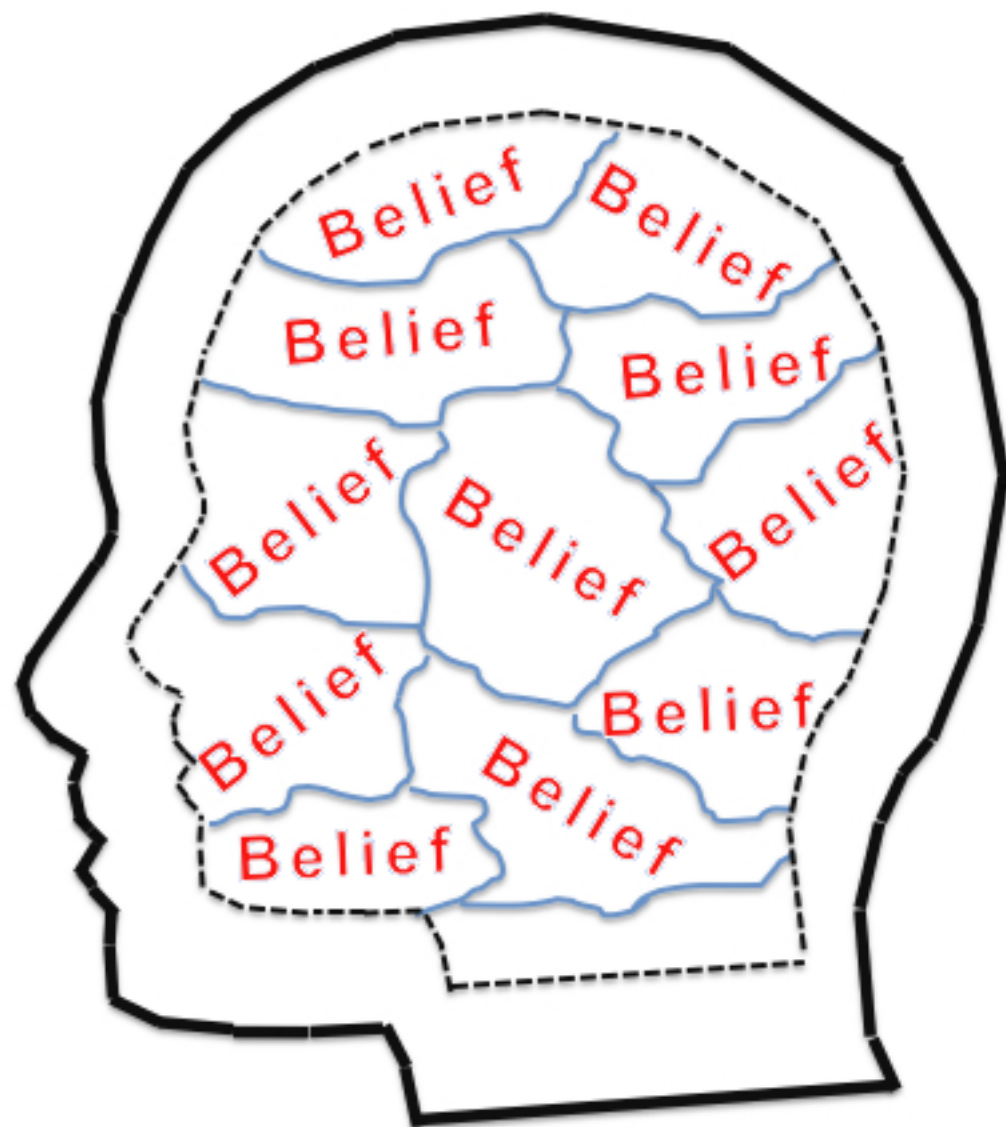
# Opposition



- ✓ Believe that spending more will not improve public schools
  - ✓ More likely to believe success a product of individual talent and effort
  - ✓ Reject race and class-specific calls for increased resources
- 
- 13% of US adults
  - More likely to be older, white, male and Republican







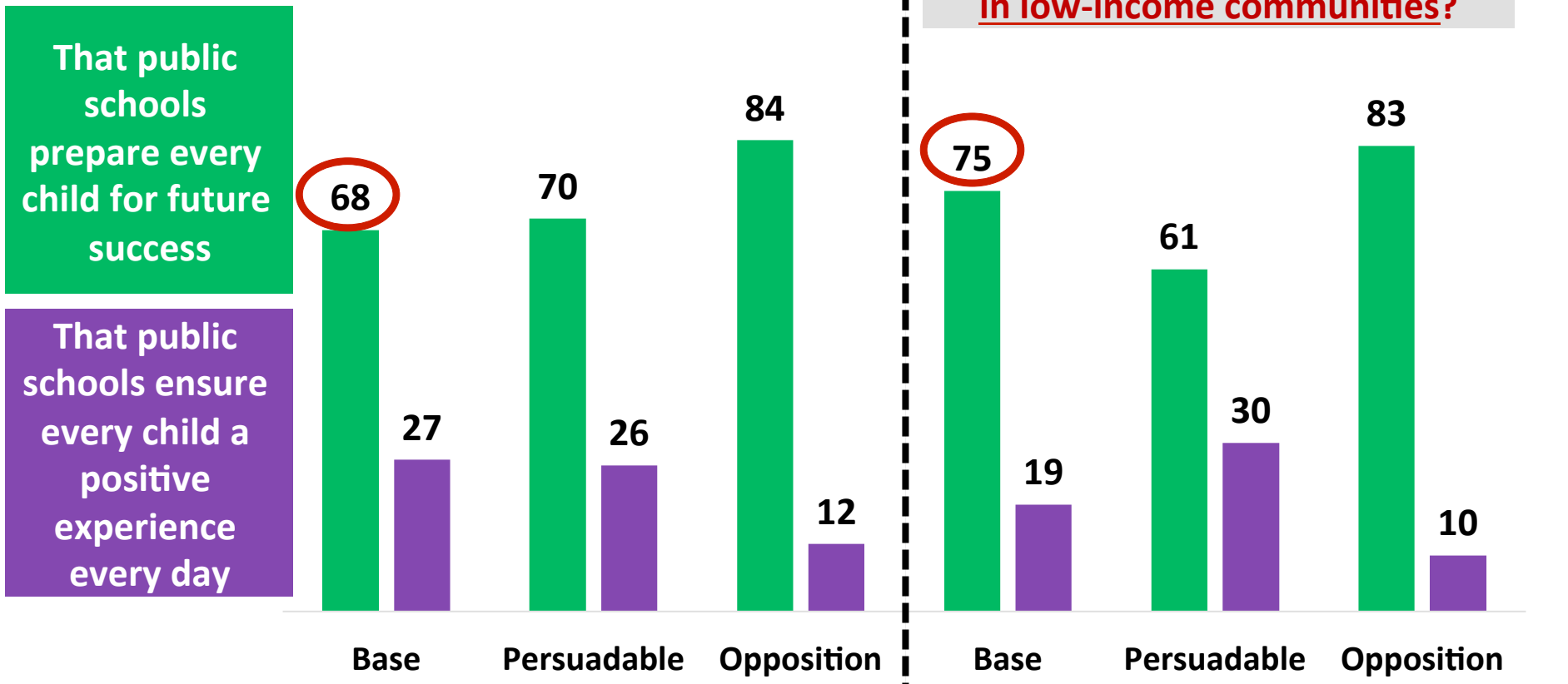
# Americans hold very favorable view of teachers, less so of teachers' unions, public schools, or policies.

Total Favorable	Total	AA	Lat.	PSP	Base	Opp	Pers	Notes
Teachers	87	87	90	93	96	76	87	Opposition favors teachers but not teachers' unions.
Teachers' Unions	60	75	64	72	74	35	60	
Public Education*	71	74	79	87	80	57	71	Latinos and public school parents rate public education higher than public schools.
Public Schools*	70	71	72	80	77	61	70	
Civil Rights Orgs	65	86	74	71	82	35	66	Base and African Americans have higher ratings of civil rights orgs than reform advocates.
Ed reform advocates	63	71	73	71	67	49	65	
NCLB	56	68	58	62	55	35	60	Base and persuadables have positive ratings of education policies and the Department of Ed. Opposition does not.
ESSA	49	67	59	64	49	23	55	
US Dept. of Ed	56	69	62	63	66	30	58	
Private school vouchers	52	70	60	56	40	52	56	African Americans, and to a lesser extent Latinos, have strong ratings for vouchers.

\* Split sampled

People believe it is more important for schools to prepare children for future success than to ensure they have a positive experience. Base even more so for schools in low-income communities.

Which of the following is more important in your view?



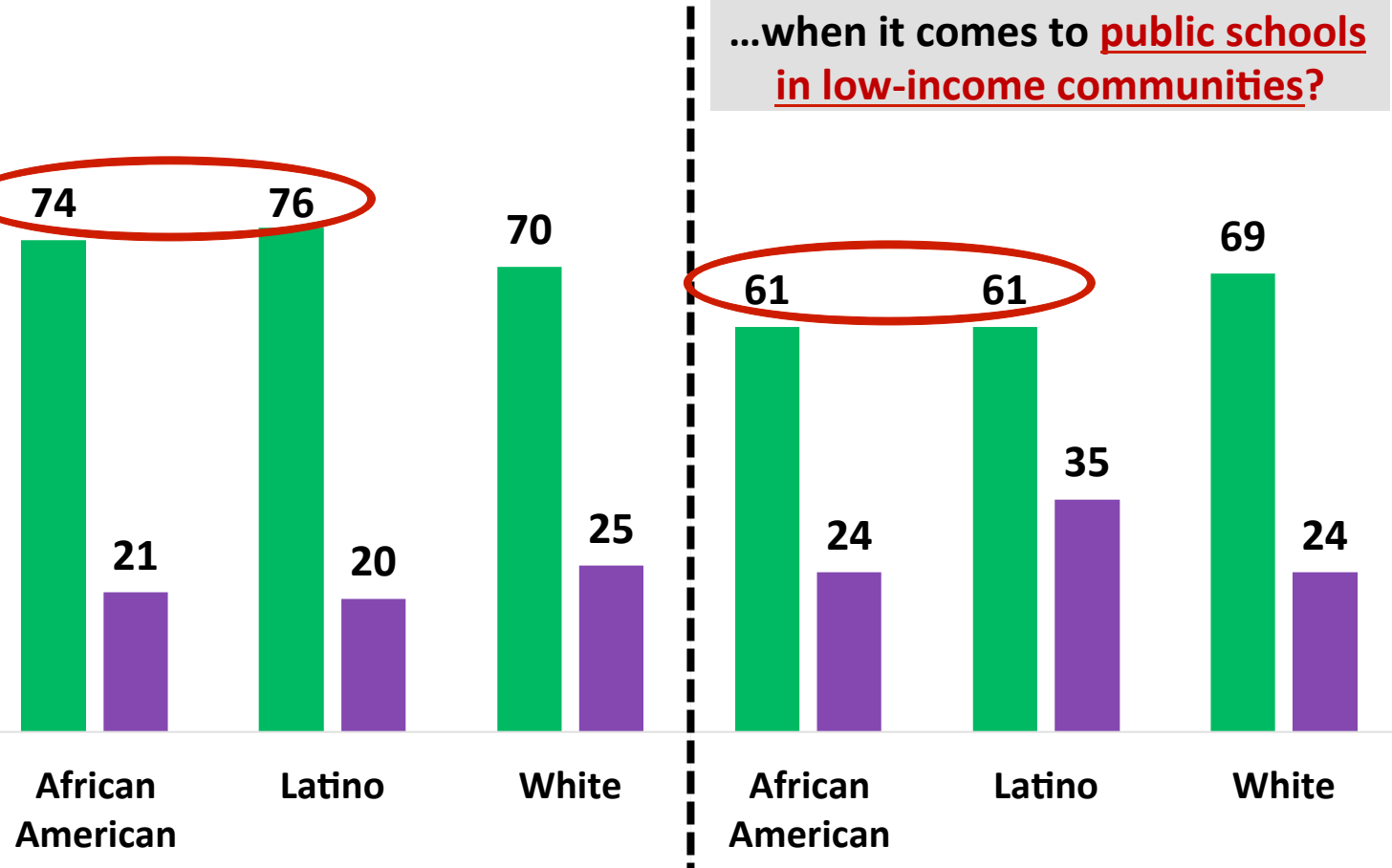


African Americans and Latinos are somewhat more likely to believe that it is more important for public schools to prepare children for future success than it is to ensure they have a positive experience every day.

Which of the following is more important in your view?

