

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS & SCIENCES

National Service Public Opinion Research

Conducted in May, July, and August 2023



David Binder Research



www.amacad.org/OurCommonPurpose

Introduction

- The *Our Common Purpose* report seeks to cultivate a cross-ideological supermajority dedicated to the reinvention of American constitutional democracy.
- To foster a culture of commitment to American constitutional democracy and to each other, the report recommends:
 - Establishing a universal expectation of a year of national service.
 - Significantly expanding funding for service programs or fellowships to provide young people with paid service opportunities.
- The Academy partnered with leading national service organizations to conduct research and employ data-driven approaches to build demand for national service.

Key Findings

- **3 in 4 respondents** say it would be good for the country if more people participated in service year programs, and they are more likely than others to recommend service (but not likely to participate).
- Across groups, **positive messages are effective** at increasing the likelihood to consider a service year and the likelihood to recommend one.
 - Some messages are more effective and some groups are more likely to consider participation.
- Belief that **service can help with one's own goals** is closely related to considering service.

Research program details

Methodology

- **Random digit dial survey** conducted by telephone (cell and landline) and online (recruited by text message)
- Survey offered in English and Spanish
- Conducted July 27-August 9, 2023

Sample

- 1,600 California adults, oversample of 200 Californians aged 18-24, 600 adults nationwide
- The margin of error is $\pm 2.5\%$ for the California sample, $\pm 4.0\%$ for the national sample, $\pm 5.1\%$ for Californians 18-24, and larger for subgroups
- (*) indicates a sample size of 100 or fewer. Numbers in charts and tables represent percentages
- Unless otherwise noted, numbers shown in this report are among California adults
- Results for White, Black, and AAPI are among non-Hispanic adults

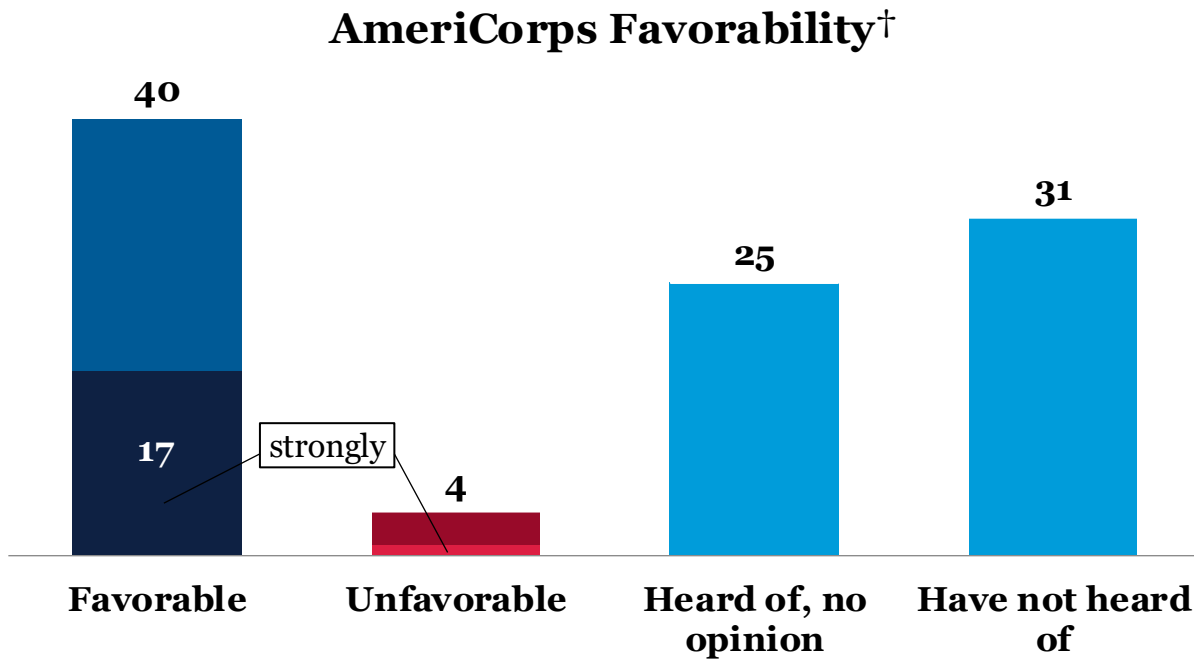
- **Four online focus groups** conducted May 8 and 9, 2023
- 100-minute online sessions with 5 participants in each

- Young adults who have not participated in, or committed to, paid national service
 - In college or college graduates
 - Not college graduates and not planning to be
- Parents of such young adults
 - Progressive and liberal
 - Moderate and conservative

