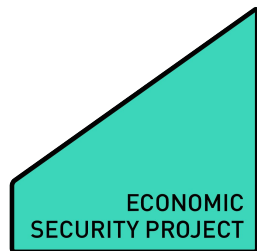


# Expanded Child Tax Credit: Survey of Eligible Parents Messaging Test



# Methodology

From June 7 to 13, 2021, Data for Progress conducted a survey of 1,749 individuals who are eligible for the Child Tax Credit (CTC) nationally using web panel respondents. The sample was weighted to be representative of U.S. adults by age, gender, education, race, and voting history. The survey was conducted in English. The margin of error is  $\pm 2$  percentage points. Eligibility for the Child Tax Credit was determined by asking two questions: first, whether they live with children under 17 for more than half of the year, and second, whether they earned less than \$240,000 as an individual or \$440,000 as a couple in 2020. Those who did not answer yes to both questions were removed from the survey.

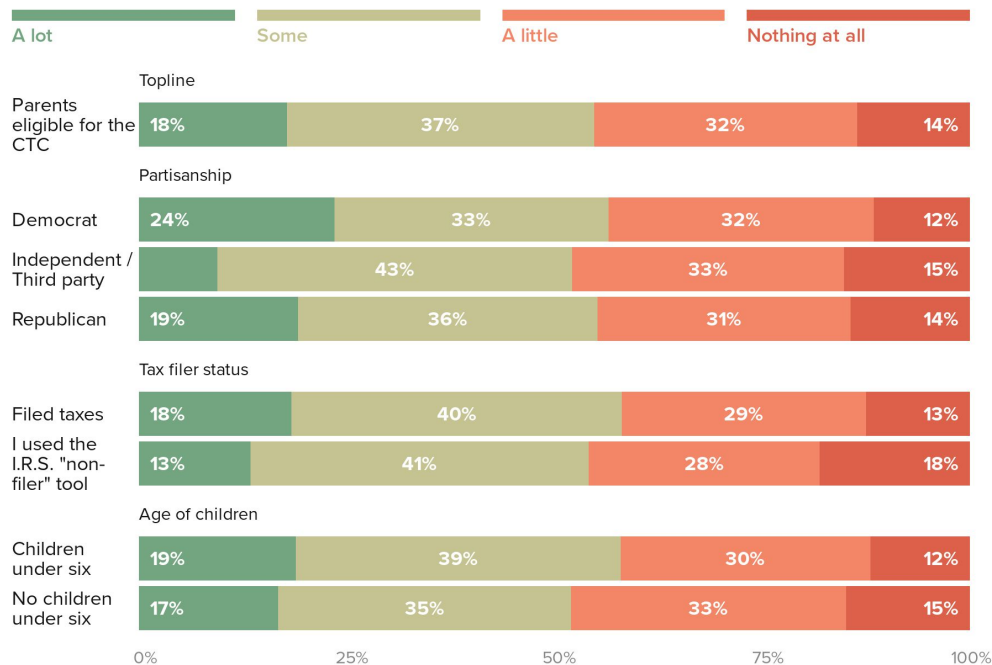
Goal of messaging testing is to compare the **relative performance** of messages against one another, among all eligible parents. Relative performance is best measured in terms of the **swings** that the messages tested induce. Each split group may start from a slightly different baseline and so this is not the best metric on which to understand which message does or does not work.

In terms of weighting, we initially weighted responses to be representative of U.S. Adults, not limiting it to likely voters. The distribution of demographic features for adults and households with children are similar enough to justify the weighting scheme.

# Awareness of the expanded Child Tax Credit is low

## Only 55 Percent of Eligible Parents Report Having Read or Heard 'A lot' or 'Some' About the Expanded Child Tax Credit

How much have you read or heard about the Child Tax Credit, which was expanded as part of a recent bill just signed into law?