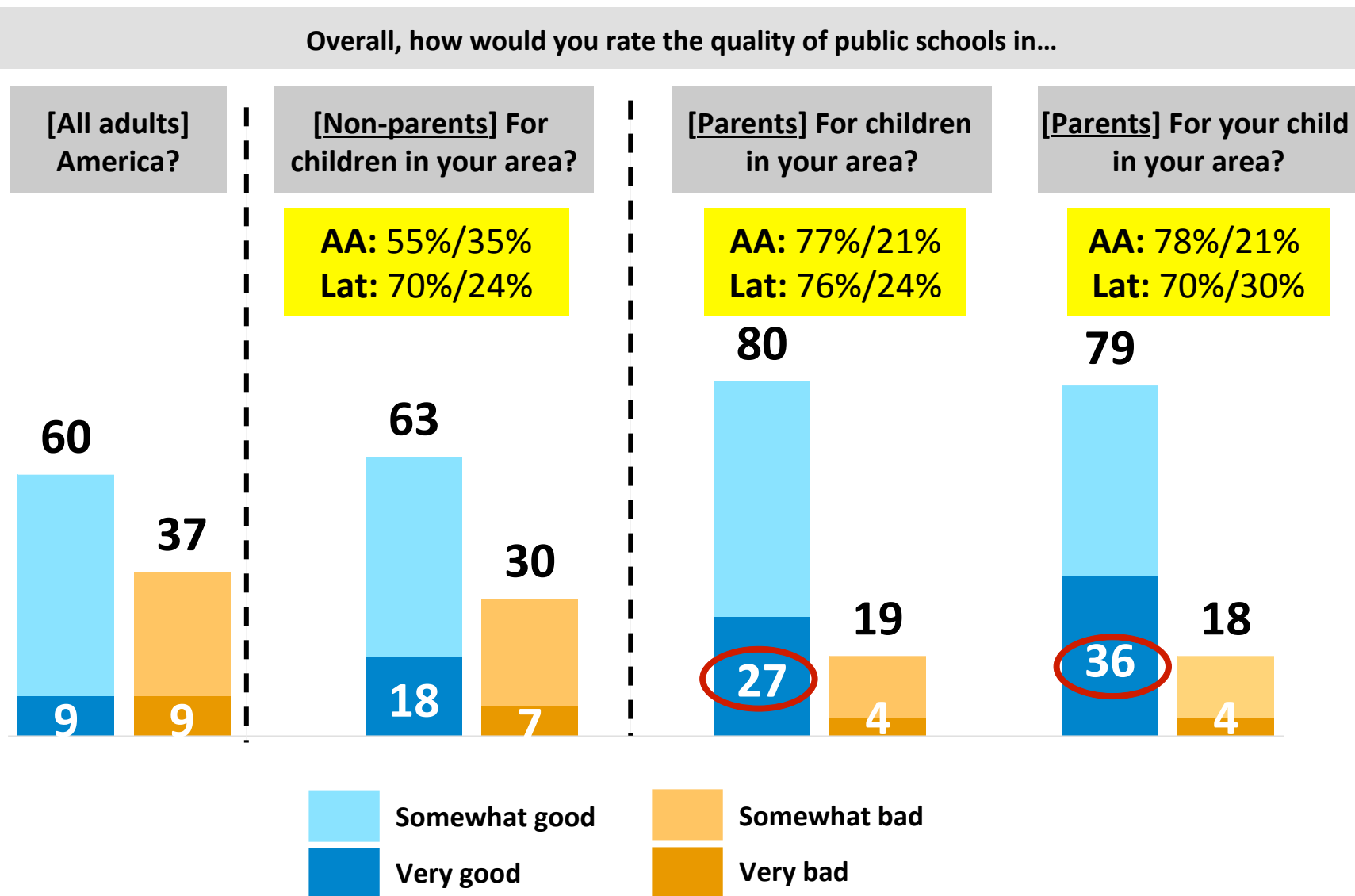
That public schools prepare every child for future success

That public schools ensure every child a positive experience every day



...when it comes to public schools in low-income communities?

People have higher ratings of public schools where they live. Parents rate schools for “your child” higher than for “children.” Parents have higher ratings of schools than non parents, but African American and Latino parents are slightly more negative.

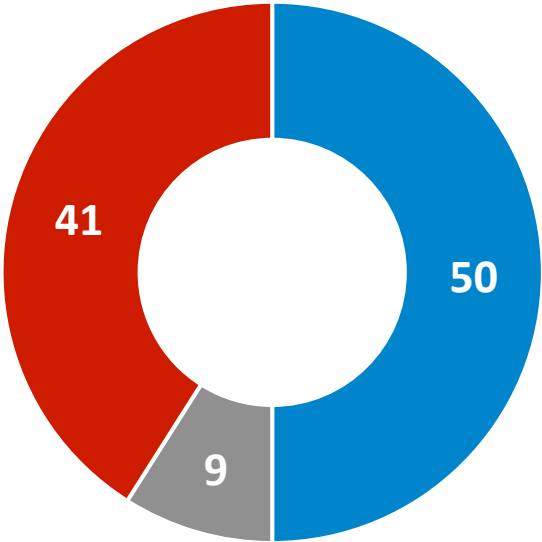


# Half believe resources more relevant than inherent qualities of student. Opposition believes dedication and intelligence explain success. Base believes the reverse.

Which of the following is the primary reason why some students do well in school where others do not?

Students who do well are inherently more dedicated and intelligent

Students who do well generally attend schools with more resources, experienced teachers, nicer facilities and more challenging classes



\*Split Sampled

All Adults

	More dedicated and intelligent	Generally attend schools with more resources
Base	30	62
Persuadable	40	51
Opposition	59	28
White	42	48
Black	35	54
Latino	38	56

Base adults see parents, underfunding, and having quality teachers as top barriers. The opposition focus on parents and ineffective teachers. Persuadables are slightly more focused on getting rid of ineffective teachers than retaining good ones.

How much of a barrier do you think it is toward ensuring that every child in public school has a quality education? (% rating 10) (0-10 scale, 0 not a barrier at all, 10 very significant barrier)	All	B	P	O
Parents that do not make an effort to help with their child's education	45	52	39	60
Not being able to replace ineffective teachers with quality teachers	39	47	35	44
Not being able to attract and retain enough quality teachers	33	49	30	25
Unequal funding between schools in low-income communities and schools in high-income communities	34	56	31	16
Not enough funding in schools in low-income communities compared to schools in high-income communities	28	50	26	1
Elected officials who do not care about communities who are unlikely to vote for them	34	47	30	27

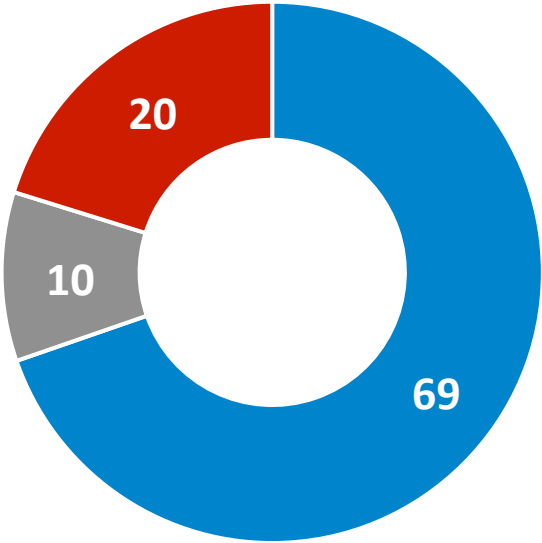


# People believe publicly identifying schools can help them improve and reject that identifying creates stigma.

When it comes to publicly identifying schools that are not adequately educating children, which of the following comes closer to your opinion?

Publicly identifying schools creates a stigma for the students who attend them

Publicly identifying schools can help them improve and serve children better

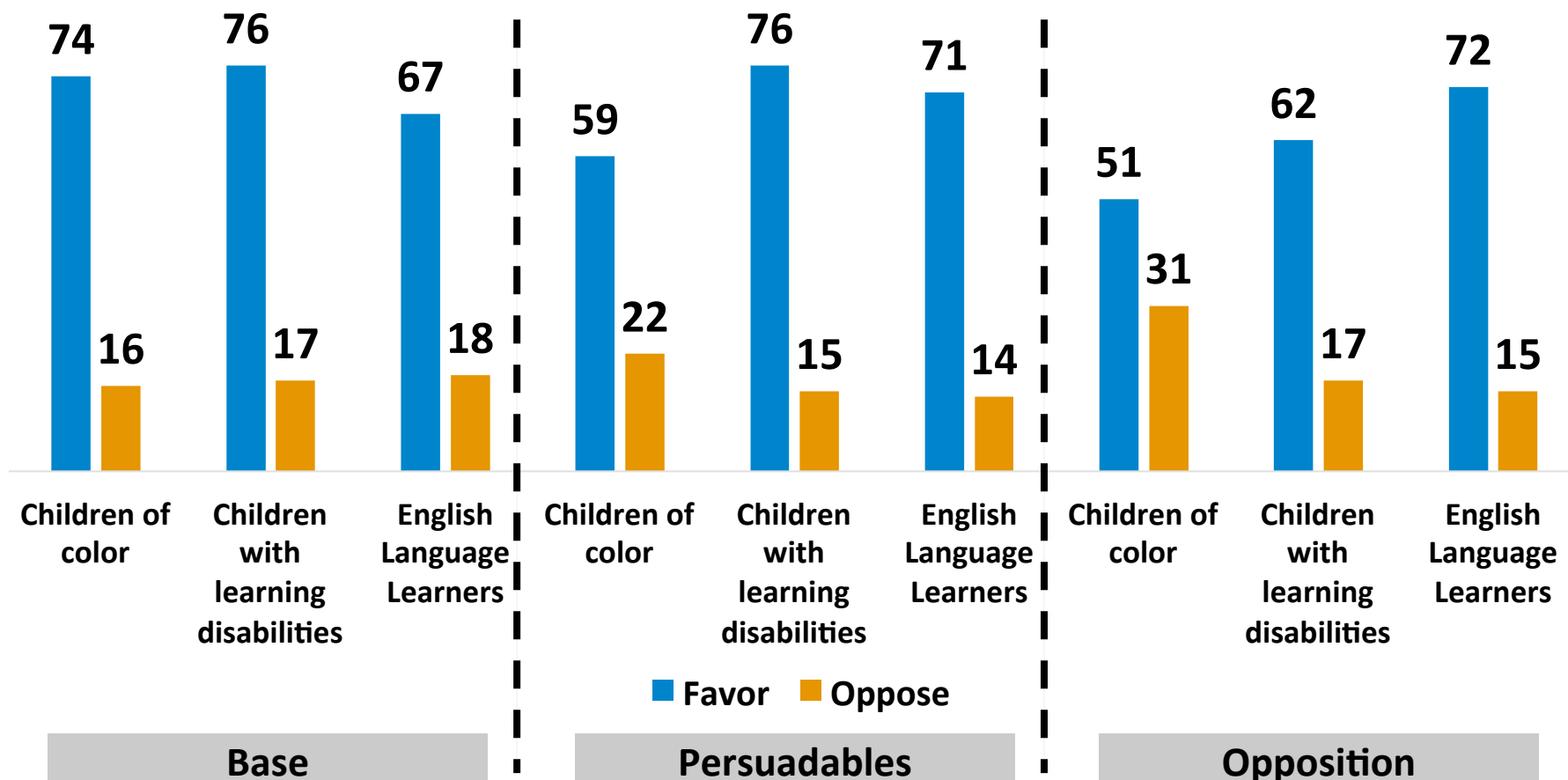


All Adults

	Creates a stigma for the students	Can help them improve and serve children
Base	16	75
Persuadable	21	69
Opposition	26	62
White	21	68
Black	13	74
Latino	21	72

## Strong majorities of all groups favor publicly identifying inadequate schools.

Do you favor or oppose publicly identifying schools that are not adequately educating...?



**Opposition adults are defined by their belief that spending more money is not going to improve schools. Base believes providing parents with choice will empower them. No one swayed by private schools.**

Do you agree or disagree with each statement? (0-10 scale, 0 strongly disagree, 10 strongly agree)


% Rating 10, Strongly Agree	All	Target		
		B	O	P
Simply spending more money in public schools is not going to make them better	29	11	64	29
Spending more money for public schools in communities whose parents do not value their child's education will not work.	20	1	42	22
We should empower parents with the freedom to choose which school they send their child	29	34	31	27
Private schools are more innovative and effective than public schools	17	11	19	19

Base adults support more resources. When we call out communities that have been denied resources and opportunities, we hold support with persuadables, and alienate opposition. Including race alienates opposition further.

Do you agree or disagree with each statement? (0-10 scale, 0 strongly disagree, 10 strongly agree)

% Rating 10, Strongly Agree	All	Target		
		B	O	P
We need to provide schools the resources needed to teach every child well and give them the opportunity to succeed	43	75	32	34
We need to provide schools the resources needed to teach every child well and give them the opportunity to succeed, <u>especially in communities that have been denied resources and opportunities</u>	39	71	10	32
We need to provide schools the resources needed to teach every child well and give them the opportunity to succeed, <u>especially in communities like communities of color that have been denied resources and opportunities</u>	35	73	1	30



The image features a rectangular piece of off-white paper with a slightly textured surface, centered against a background of heavily textured, aged, light brown paper. The background paper has a mottled appearance with various shades of brown and tan, suggesting a natural or recycled material. The text on the white paper is in a bold, black, sans-serif font, arranged in three lines: "WORDS" on the top line, "MEAN" on the middle line, and "THINGS" on the bottom line. The text is enclosed in quotation marks at the beginning and end of the first and last lines.