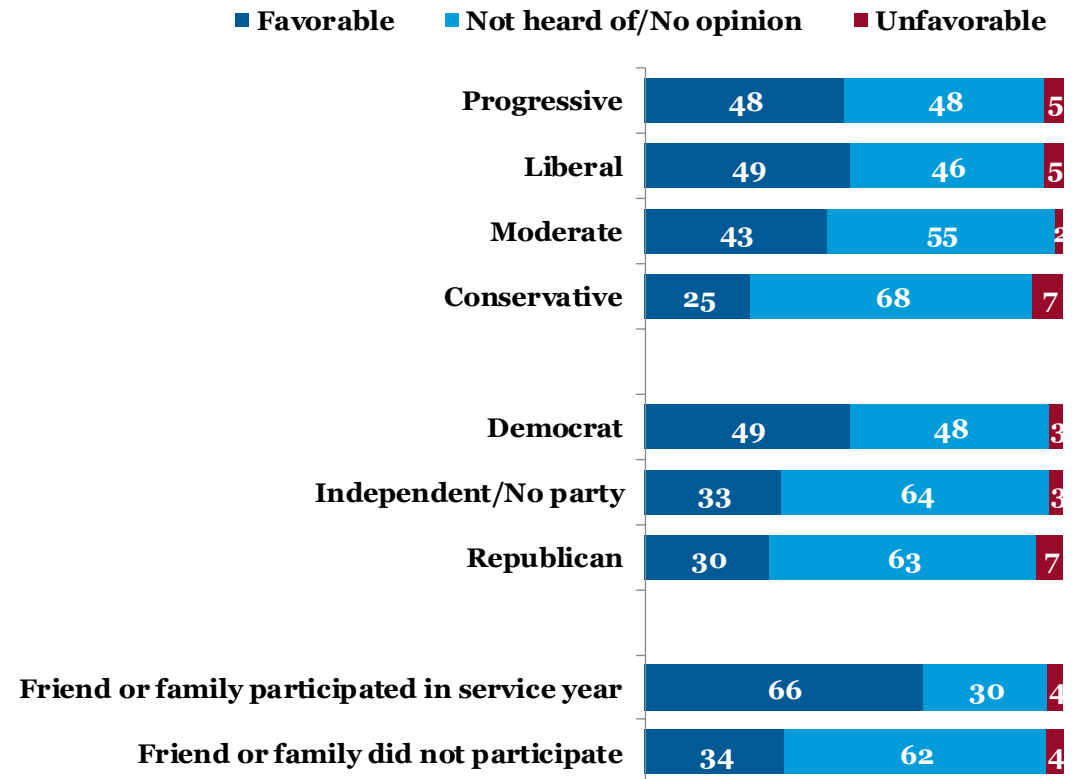


Attitudes toward Service

Those who have an opinion of AmeriCorps are overwhelmingly positive



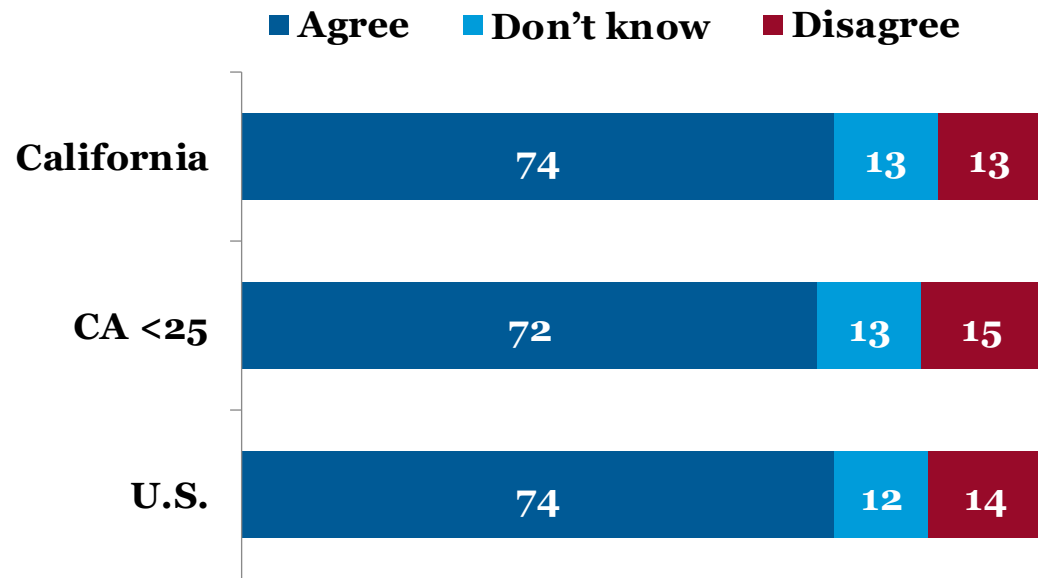
[†]Results shown among all California adults