June 7–13, 2021 survey of 1,749 likely voters

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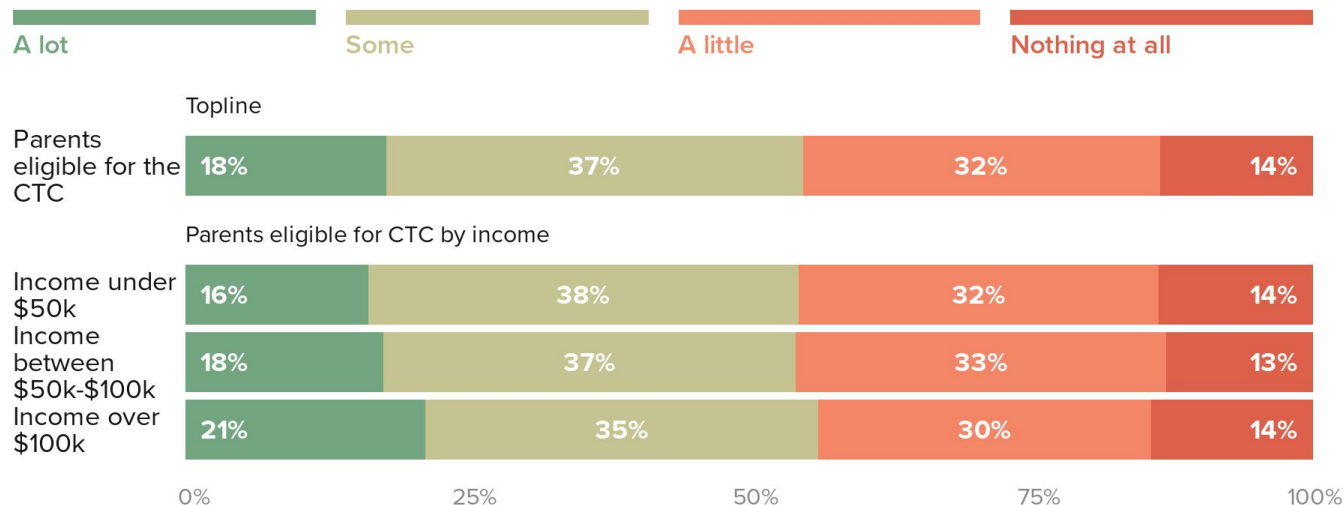
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- Largest problem that needs to be solved is increasing awareness of the program
- Only 18 percent of eligible parents have read or heard “a lot” about the program
- Democrats, those who filed taxes, and parents of children under six currently have highest awareness

# Familiarity with the Expanded Child Tax Credit Varies With Income

## Parents who Make Less Than \$50,000 are the Least Aware of the Expanded Child Tax Credit

How much have you read or heard about the Child Tax Credit, which was expanded as part of a recent bill just signed into law?



June 7–13, 2021 survey of 1,749 likely voters

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- Awareness of the expanded Child Tax Credit varies slightly with income
- Of those making less than \$50,000 a year, only 16 percent report having read or heard 'a lot' about the program, five-points less than those with incomes over \$100,000 a year

# Messages in Support

- **ALL FAMILIES SUCCEED:** Everyone should have the ability to provide for and care for their families. Supporters say this expansion of the Child Tax Credit — essentially a tax cut of \$150 to \$300 per child every month for most families with children — will help all families succeed, from working families struggling with basic needs like food, rent, and bills, to middle-class families that need help with childcare and college savings. This helps Main Street businesses and the whole community thrive.
- **RACE CLASS NARRATIVE (RCN):** No matter where we come from or whether we are Black, brown, or white, when it comes to our kids, we want them to have the very best of what they need. Rather than turning people against each other, we need policies that benefit all kinds of Americans. We can start by putting our families first. The Child Tax Credit will help make our communities and economy stronger by putting parents and kids on a solid financial footing to build a better future
- **BASIC NEEDS:** Supporters say this expansion of the Child Tax Credit — essentially a tax cut of \$150 to \$300 per child every month for most families with children — will help families meet basic needs like putting food on the table, paying for rent and childcare, and saving for a better future. This last year has taught us all how important a couple hundred dollars a month can be in helping children grow up healthy and strong so they can get a good start in life.
- Additional messages tested include those focusing on **poverty reductions** and **taxing the wealthy to pay for** the Child Tax Credit expansion