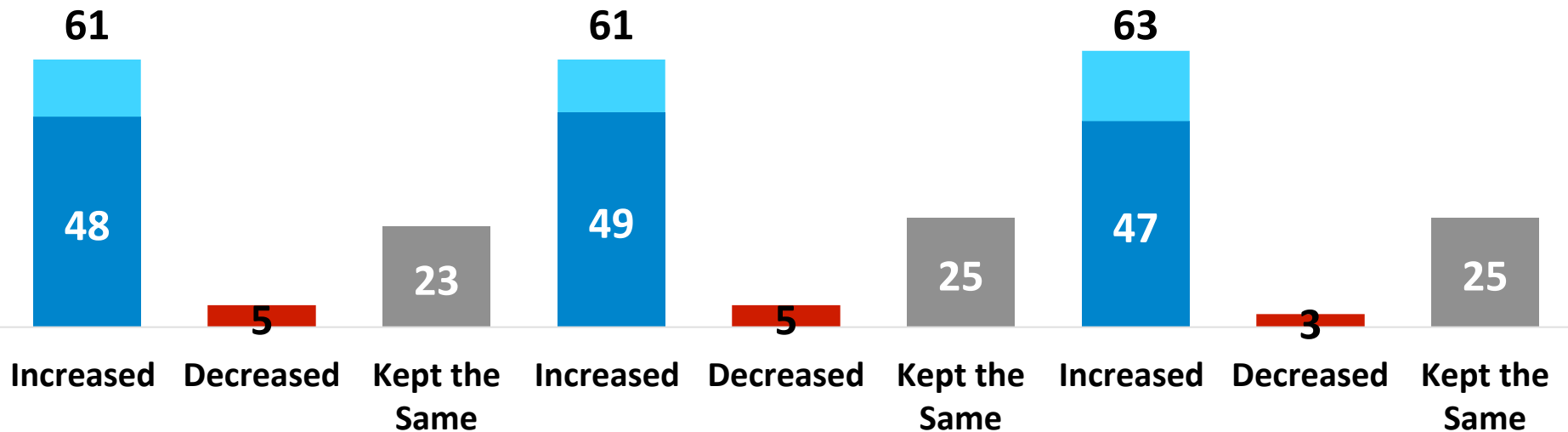
**“WORDS”  
MEAN  
“THINGS”**

# Americans want to increase funding for public schools. Saying “schooling” resonates most with base adults and African Americans, and alienates opposition.

Funding for **PUBLIC SCHOOLS** in poorer communities of color?

Funding for **PUBLIC EDUCATION** in poorer communities of color?

Funding for **SCHOOLING** in poorer communities of color?



% Increase EVEN if paid more taxes	
Base	78
Opposition	19
Persuadable	44

% Increase EVEN if paid more taxes	
Base	73
Opposition	13
Persuadable	46

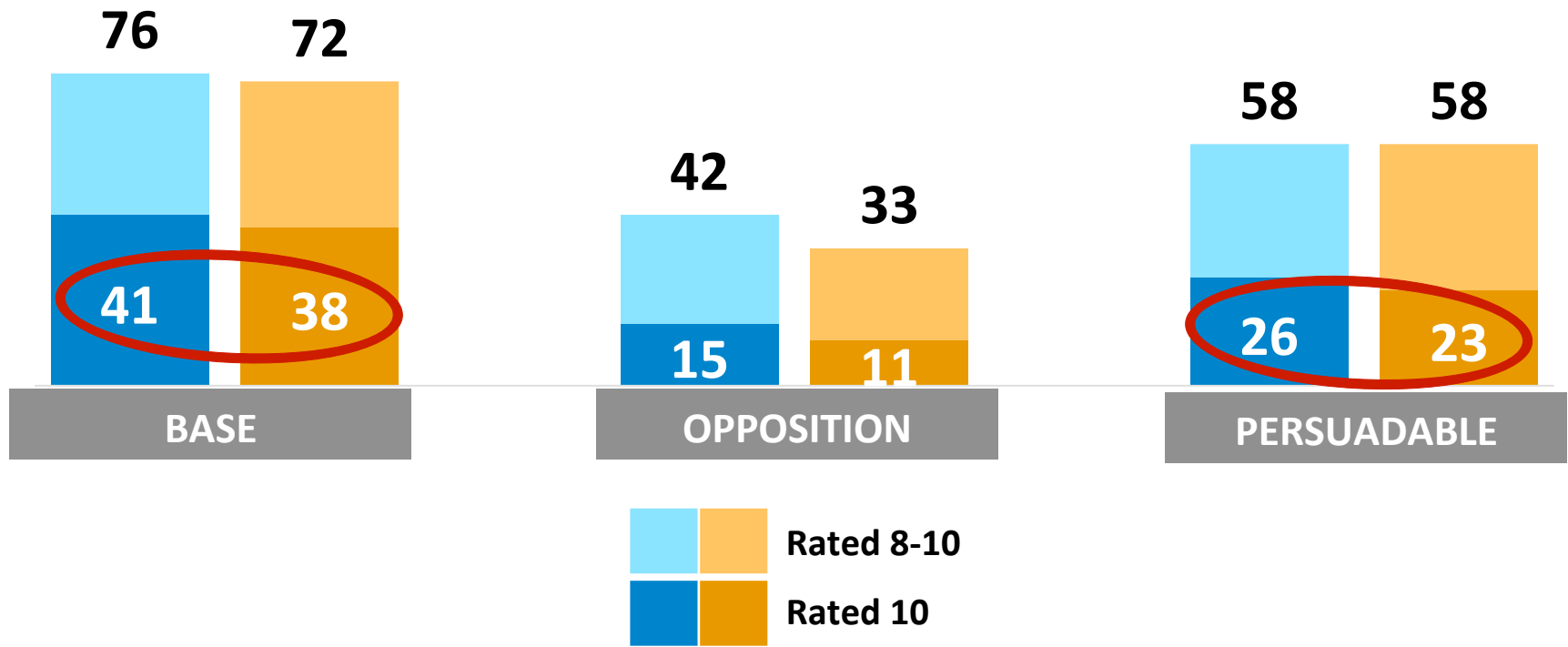
% Increase EVEN if paid more taxes	
Base	79
Opposition	6
Persuadable	46

 Increase, even if paid more in taxes

# Saying “child” instead of “student” increases concern among base and persuadables.

Not enough attention given to the unique needs of every child.

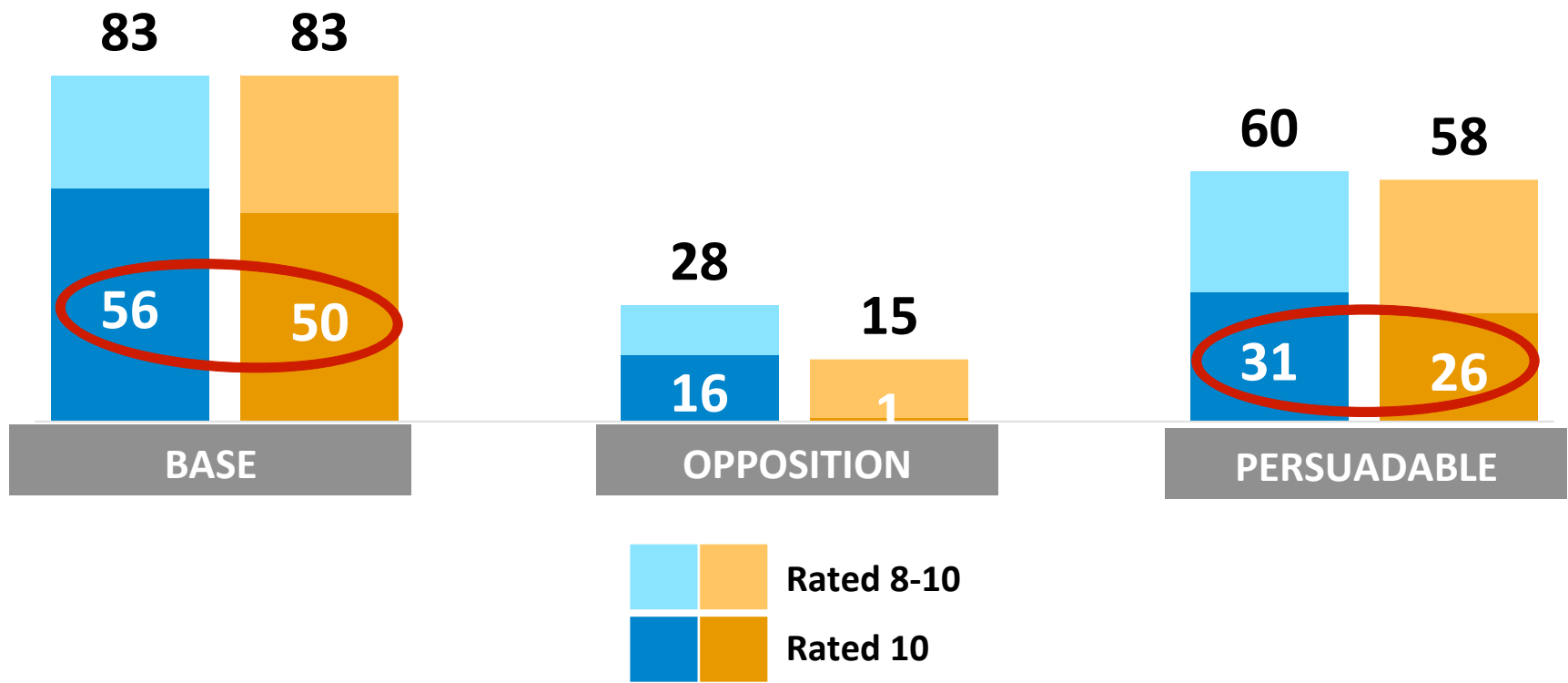
Not enough attention given to the unique needs of every student.



# “Unequal funding” is stronger than “not enough funding” for both base and persuadables.

Unequal funding between schools in low-income communities and schools in high-income communities.

Not enough funding in schools in low-income communities compared to schools in high-income communities.



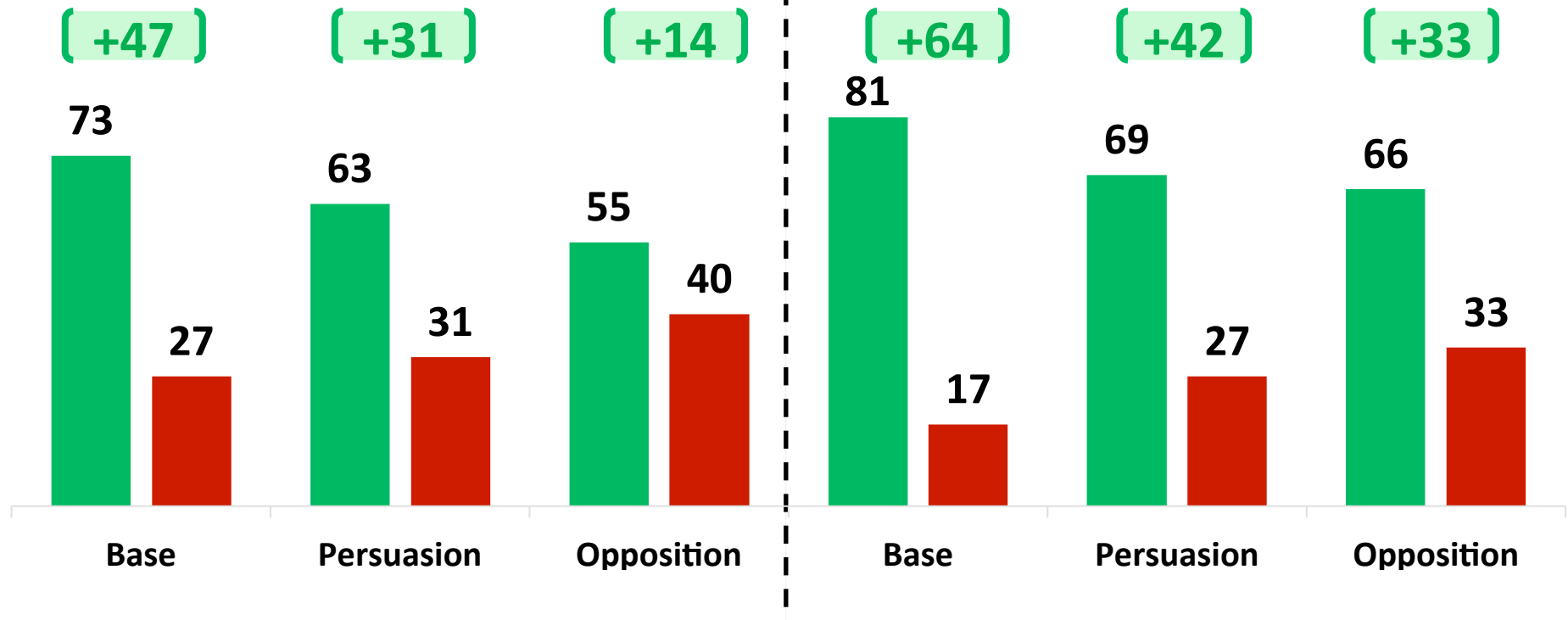
# Priming on low income communities increases agreement with equality approach at expense of making sure every student receives needed resources.