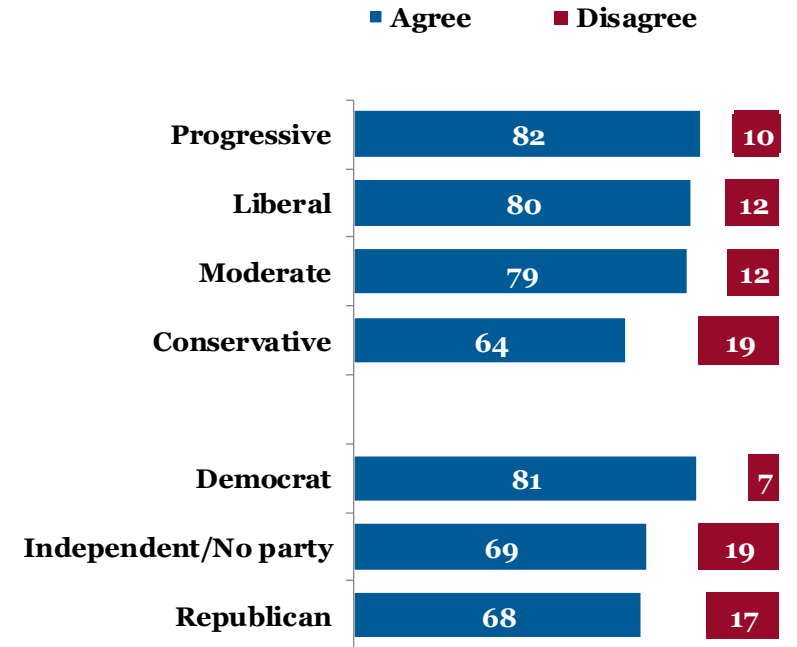
Progressives, liberals, and Democrats are most likely to be positive, but few are negative across any group.

3 in 4 say it would be good for the country if more people participated in service year programs

It would be good for the country if more people participated in service year programs†



†Results shown among all California adults

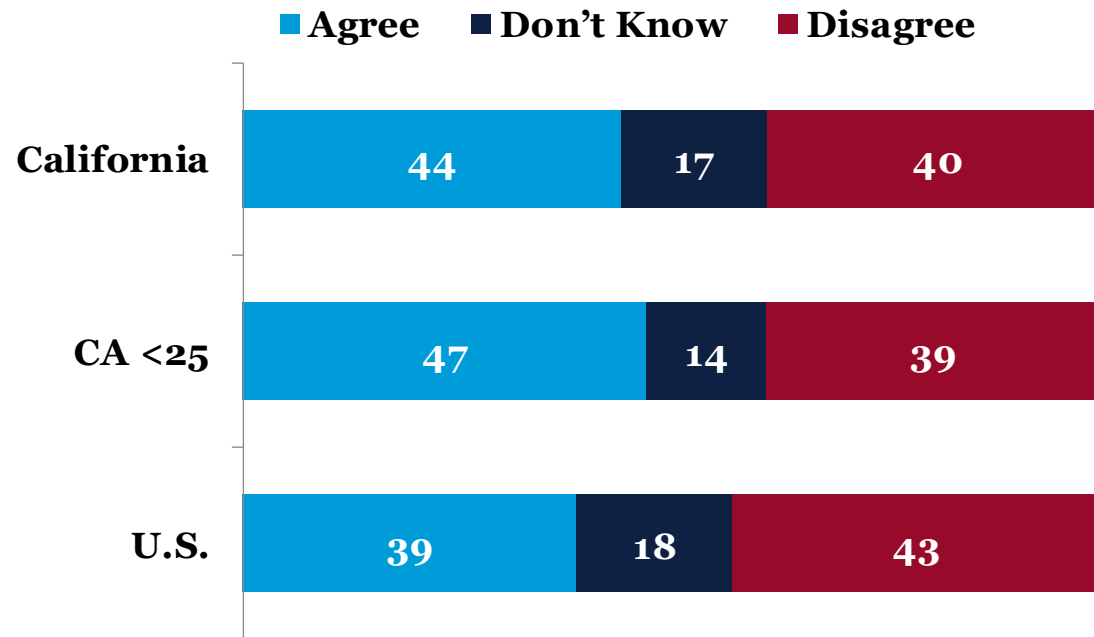


Progressives, liberals, moderates and Democrats are most likely to agree, but large majorities of conservatives and Republicans agree as well.

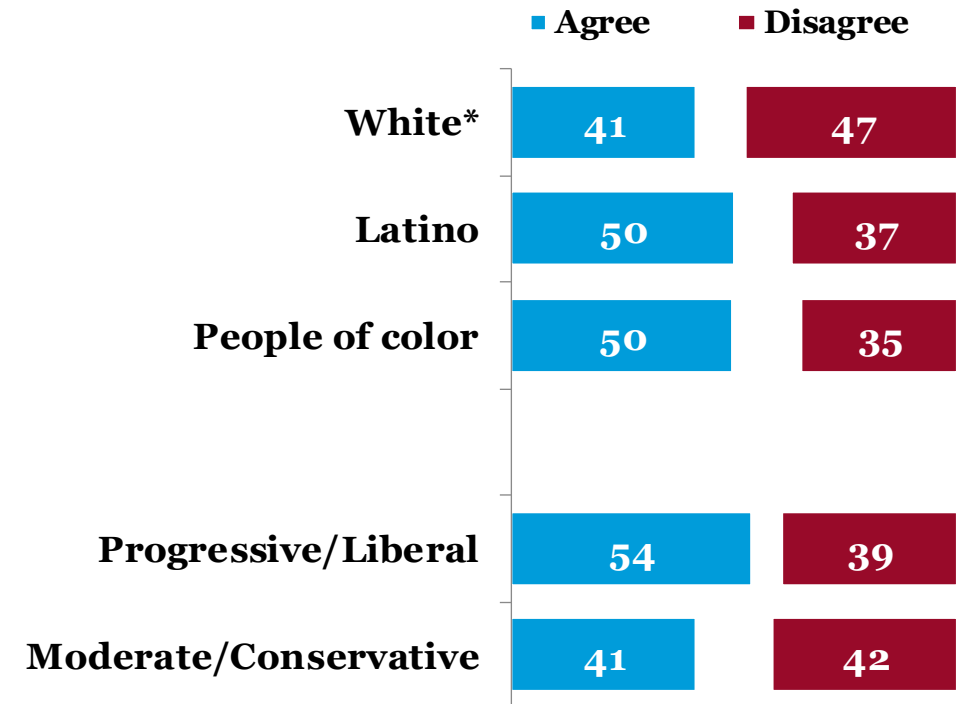
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44% expect a service year would help with their own goals.