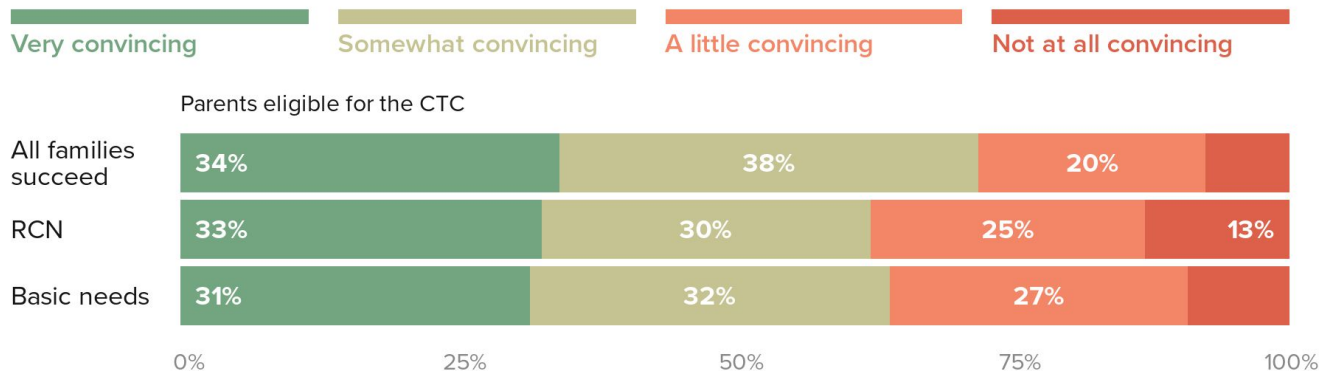
# Key Messaging Takeaways

- The “all families succeed” messaging was the most popular, causing a significant net gain in support among respondents.
- After exposure to a negative message, support from eligible parents drops from levels observed directly after parents saw messages in support for extending the expanded Child Tax Credit. The “all families succeed” messaging was also the most robust, diminishing drops in support after respondents were exposed to persuasive opposition talking points.
  - This message works because it’s anchored to a clear description of the policy
  - Speaks to the broad benefits of the policy for the middle class, which is how the preponderance of voters self-identify
  - Includes language that appeals to cross-pressured voters, e.g., tax cuts and Main Street businesses
  - Message is optimistic and forward looking
- In total, the ‘all families succeed’ message increases support by 11 points, while ‘race class narrative’ and ‘basic needs’ see drops in support by margins of two points and four points, respectively.

# Among all Eligible Parents the Messages are Rated as Convincing at Roughly Comparable Rates

In this survey, the effectiveness of the three messages were measured two ways. First, eligible parents were asked to rate whether or not they found each message convincing. Asked this way, we observe only minor differences between each message. After exposure to these three messages, we asked eligible parents whether or not they would support extending the Child Tax Credit, along with a counterfactual to measure change in attitudes these messages may induce. With the second way of message testing, differences between the three arguments in support of extension emerge