Which of the following is more important to you?

That we treat every child equally and give each school exactly the same amount of resources per child

That we make sure every student receives the resources he/she needs so they graduate prepared for success after H.S

Primed with: "Some people say that the schools that need the most help are often in low income communities."





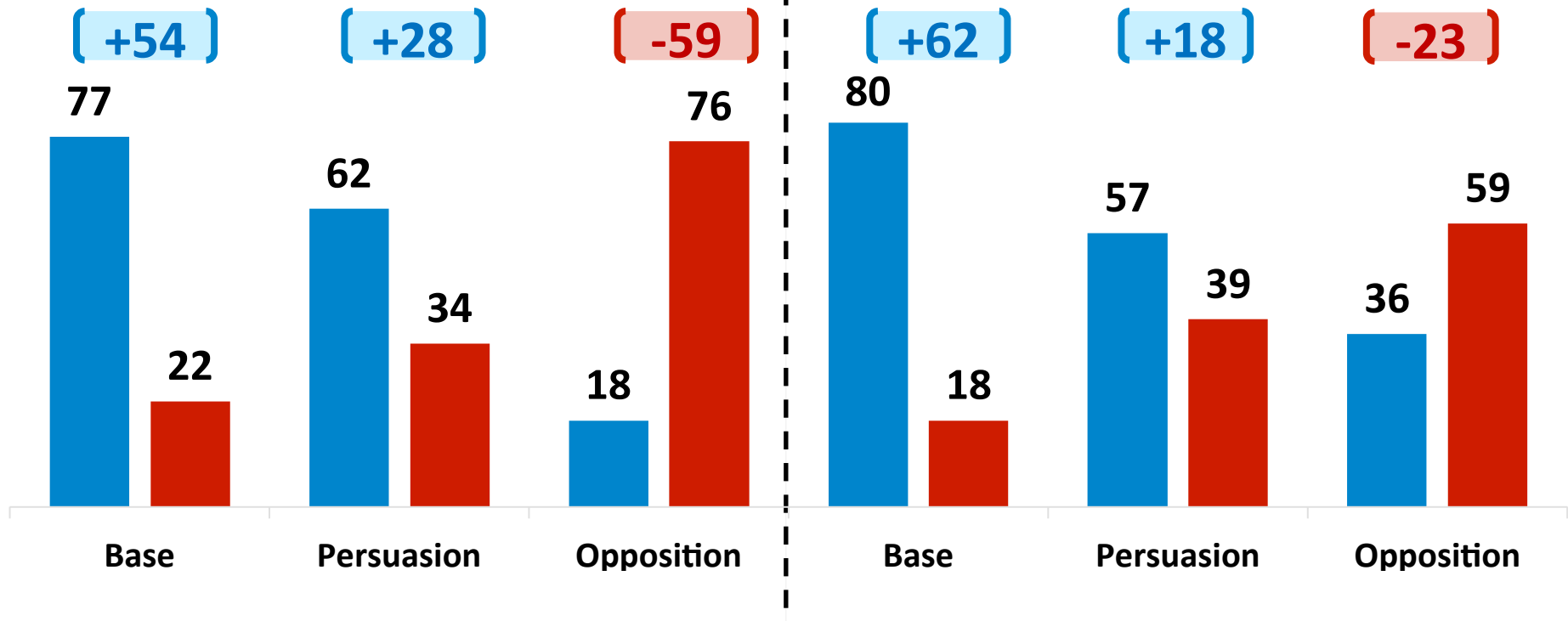
# Priming on low income communities then providing more explicit call for low-income communities increases desire for equity with persuadables and alienates opposition.

Which of the following is more important to you?

That we treat every child equally and give each school exactly the same amount of resources per child

That we ensure each child has the same opp, and give additional resources to the schools that need the most help

Primed with: "Some people say that the schools that need the most help are often in low income communities."



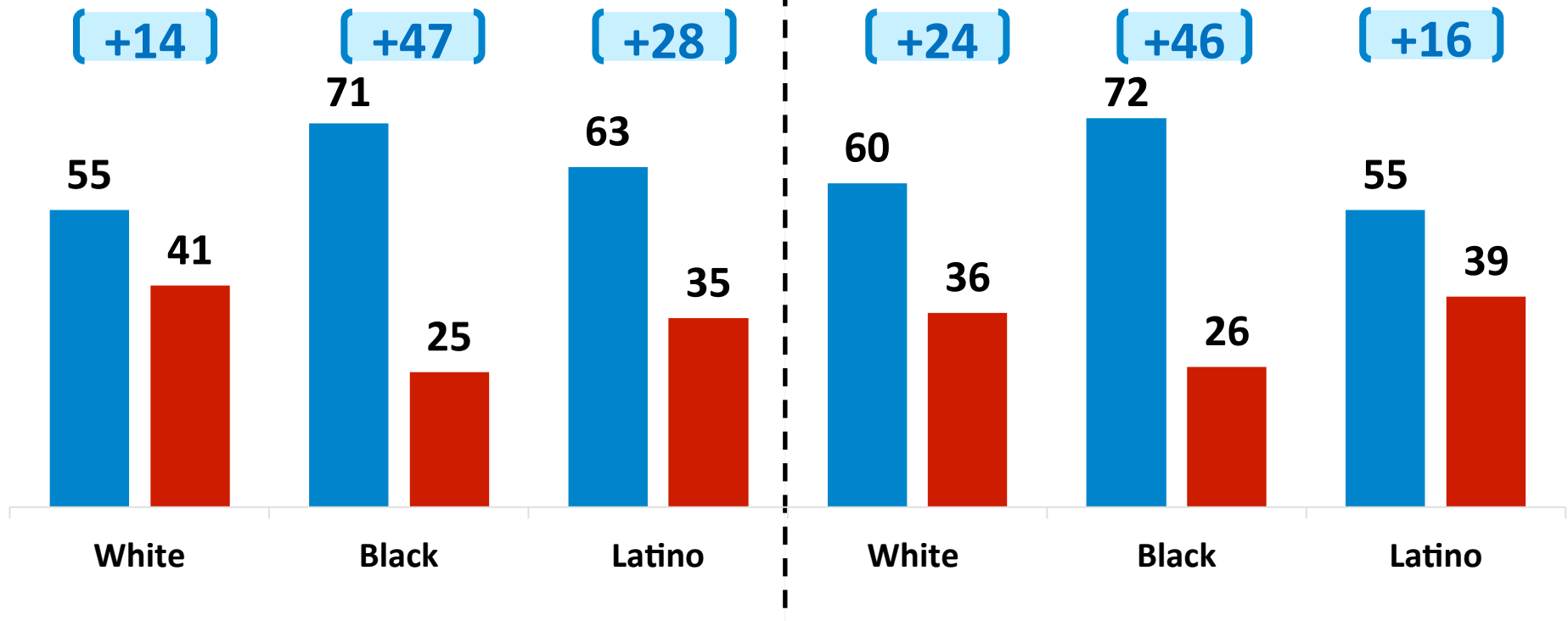
# Priming class then providing explicit call for low-income communities increases desire for equity with African Americans and Latinos.

Which of the following is more important to you?

That we treat every child equally and give each school exactly the same amount of resources per child

That we ensure each child has the same opp, and give additional resources to the schools that need the most help

Primed with: "Some people say that the schools that need the most help are often in low income communities."



## In summary

“Ensure each child has the same opportunity, and give additional resources to the schools that need the most help.”

People across groups support equity when expressed in individual terms.

However, a prime about low income communities without a corresponding policy payoff increases desire for equality at expense of individual equity.

### **The Key?**

- ✓ Express equity jointly at individual and community level (on left).
  - ✓ Keeps base and persuadables while alienating opposition.
  - ✓ Priming increases desire for equity with African Americans and Latinos.

## Base and persuadables respond more to quality education for America's future than for the sake of each child.

Do you agree or disagree with each statement? (0-10 scale)

% Rating 10, Strongly Agree	All	Target		
		B	O	P
Ensuring that all children get a quality education will help <u>America's future</u>	54	89	41	46
Ensuring that all children get a quality education will help <u>each child pursue their dreams</u>	42	68	29	38

# Calls for resources referencing zip code are stronger across groups. Opposition turns away more when we say “no matter how [children] learn.”

Do you agree or disagree with each statement? (0-10 scale, 0 strongly disagree, 10 strongly agree)

% Rating 10, Strongly Agree	All	Target		
		B	O	P
We need to make sure that every school has the resources they need to educate every child, <u>no matter the zip code they live in</u>	50	83	40	41
We need to make sure that every school has the resources they need to educate every child, <u>no matter how they learn</u>	38	66	15	32



## Base responds more to referring to children from low-income “communities” than “families.”

Do you agree or disagree with each statement? (0-10 scale)

% Rating 10, Strongly Agree	All	Target		
		B	O	P
Children from low-income <u>communities</u> face more barriers to doing well in school than others	33	53	13	31
Children from low-income <u>families</u> face more barriers to doing well in school than others	28	41	7	28

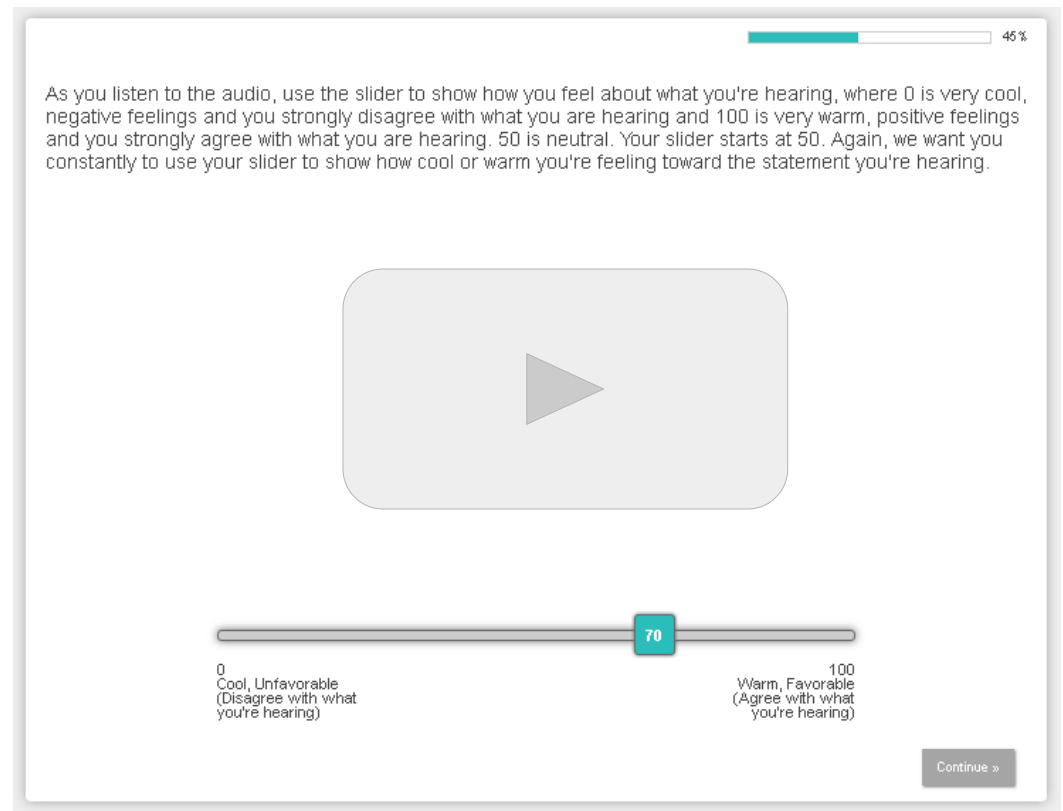
# Base and persuadables respond to accountability more when we focus on what the school does, rather than on what the students do.