Participating in a service year could help me achieve my own goals



CA aged 18 to 24



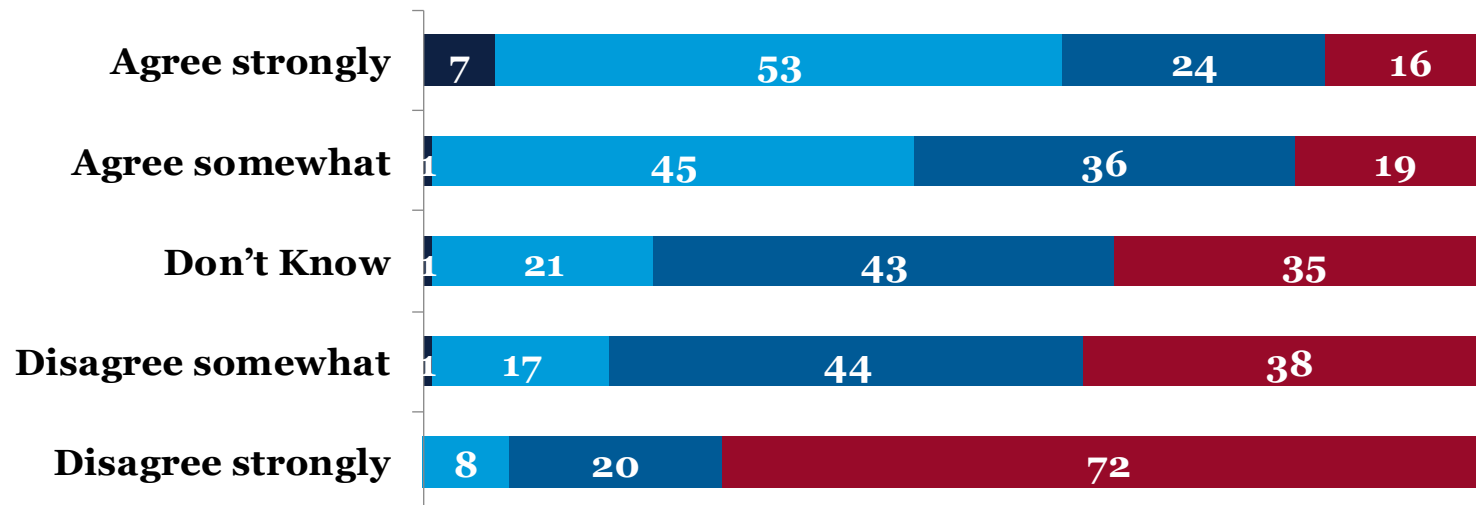
**Small sample size
#OurCommonPurpose*

Agreement that a service year could help achieve goals is closely related to considering service

Participating in a service year could help me achieve my own goals[†]

*Likelihood to Consider
(after messages)*

■ Already committed to a service year ■ Probably (10 to 6) ■ Unsure (5 to 1, Don't Know) ■ Definitely Not (0)





Reasons to Participate



Young adults and their parents need to believe service is a good use of their time

Challenges

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many young adults want to start their professional and adult lives as soon as they can, and service must be seen as a step toward their goals.• Cost of living and cost of housing are major challenges, so service must be seen as something that can help financial stability, not make things more difficult.• Young adults want time to focus on the bigger picture but see their time as occupied by work, school, family, and other responsibilities.• Conservative parents say service programs are likely to have a liberal agenda and there may not be people in the programs for their children to relate to. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>“With that pay, a lot of people won’t be able to do that.”</i>
—Liberal Parent• <i>“I got a lot of other stuff going on. If the benefits line up with what I’m trying to do it could work.”</i>
—Non-College Young Adult, Black Male |
|--|--|