## Parents Say All Three Messages are 'Very Convincing' at Roughly Equivalent Rates



June 7–13, 2021 survey of 1,751 likely voters

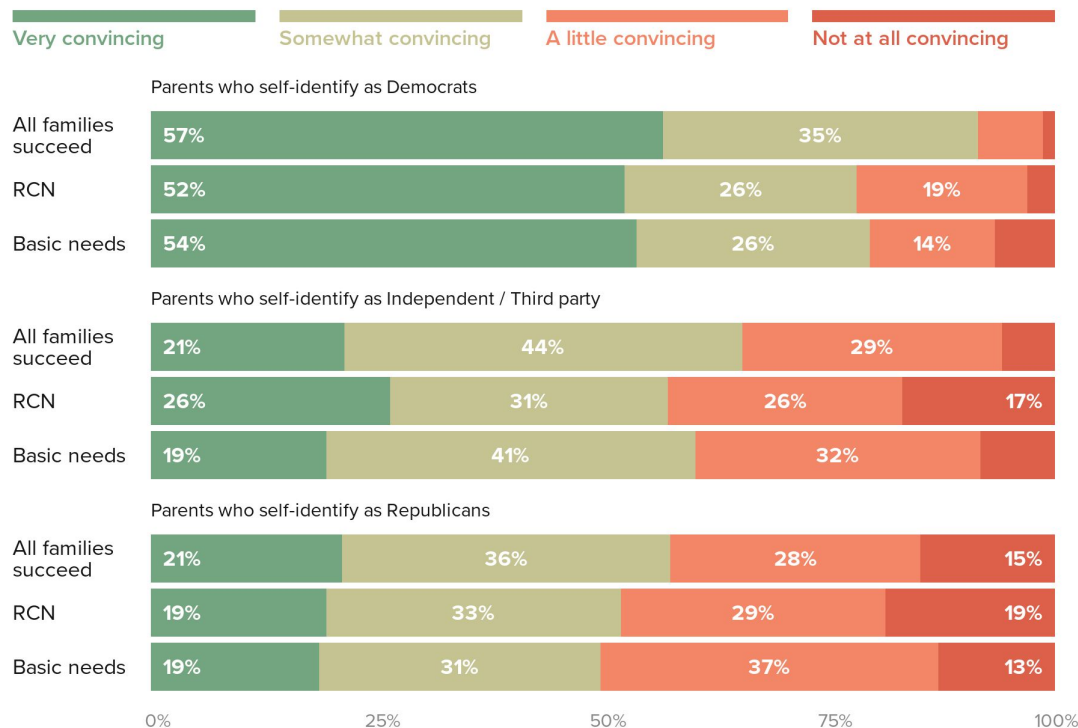
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- Using this scale, we find that all messages perform in a similar fashion, with the 'all families succeed' modestly outperforming the other two messages
- The RCN message modestly polarizes eligible parents, inducing both a positive and negative reaction

# How Voters Rate the Messages Varies by Partisanship

## Parents Who Self-Identify as Democrats are Most Convinced by These Messages



June 7–13, 2021 survey of 1,751 likely voters

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- A majority of Democrats rate the all three messages as ‘very convincing,’ with ‘all families succeed’ standing out as a top performer
- ‘Race class narrative’ polarizes independent / third party voters, inducing the highest responses rates of both ‘very’ and ‘not at all convincing’ among parents in this subgroup
- The RCN message induces the large ‘not at all convincing’ response among parents that self-identify as Republicans
- ‘All families succeed’ is the strongest message among Republicans



# How the Messages are Tested

We reference *Graham. 2020. [Asking About Attitude Change](#)* for an experimental design to measure the changes in approval of the CTC in respondents after exposure to messaging.

The format exposes respondents to treatment, asks their support, and then asks them to imagine how they *would have* responded had they not be exposed. Research indicates that this provides a substantially less noisy estimate of attitudinal change when compared to traditional methods. This is called the **counterfactual** method.

Normally we would need to simulate the untreated outcomes for individuals, or rely on a noisy initial estimate of support. But this asks respondents to actively report their change in attitude, rather than relying on our analysis to impute it.

## Abstract

Surveys often ask respondents how information or events changed their attitudes. Does [information X] make you more or less supportive of [policy Y]? Does [scandal X] make you more or less likely to vote for [politician Y]? We show that this type of question (the *change format*) exhibits poor measurement properties, in large part because subjects engage in response substitution. When asked how their attitudes changed, people often appear to report the level of their attitudes rather than the change in them. As an alternative, we propose the *counterfactual format*, which asks subjects what their attitude would have been in the counterfactual world in which they did not know the treatment information. Using a series of experiments embedded in four studies, we show that the counterfactual format greatly reduces bias relative to the change format.