Do you agree or disagree with each statement? (0-10 scale, 0 strongly disagree, 10 strongly agree)

% Rating 10, Strongly Agree	All	Target		
		B	O	P
Schools need to be held accountable if <u>the schools do not educate and perform well</u>	38	48	32	36
Schools need to be held accountable if <u>their students do not learn and thrive</u>	32	38	38	28
Schools need to be held accountable if <u>their students do not learn and perform well</u>	30	38	32	27

# Messaging Dial Testing

- People listened to a recording of a message.
- While they listened they moved their cursor to indicate positive or negative reactions.



45%

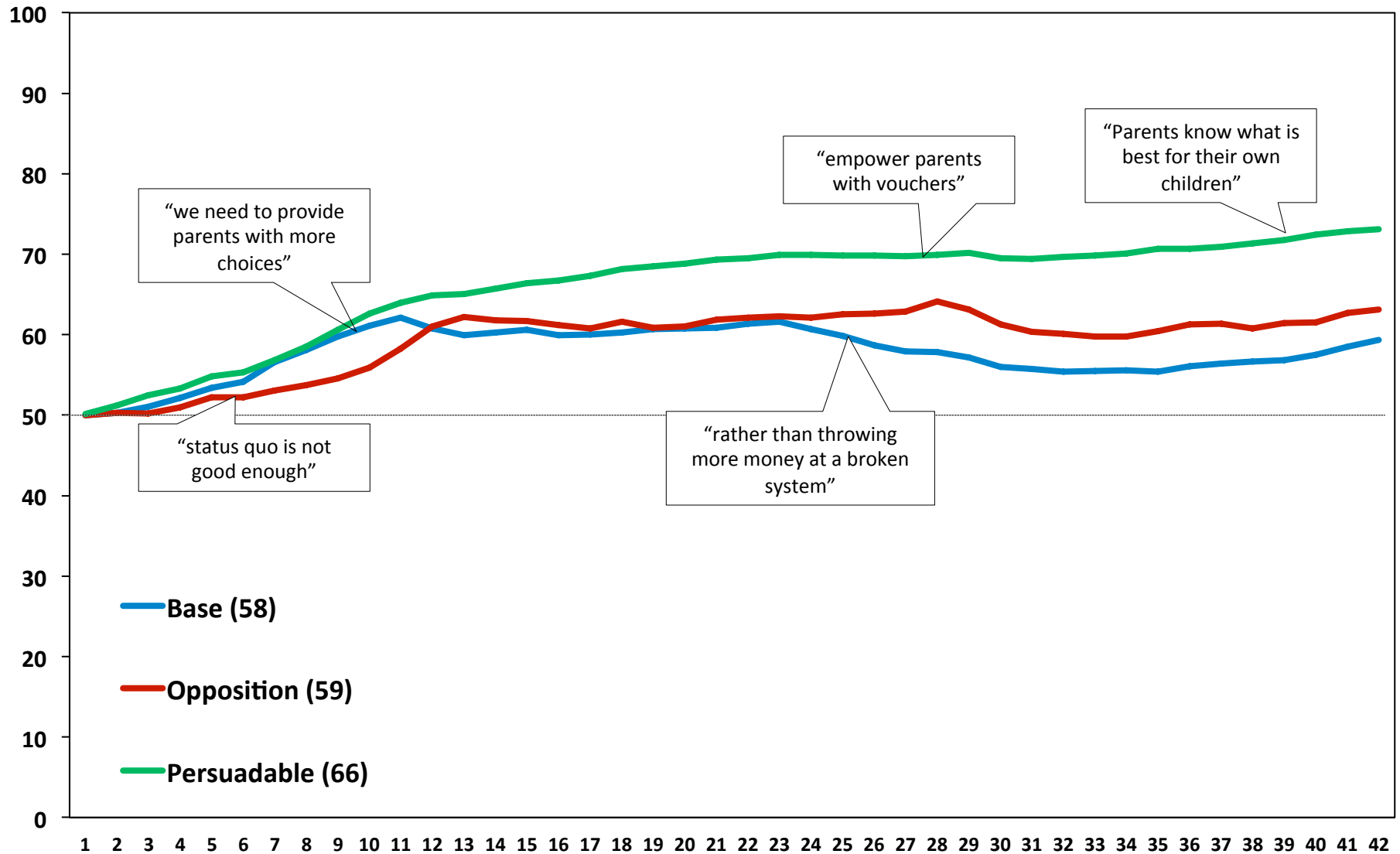
As you listen to the audio, use the slider to show how you feel about what you're hearing, where 0 is very cool, negative feelings and you strongly disagree with what you are hearing and 100 is very warm, positive feelings and you strongly agree with what you are hearing. 50 is neutral. Your slider starts at 50. Again, we want you constantly to use your slider to show how cool or warm you're feeling toward the statement you're hearing.

70

0 Cool, Unfavorable (Disagree with what you're hearing) 100 Warm, Favorable (Agree with what you're hearing)

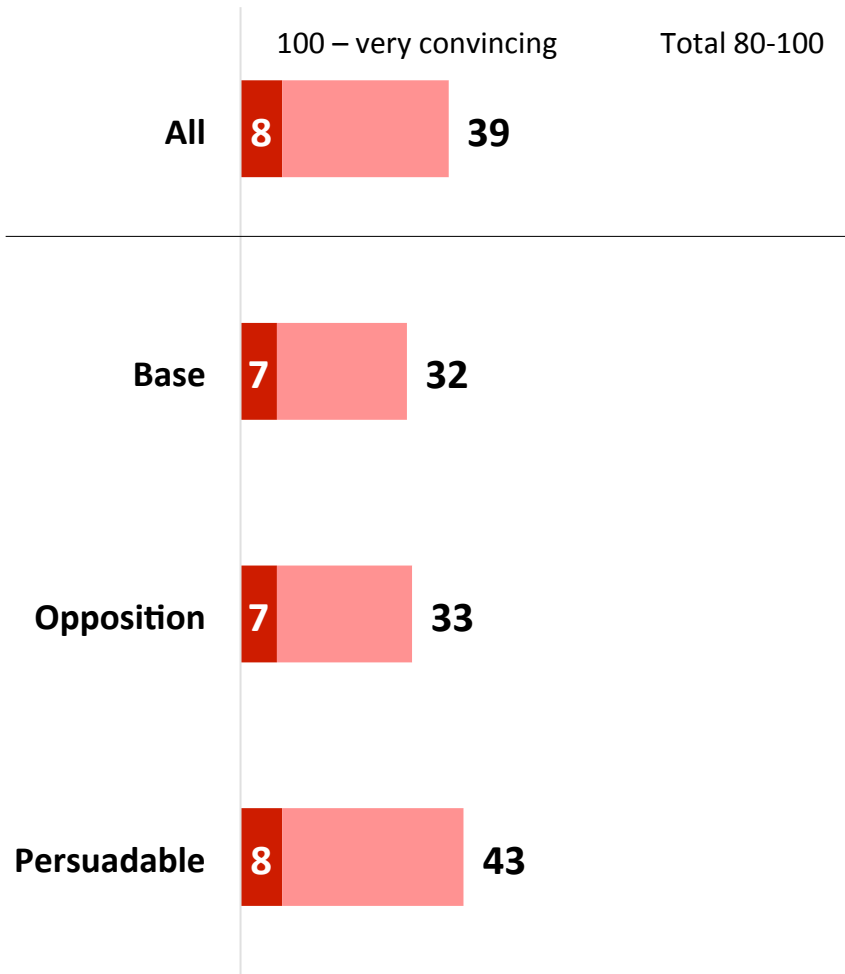
Continue »

# Opposition



# Opposition

How convincing did you find this message?



**WHAT WORKS (for them)**

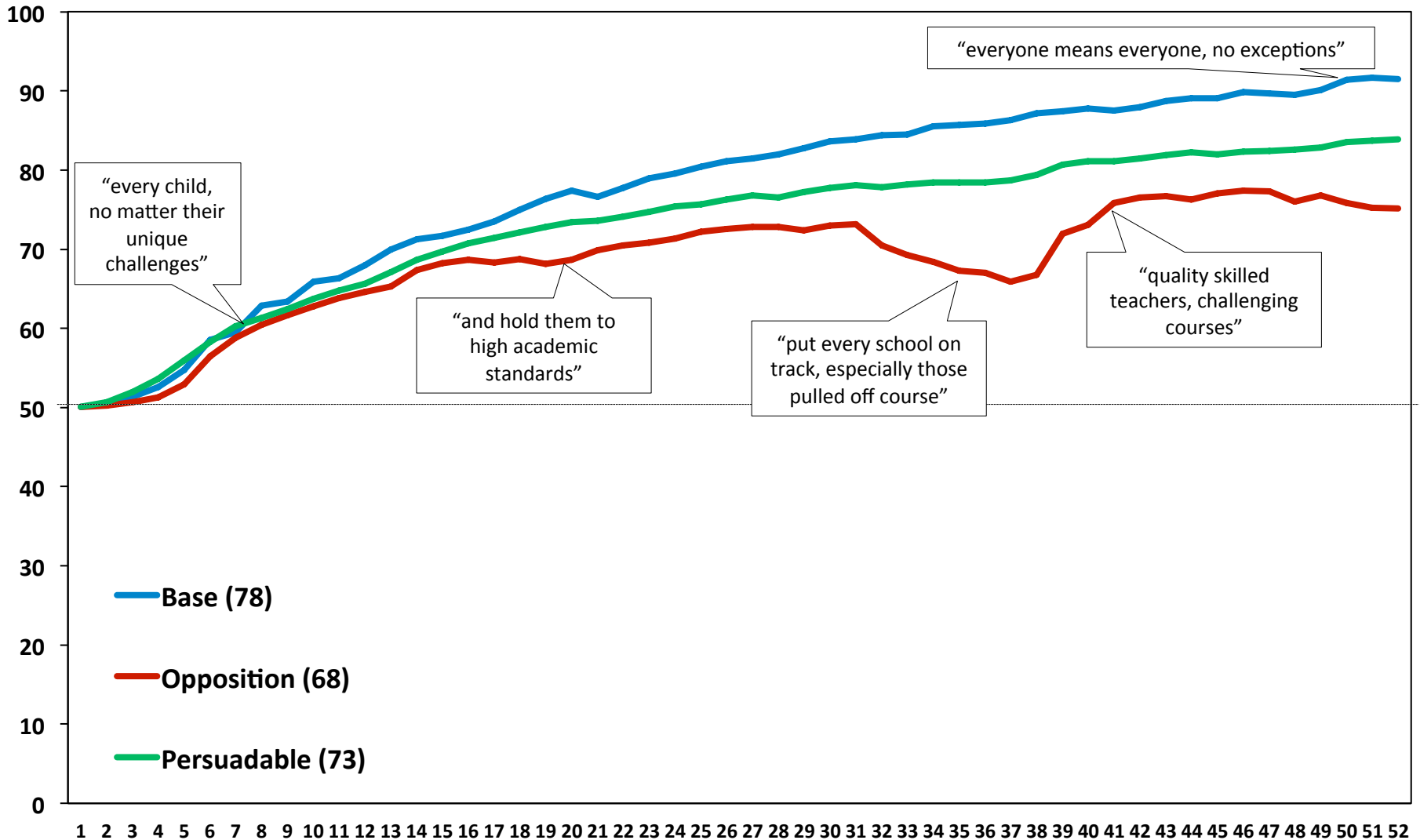
- ✓ “We need to provide parents with more choices” is strong with persuadables and opposition.
- ✓ Vouchers resonates with persuadables.
- ✓ Base largely unmoved by the message.

**WHAT FALLS SHORT (for them)**

- X Slow start.
- X Weak conscious and unconscious means.
- X Opposition plateaus.
- X Likely too parent centered as opposed to school or child.
- X Begins negative, not aspirational.