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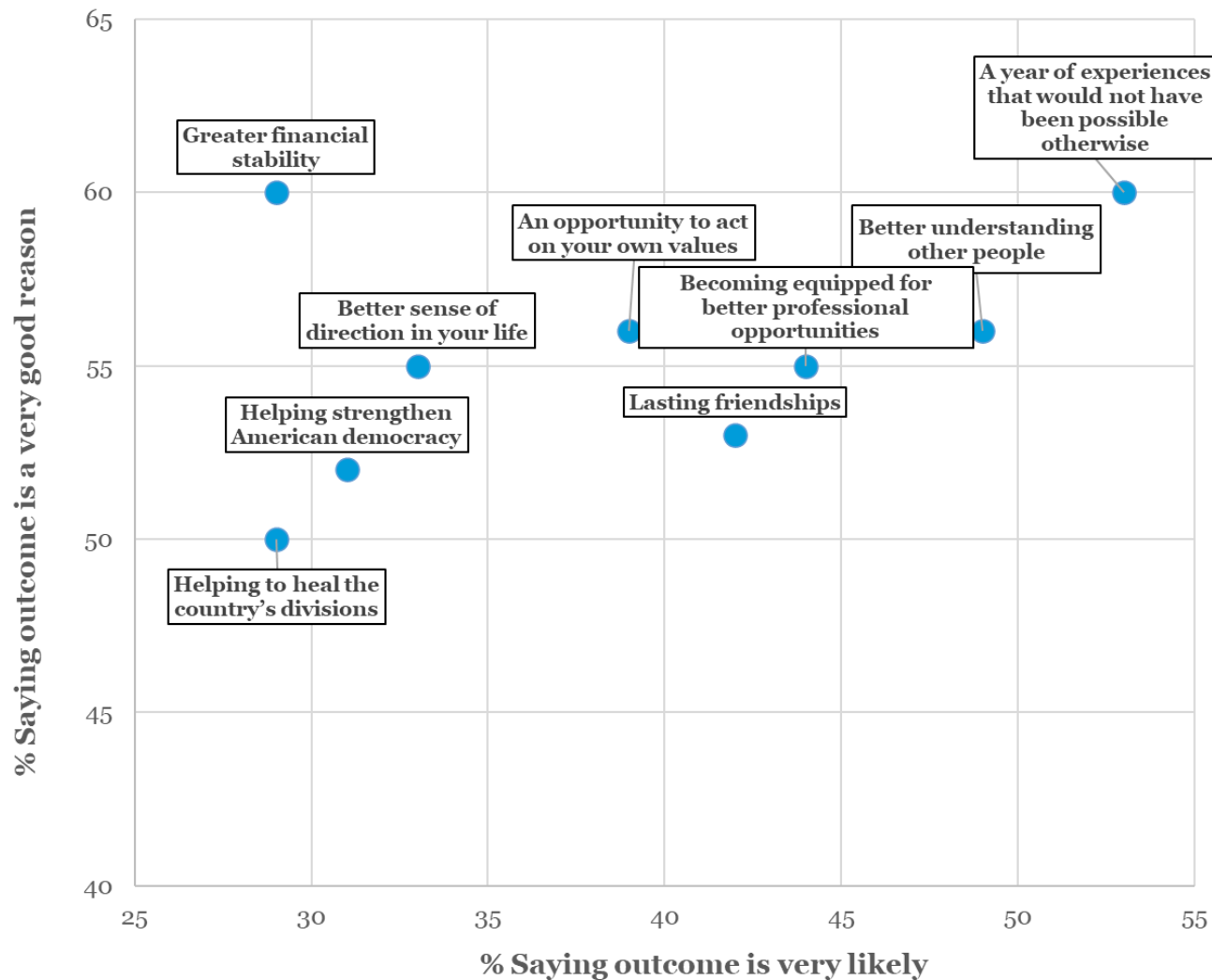
Language and Concept Tests

➤ Language tests: giving back to your community, helping your community, and money for college rate better than alternatives.