In terms of matching the substantive conclusions of the experimental benchmark, the counterfactual format easily outperforms the change format. **The more-minus-less estimates derived from the change format have the opposite sign as the experimental difference-in-means estimates in 12 out of 20 opportunities**, compared with 3 of 20 for the counterfactual format. In all three of those cases, neither the counterfactual estimate nor the difference in means estimate can be distinguished from zero. More often than not, the change format gets the *sign* wrong, whereas the counterfactual format does not.

# A Note on Experimental Design

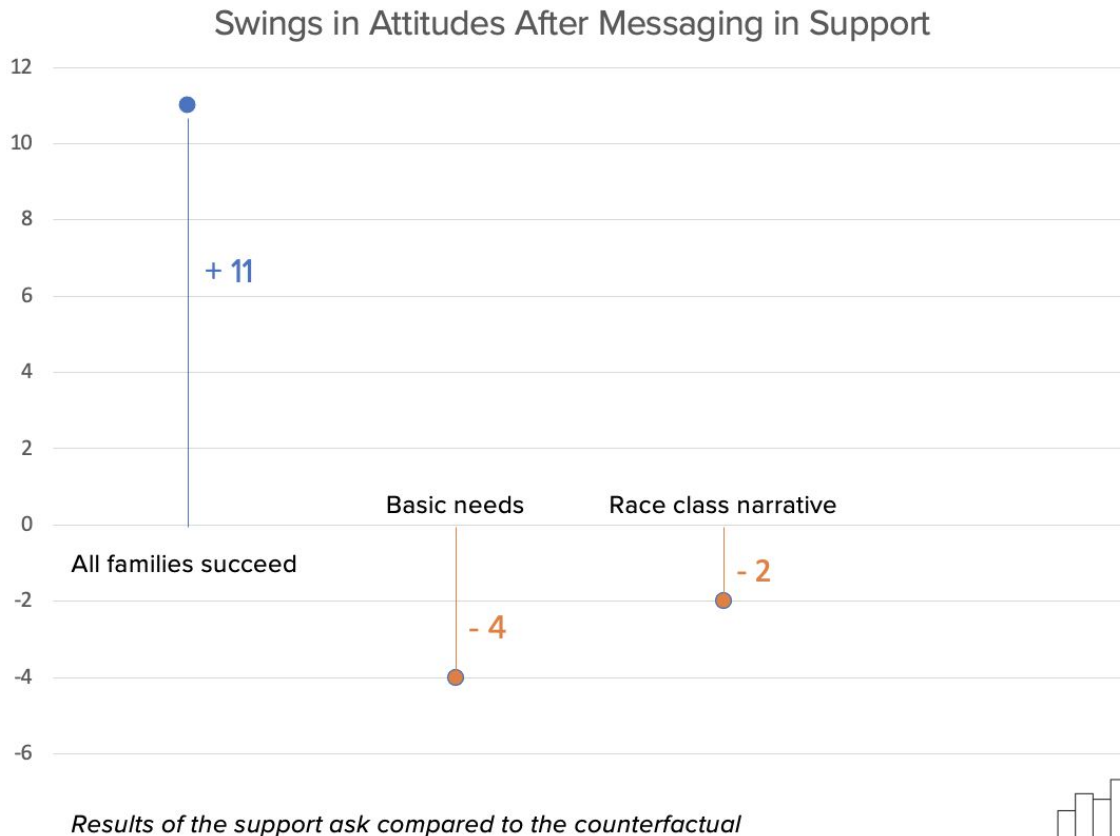
To conduct this message test, eligible parents were divided into three groups. Each group then saw one of the three messages: ‘all families succeed,’ ‘basic needs’ and ‘race class narrative.’ Eligible parents were then asked to rate whether or not they found this message a convincing reason to support extending the expanded Child Tax Credit.