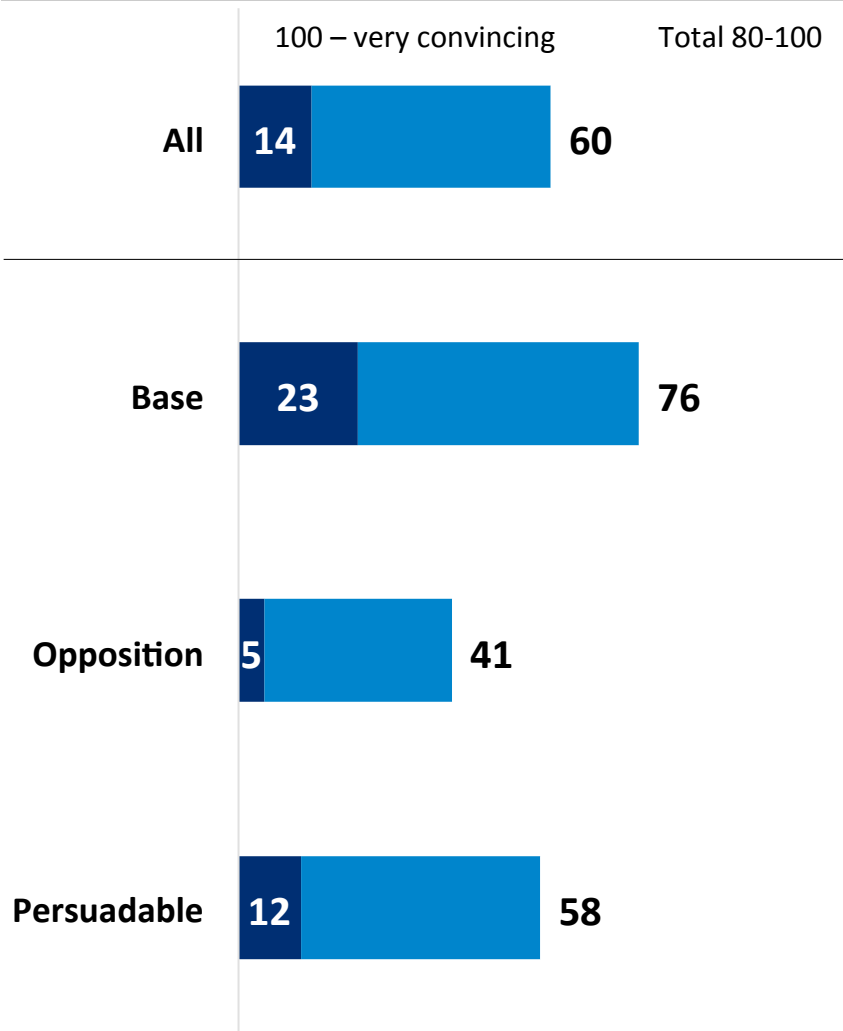
# Future of Individual (White Man)



\*Split Sampled

# Future of Individual (White Man)

## How convincing did you find this message?



\*Split Sampled

## WHAT WORKS

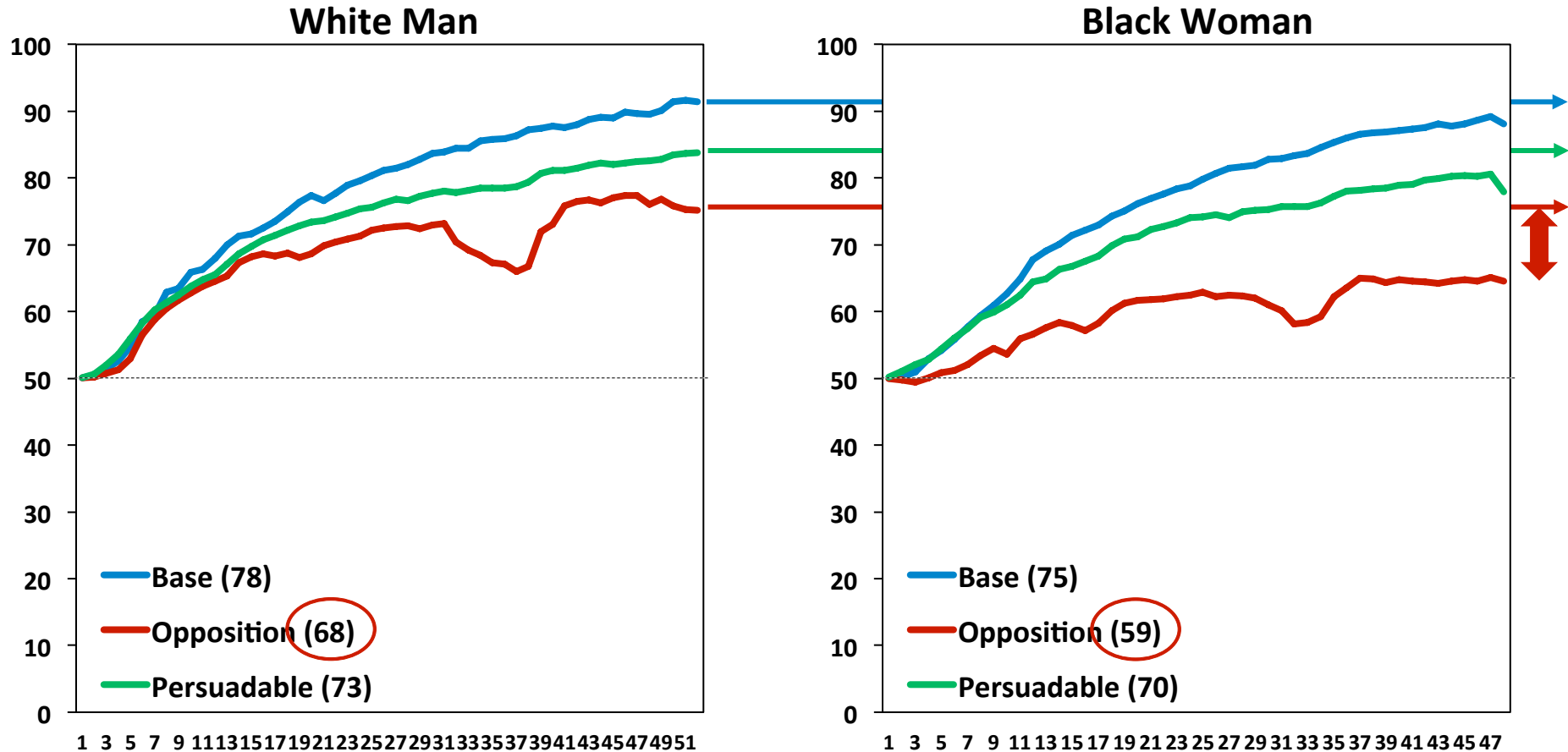
- ✓ Quick start with positive aspirational statement.
- ✓ Opposition dials down on call to action “it’s up to us to put every school on track, especially those pulled off course.”
- ✓ Strong close for base and persuadables that alienates opposition
- ✓ Strong conscious and unconscious ratings for both base and persuadables.
- ✓ Gives specifics for outcomes (high academic standards) and what resources are for (skilled teachers, and challenging courses.)

## WHAT FALLS SHORT

- X Does not alienate opposition.
- X Lacks explicit call for targeting resources to certain schools.

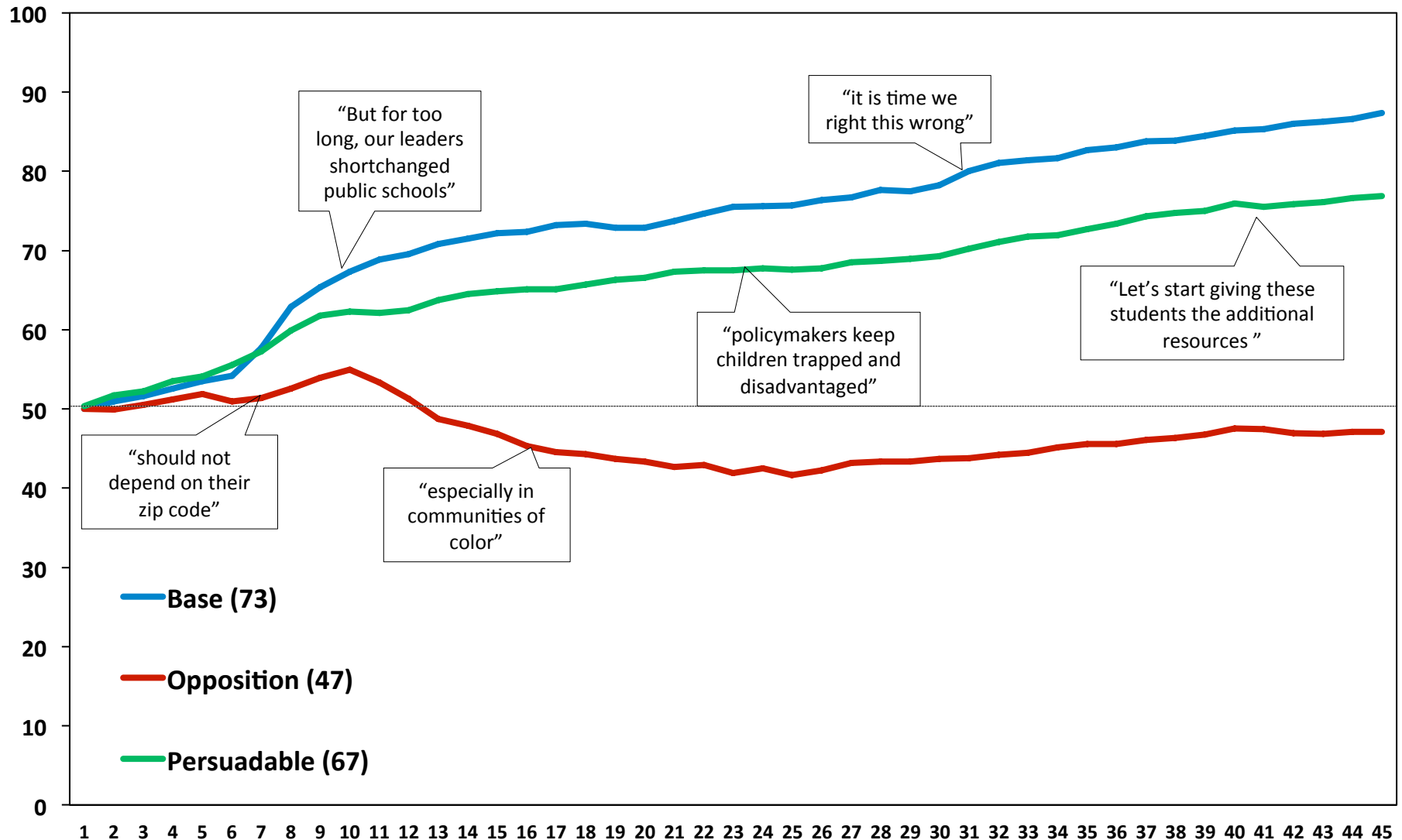
# Future of Individual: Messenger Matters

Ratings among base and persuadables remain strong for both, and a Black Woman successfully alienates the opposition (which is our goal).





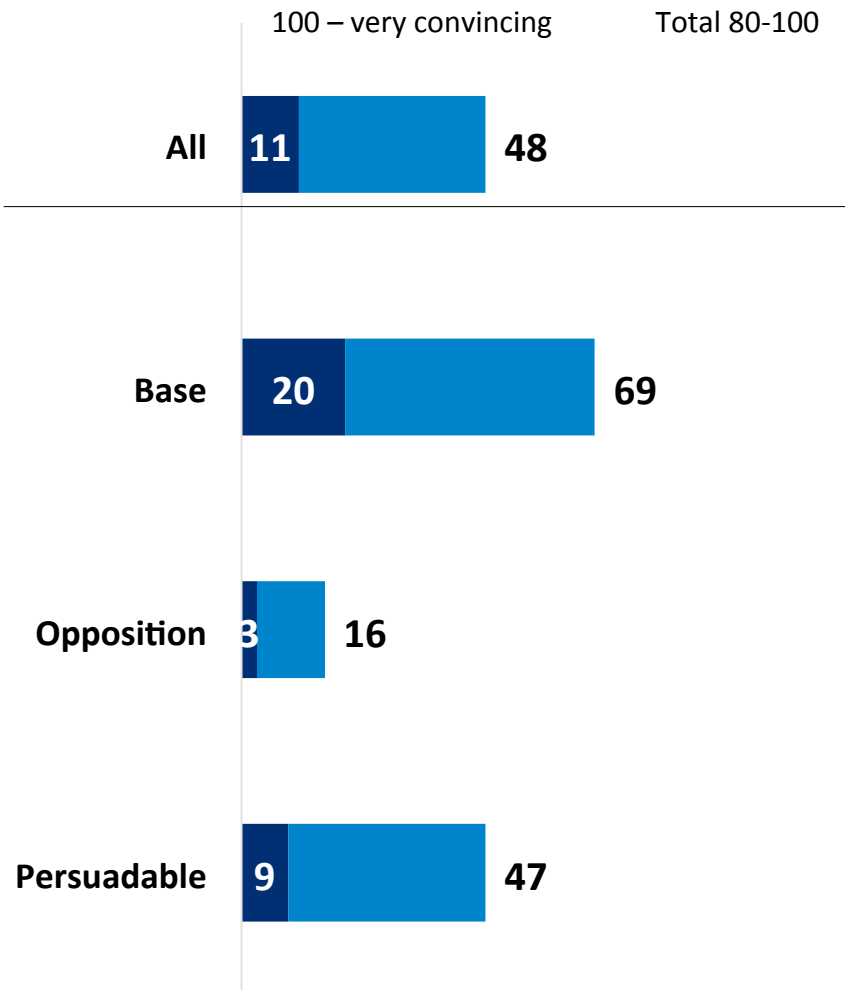
# Righting Wrongs (Black Woman)