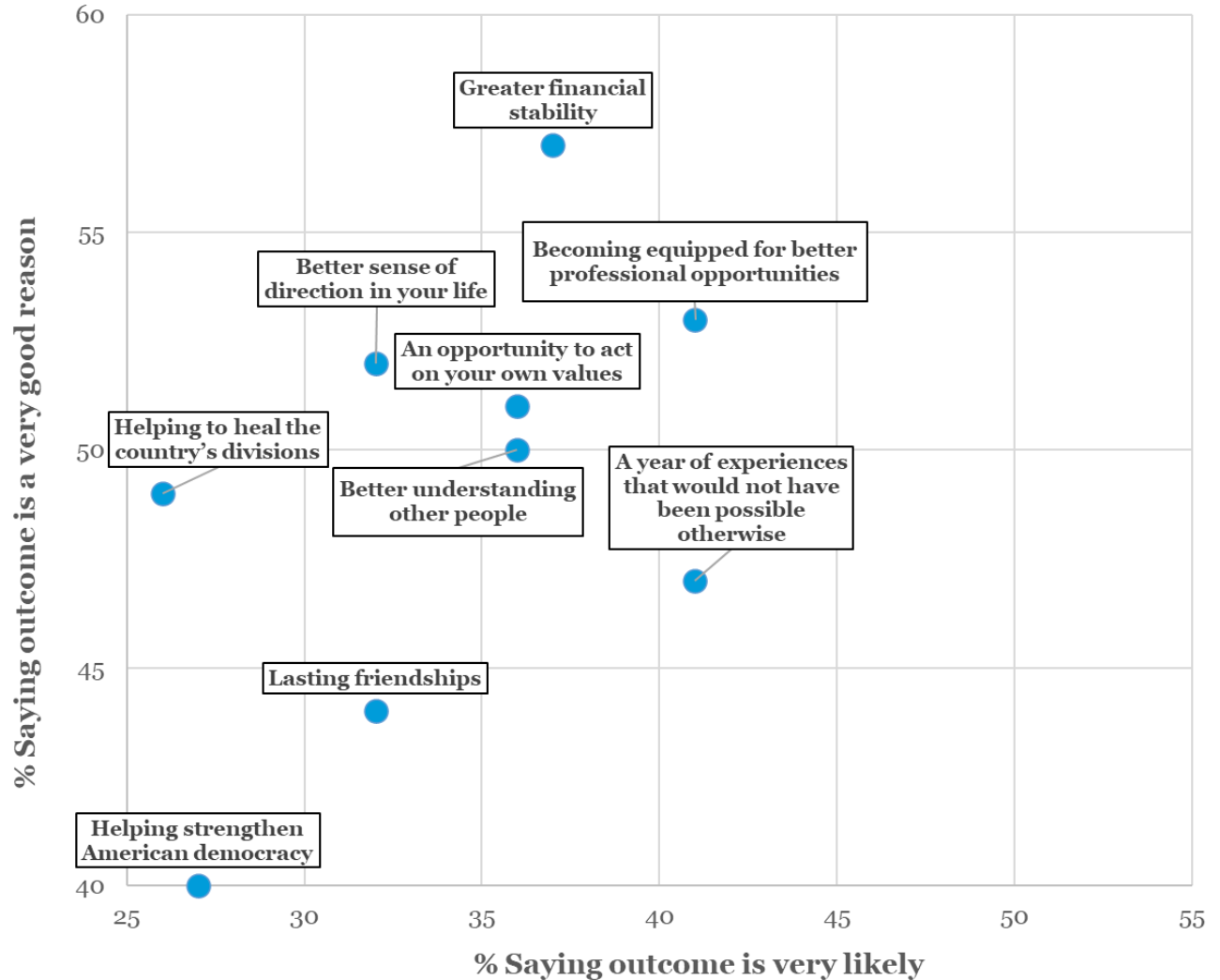
% saying "very good reason"		CA	CA <25	U.S.	Probably will Consider*	Probably will Recommend*
✓	Giving back to your community	68	62	75	73	80
	Giving back to the country	55	49	61	65	65
✓	Helping your community	67	64	70	74	79
	Helping communities other than your own	59	58	58	71	72
✓	Money for college	63	58	58	75	78
	Education awards	45	36	53	57	58
✓	Meeting people different from you	58	51	62	71	74
	Meeting people similar to you	37	36	29	53	45
=	Professional skills	59	47	64	69	72
=	Job skills	58	52	65	64	71
✓	Working hands-on to address issues on the front lines	55	54	57	67	69
	Working behind the scenes to support programs	43	34	48	57	56
=	A living stipend	52	53	53	66	66
=	A living allowance	51	46	60	58	64
=	Building a personal network	47	42	47	54	60
=	Building a professional network	46	41	48	58	59

All asked of half the sample
* 6 to 10 on final ask

Aspirational outcomes: Adults Nationwide



Aspirational outcomes:
Californians aged 18 to 24



Messages



Young adults want a full picture of what their year doing service work would look like and what its outcome would be

Messaging Implications from Focus Groups

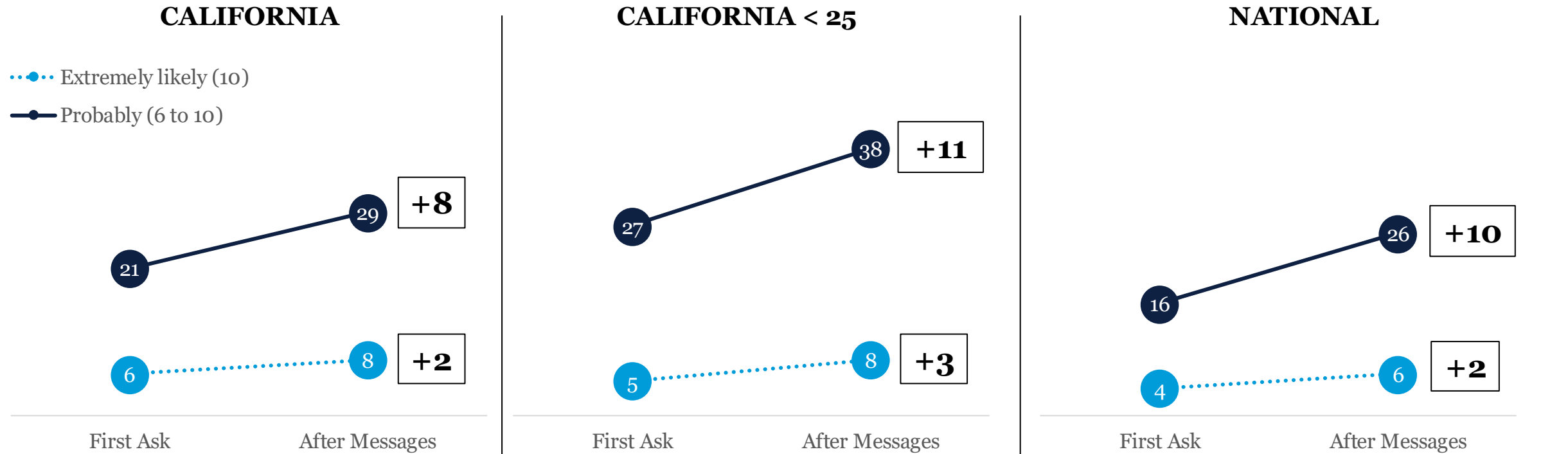
- Participants react positively to brief **descriptions** of service programs, **examples** of daily work, and **benefits** from participating.
 - But they want a better understanding of **what service would be like** and **what the benefits would be**.
 - Top message language includes **specifics** about pay, education, and health benefits, and information about technical training and certifications.
 - A strong **testimonial** tested describes specific benefits that one individual saw.
- *“I’d want to know what I’d be doing and not just service work.”*
—Young adult in college
 - *“It gave an example of how it would be helpful in the future and building a career, and gives an example of career specific training which was persuasive to me—to find that it was not just experience that gives you soft skills but certifications as well.”*
—Young adult in college