Next, eligible parents were asked the following question to measure support for extension of the expanded Child Tax Credit, “After reading the previous statement, do you support or oppose extending the expanded Child Tax Credit, which provides monthly financial support to most families with children age 17 or under?”

Eligible parents were then next asked the following counterfactual: If you had not read the previous statement, how would you have responded to the question, "Do you support or oppose extending the expanded Child Tax Credit, which provides monthly financial support to most families with children age 17 or under?"

To evaluate the effectiveness of each message, support as measured in the counterfactual is subtracted from the question about whether or not they support extending the program after reading the message. The difference between attitudes as measured here is the swing each message induces.

# 'All Families Succeed' Increases Support by Eleven-Percentage-Points

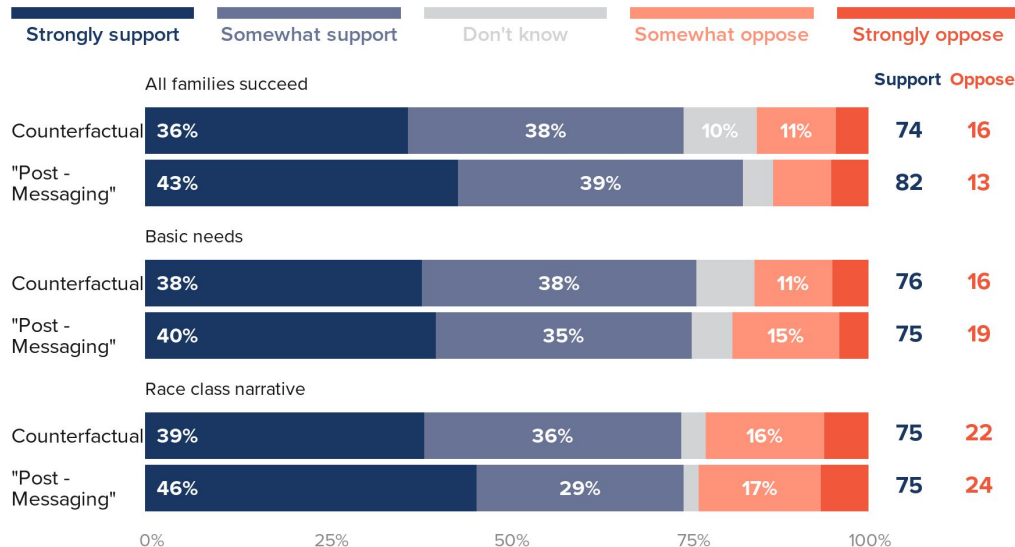


- Marginal swings are calculated by subtracting net support from the counterfactual from net support from the ask for support
- The 'All Families Succeed Message' increases support by 11-percentage-points
- 'Basic needs' and 'Race class narrative' decreases support by four-points and two-points, respectively

# The 'All families succeed' message performs the strongest when compared to its counterfactual

## Performance of all Three Messages In Support of Extending the Expanded CTC Compared to Their Counterfactuals

Eligible parents were asked whether they support or oppose extending the expanded Child Tax Credit after exposure to one of the three messages. Eligible parents were then posed a counter-factual, asking them how they would have responded had they not seen messaging.



- Total support as measured in the counterfactual is high for all split groups
  - Initially, the 'All families succeed' message is supported by 74 percent of parents, the 'Basic needs' message by 76 percent of parents, and the 'race class narrative' by 75 percent of parents
- Total support among those who saw the 'all families succeed' message increases by eight-points
- The 'basic needs' message leads to a one-point drop in total support
- Total support among those who saw the 'race class narrative' is steady at 75 but total opposition rises by two-points

## Effect Sizes by Message (Estimated with Linear Regression)

Among all eligible parents, the strongest significant response was to **Families Succeed**, moving support by ~11 percentage points (pp).

When controlling for partisanship, **families succeed** moved Democrats (5pp) and Independents (30pp).