\*Split Sampled

# Righting Wrongs (Black Woman)

## How convincing did you find this message?



\*Split Sampled

## WHAT WORKS

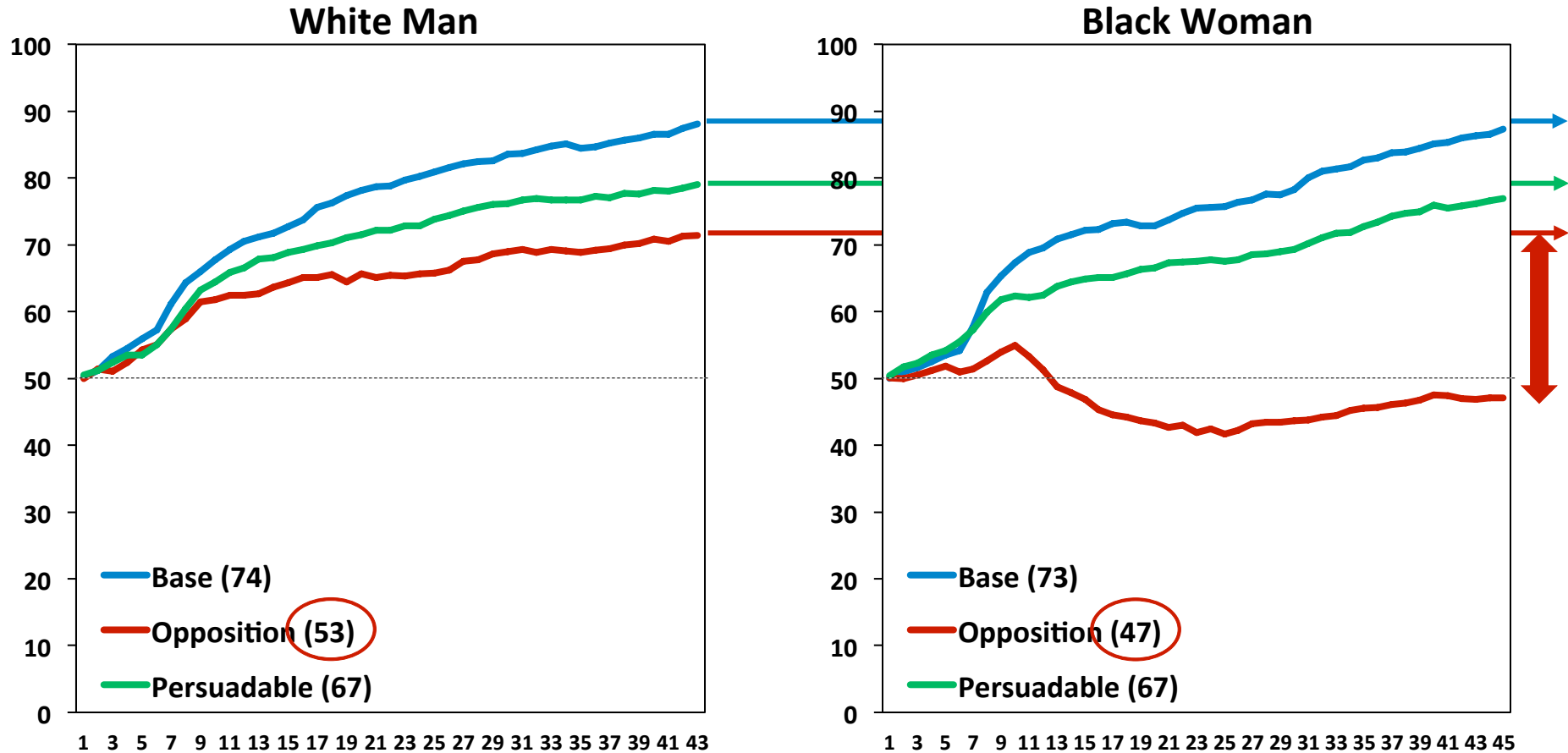
- ✓ Base and persuadables dial up on “should not depend on their zip code.”
- ✓ Quick alienation of opposition.
- ✓ Explicit race strong with base and persuadables, alienates opposition.
- ✓ Outlining causation, “our leaders shortchanged public schools in low-income communities” resonates with base and persuadables.
- ✓ Saying “it’s time we right this wrong” is strong with the base.
- ✓ Calls for resources resonates with the base “let’s start giving these students the additional resources they need.”
- ✓ Strong conscious ratings with base.

## WHAT FALLS SHORT

- X Slower start with Black woman messenger.
- X Conscious ratings are lower than with White man (unconscious same for base and persuadables.)

# Righting Wrongs: Messenger Matters

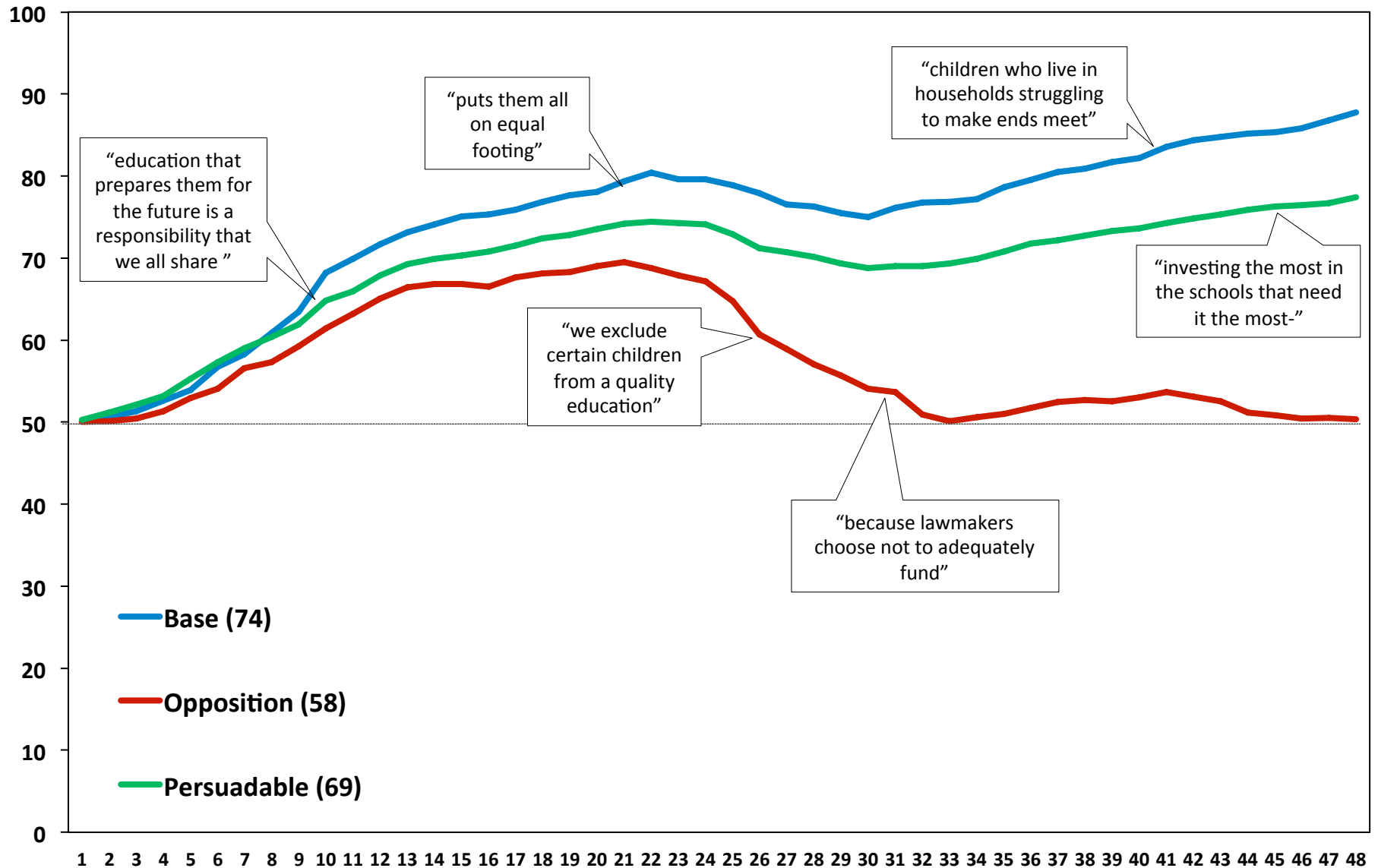
Ratings among base and persuadables remain strong for both, and a Black Woman successfully alienates the opposition (which is our goal).