Opinion after Messages



Likelihood of considering a service year increases after messages

Likelihood to Consider Service Year for Yourself



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Likelihood to Consider Service Year for Yourself (Californians aged 18 to 24)

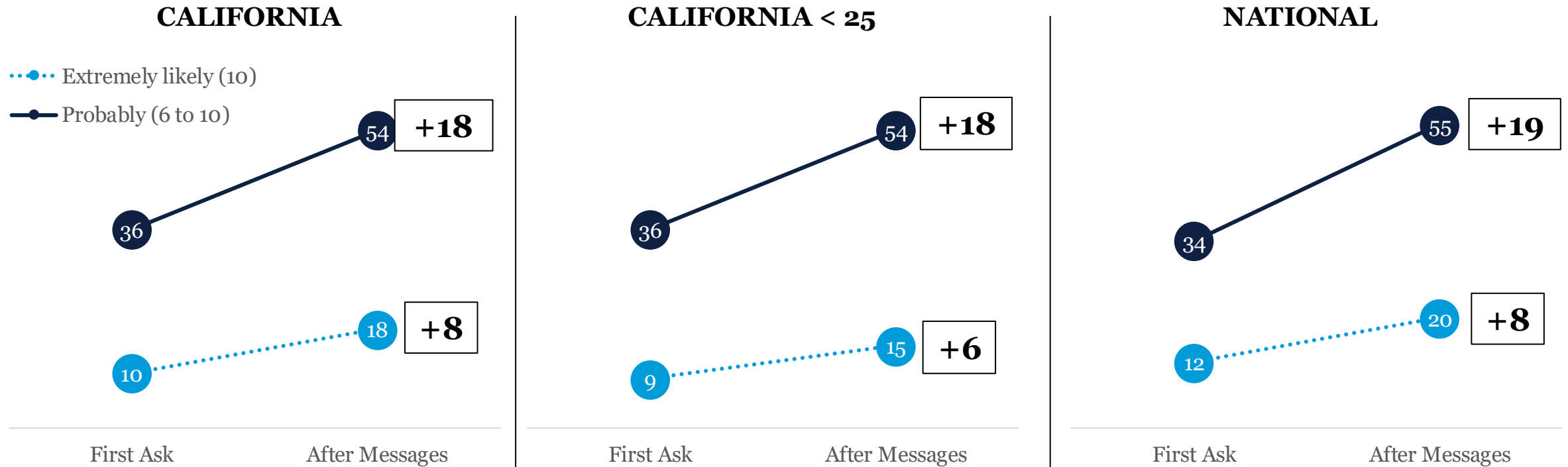
- Among young adults, the likelihood to consider service **increases most among those planning to get a degree.**
- Increases are also slightly higher among **women and progressives/liberals.**

<i>% saying 10 to 6</i>	First ask	After messages	Change
All CA 18 to 24	28	38	+11
Female	28	41	+13
Male	27	36	+9
White*	18	29	+11
Latino	30	42	+12
People of Color	31	42	+11
Prog/Lib	29	42	+12
Mod/Cons	26	34	+8
Under \$75K	31	40	+9
\$75K+	26	35	+9
Not College Graduate	26	39	+13
College Graduate	31	34	+3
Plan to earn degree	30	44	+14
City	29	42	+14
Suburban	26	38	+12
Town/Rural	28	34	+6

**Small sample size*

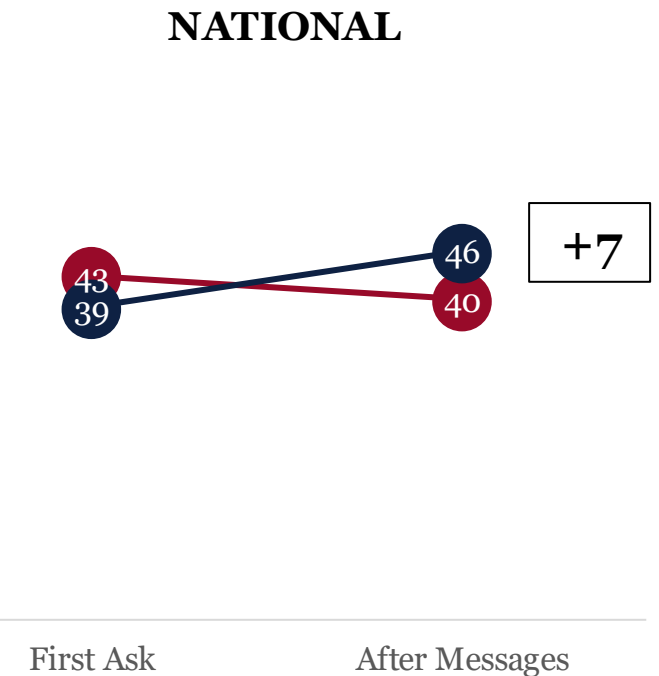
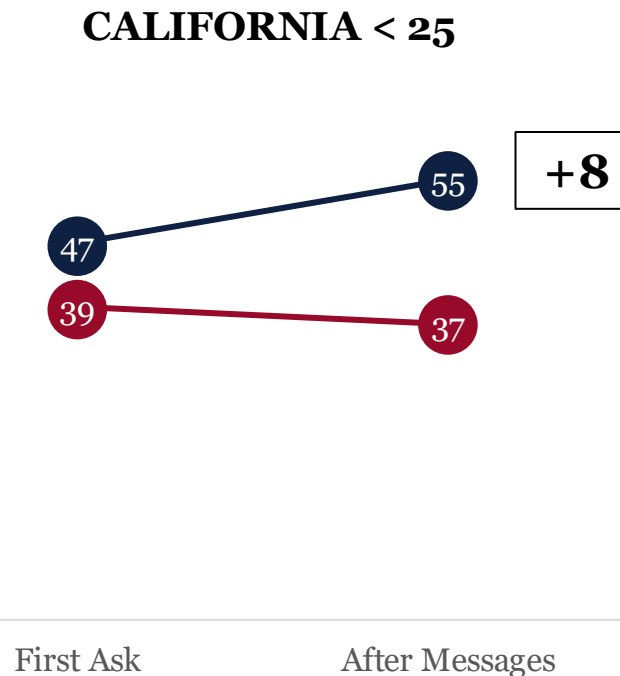
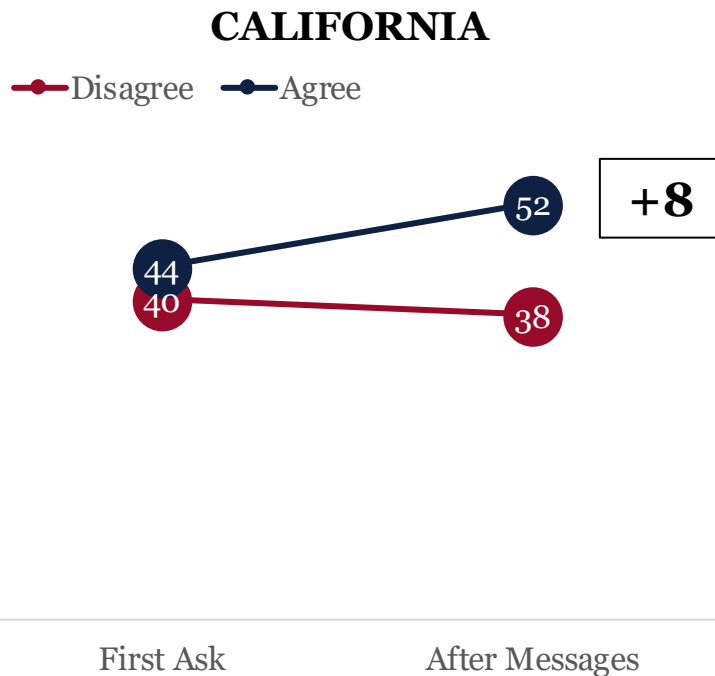
Likelihood of recommending a service year increases after messages

Likelihood to Recommend a Service Year



After messages, more believe a service year could help achieve their goals

Participating in a service year could help me achieve my own goals



Recommendations



Data-driven recommendations

- A. For recruiting, focus on the **community aspects of service** rather than describing it as “national service” or a national program.
- B. Include **top motivations** in messaging: helping people and communities, health insurance, money for college, and technical training and job certifications.
- C. Shift **key attitudes** that can increase the likelihood to serve:
- Service can help you achieve your goals.
 - Participating can provide you with greater financial stability over the long term.
- D. Use a **mix of testimonials and traditional messages** to paint a full picture of the value and benefits of service.
- E. Use **effective language**:
- “Giving back to your community”
(vs. “Giving back to the country”)
 - “Helping your community”
(vs. “Helping communities other than your own”)
 - “Money for college”
(vs. “Education awards” or “Loan deferment”)
 - “Meeting people different from you”
(vs. “Meeting people similar to you”)