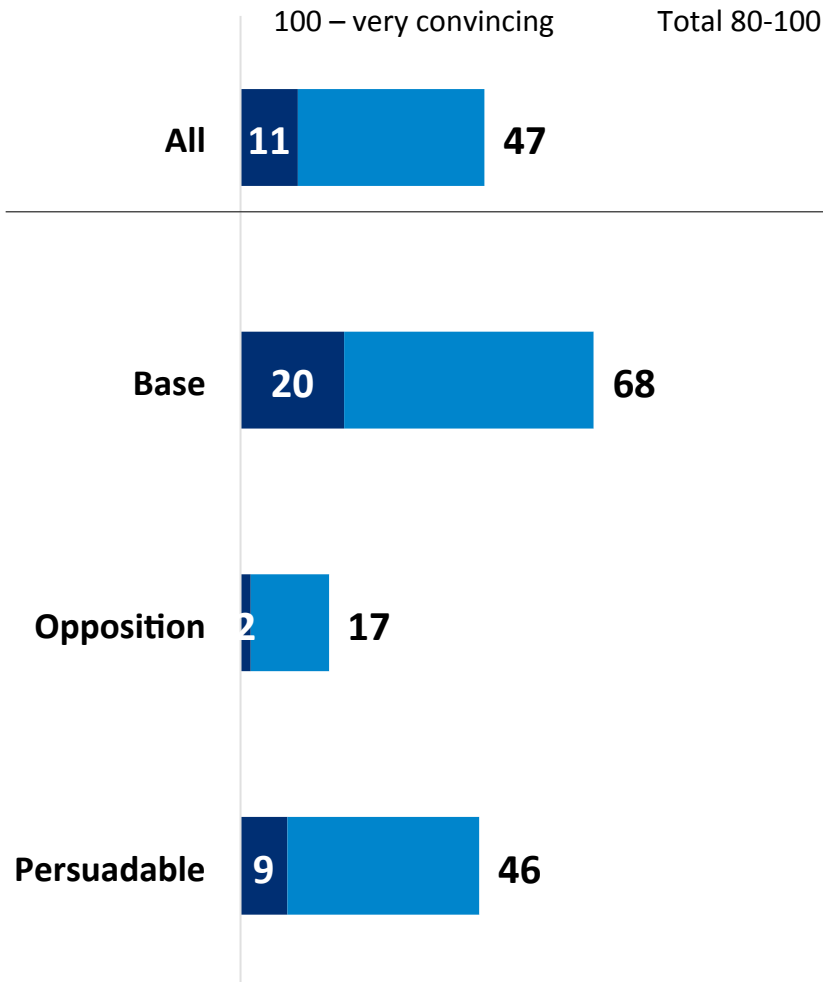


# Shared Responsibility



# Shared Responsibility

## How convincing did you find this message?



## WHAT WORKS

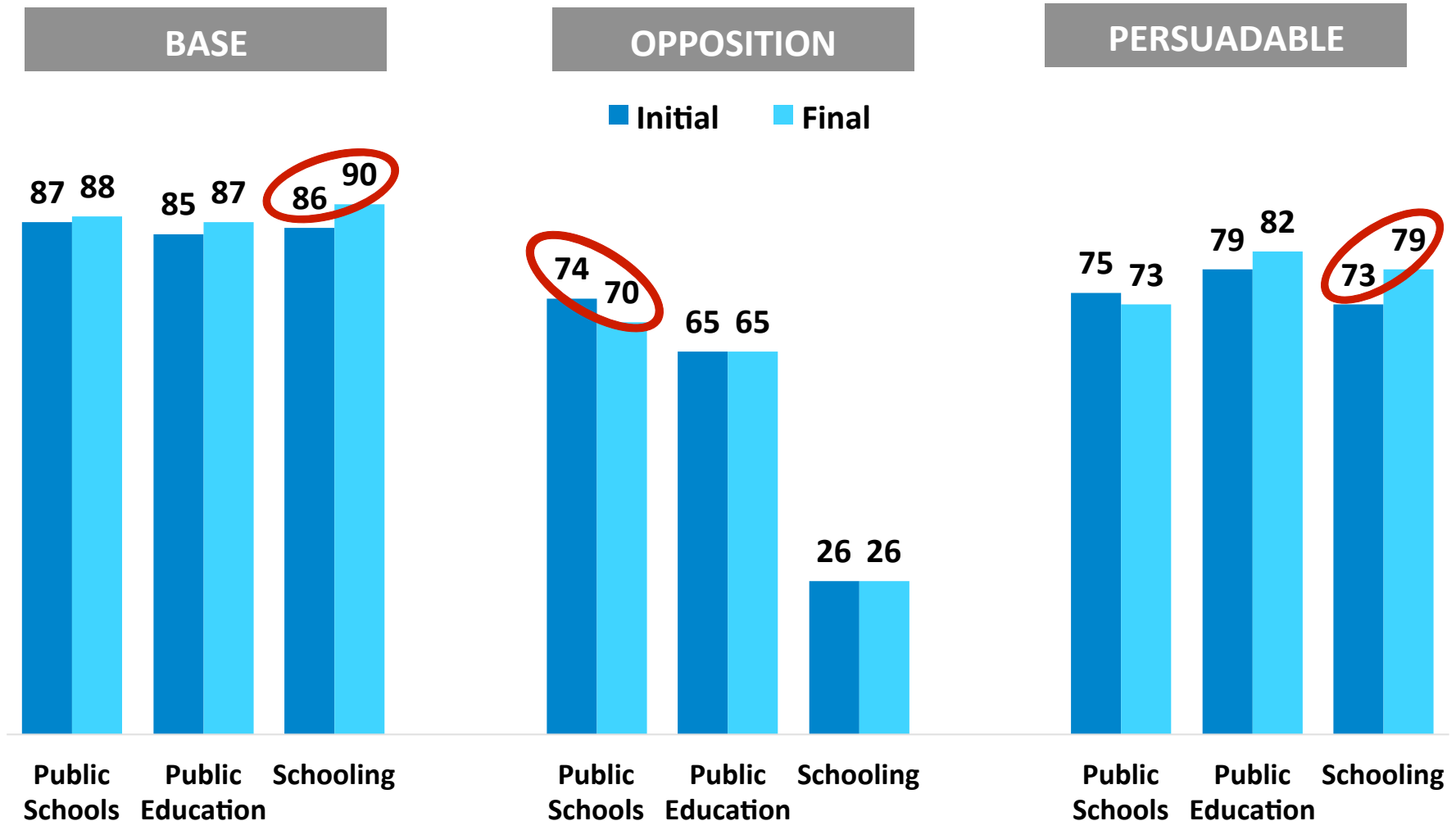
- ✓ Call for shared responsibility strong with base and persuadables.
- ✓ Assigning blame - “lawmakers choose not to adequately fund schools in low income communities” resonates with base and persuadables, and alienates the opposition.
- ✓ Talking about “children who live in households struggling to make ends meet” resonates with base.
- ✓ Alienates opposition, especially with explicit call for additional resources based on equity

## WHAT FALLS SHORT

- X Slower start.
- X Highlighting that “we exclude certain children from a quality education” moves everyone down.

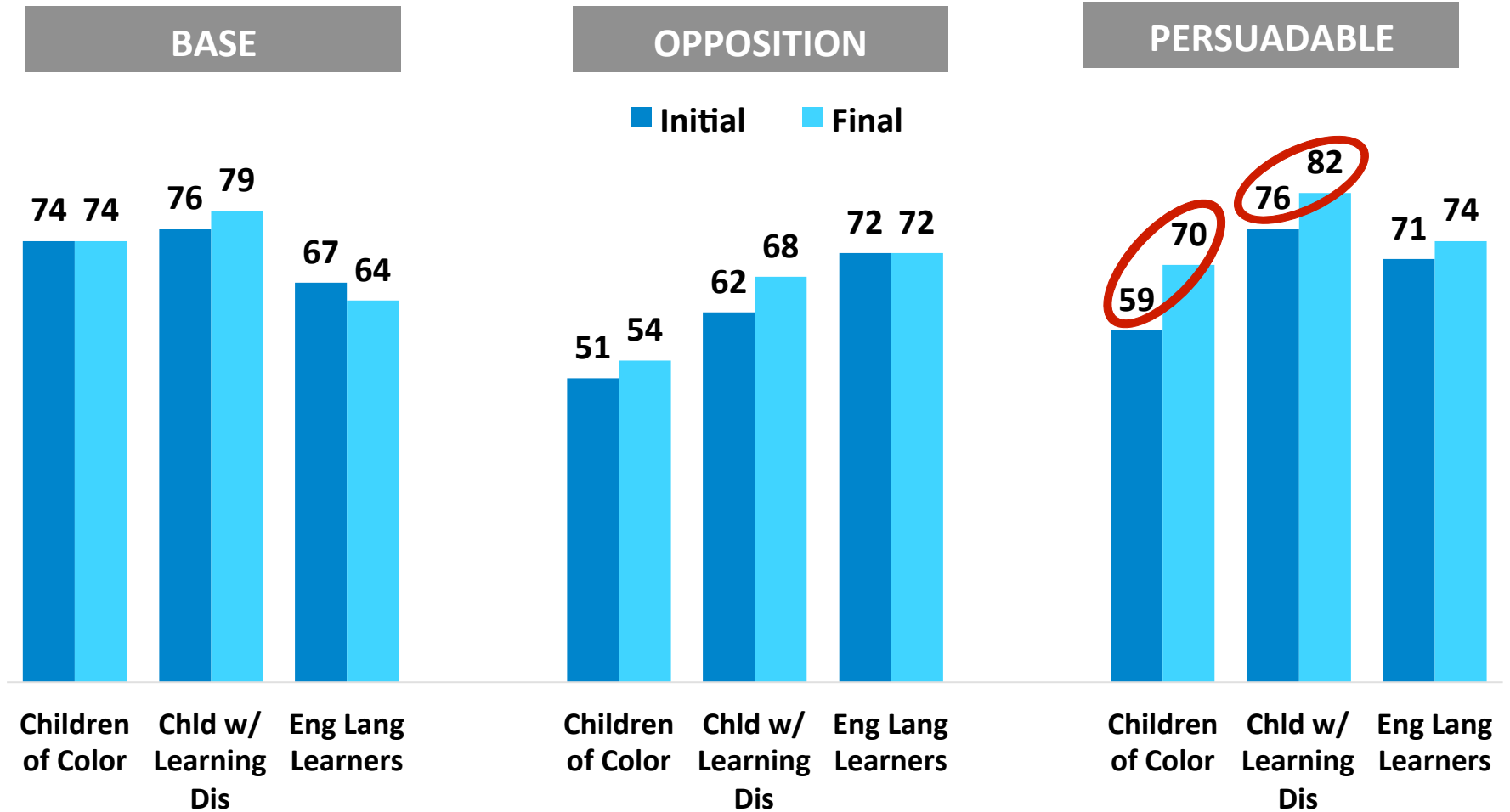
After messaging, base and persuadables increase their willingness to pay more in taxes to increase funding for schooling and public education.  
Opposition declines on “public schools.”

% who want to increase funding for [public schools/public education/schooling] in poorer communities of color, even if it meant they pay more in taxes.



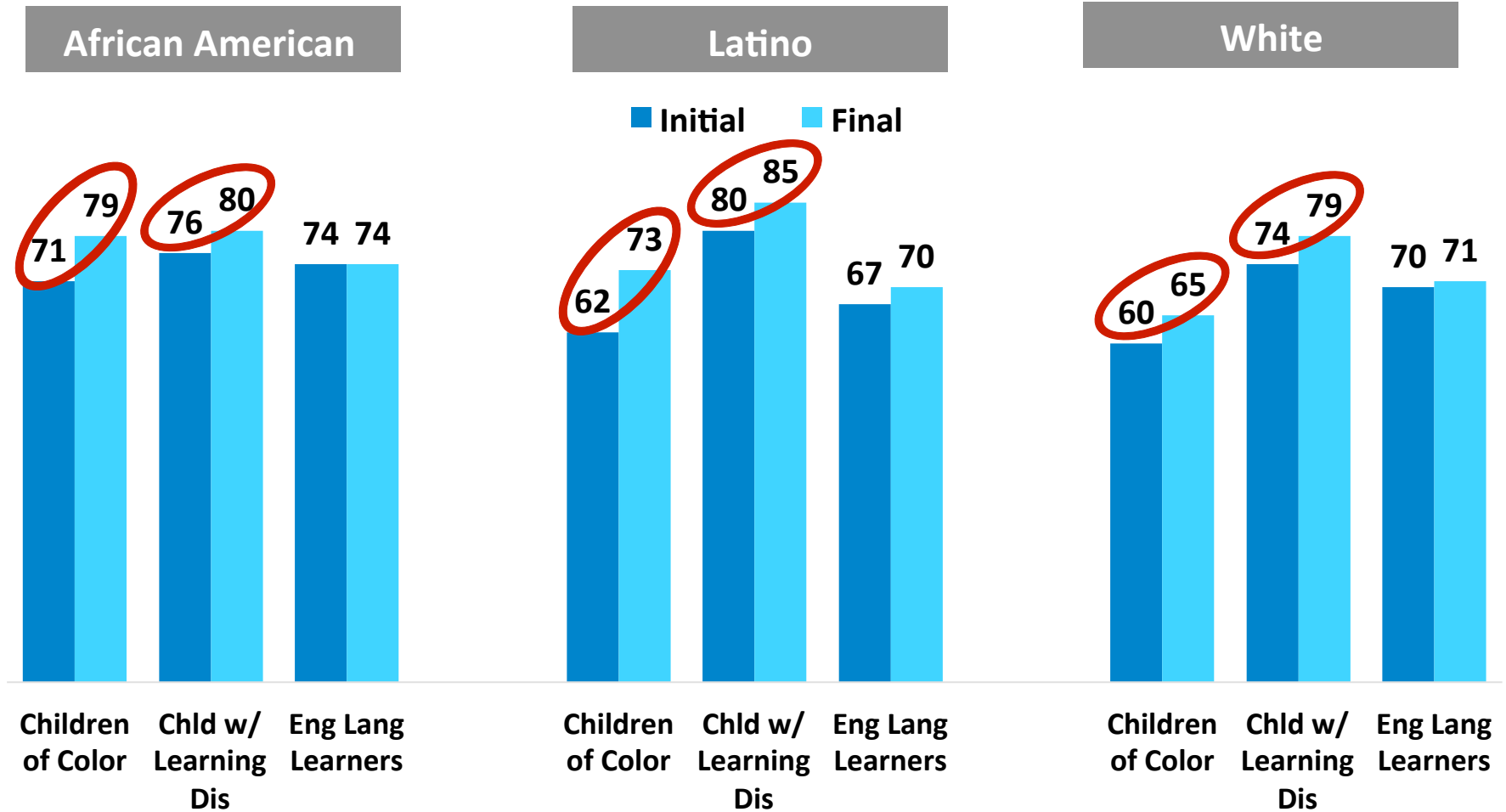
# Support for publicly identifying schools, already strong to begin with, increases among persuadables.

Movement: % Favoring publicly identifying schools not adequately educating  
[children of color / children with learning disabilities / English language learners].



# Across racial lines, support for publicly identifying schools that are not adequately educating children of color or children with learning disabilities increases.

Movement: % Favoring publicly identifying schools not adequately educating  
[children of color / children with learning disabilities / English language learners].



Say	Instead of	Notes
Schooling, public education	Public schools	Broader (education) and more colloquial (schooling) increase receptivity to our solutions.
Unequal funding	Not enough funding	Unequal has an additional layer of value that lack of funding does not.
Child/Children	Students	Child/children evokes familiarity, emotion and desire to care. “Student” is not how people think of the young people in their lives.
More resources... <u>no matter their zip code</u>	More resources... <u>no matter how they learn</u>	More explicit note of disparity helps make case for resources, though highlighting children with learning disabilities in call for resource is effective too.
Children in low income <u>communities</u>	Children in low income <u>families</u>	Avoid playing into trap of parents not doing enough as the reason for outcomes.
Hold schools accountable if the <u>school does not educate</u>	Hold schools accountable if the <u>students do not learn</u>	Making schools the agent focuses problem where it belongs and sets up argument for increased and better resources.
Give more resources to the schools that need the most help	Education equity, equitable funding	Spelling out what equity means is more effective than relying upon the term itself.

Say	Instead of	Notes
Schools have been deprived for too long	Schools that have fewer resources	Positioning funding disparities as a choice, not an accident, lays foundation for making other choices.
Future success	Positive experience learning	Outcome language is stronger than process language.
Quality teachers, new technology, art, music, science, challenging classes	Resources	Painting a picture of what resources will purchase increases people's desire to supply these resources.
If the schools do not educate and perform well	If the students do not learn and thrive	Making schools the agent focuses problem where it belongs and sets up argument for increased and better resources.
Shared vision for success, high academic standards, put every school on track	metrics, accountability	The terms "metrics" and "accountability" bring up a quantitative frame, reducing children to test scores and privileging skill and drill approach parents reject.
Equip our children to be good citizens, equip them with the skills to forge the best path to their future	Train our future workforce, improve our economic potential	Making the purpose of education personal and aspirational is far more moving than putting forth a purely practical economic argument.
Love of learning	Student performance	"Performance" suggests a set, homogeneous outcome that all students ought to be able to deliver. Love of learning is an element of education that parents believe sets the foundation for good outcomes.



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