Coefficient	Estimate	Std. Error	T Value	P Value
Treatment A	-0.037	0.053	-0.699	0.485
Treatment B	<b>0.105</b>	<b>0.032</b>	<b>3.310</b>	<b>0.001</b>
Treatment C	-0.006	0.039	-0.156	0.876
Treatment A * Dem	<b>0.040</b>	<b>0.018</b>	<b>2.255</b>	<b>0.024</b>
Treatment B * Dem	<b>0.051</b>	<b>0.018</b>	<b>2.759</b>	<b>0.006</b>
Treatment C * Dem	0.020	0.032	0.612	0.540
Treatment A * Ind	-0.102	0.113	-0.899	0.369
Treatment B * Ind	<b>0.303</b>	<b>0.140</b>	<b>2.165</b>	<b>0.030</b>
Treatment C * Ind	-0.007	0.163	-0.041	0.967
Treatment A * Rep	-0.139	0.118	-1.183	0.237
Treatment B * Rep	0.145	0.132	1.097	0.273
Treatment C * Rep	0.160	0.128	1.253	0.210

## Effect Sizes Combining all 3 messages (Linear Regression)

Controlling for salience and partisanship, we saw significant movement only among Democrats.

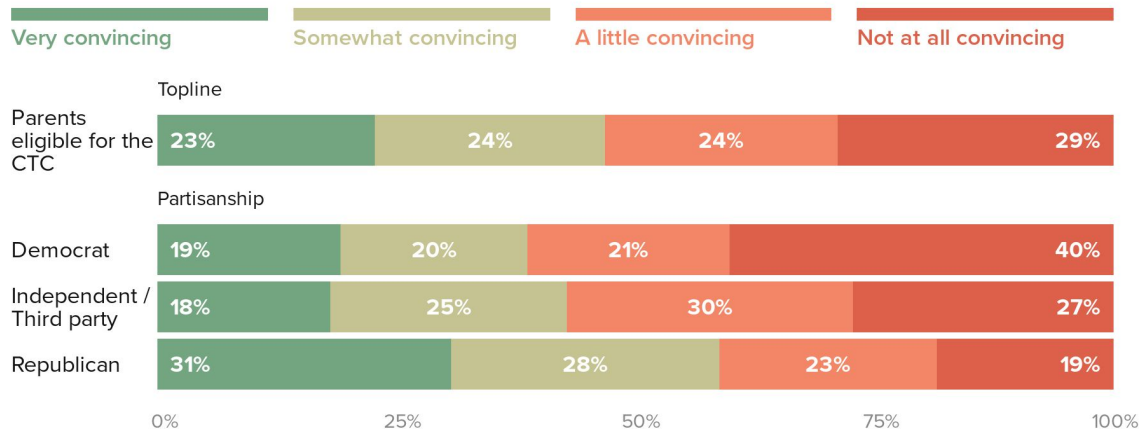
- Those who knew "a lot" about CTC, increased support by ~2pp.
- Those who knew "a little" about CTC, increased support by ~6pp.

Coefficient	Estimate	Std. Error	T Value	P Value
A lot * Democrat	0.020	0.010	1.946	0.052
Some * Democrat	0.029	0.019	1.508	0.132
A little * Democrats	0.060	0.031	1.924	0.055
Nothing at all * Democrat	0.026	0.046	0.572	0.568
A lot * Independent	-0.004	0.103	-0.037	0.970
Some * Independent	-0.060	0.152	-0.395	0.693
A little * Independent	-0.012	0.103	-0.117	0.907
Nothing at all * Independent	0.102	0.218	0.467	0.640
A lot * Republican	-0.265	0.183	-1.447	0.148
Some * Republican	-0.138	0.086	-1.611	0.107
A little * Republican	0.082	0.076	1.078	0.281
Nothing at all * Republican	-0.095	0.111	-0.861	0.390

# Eligible Parents Find Messaging Against the Extending the Expanded Child Tax Credit to be Modestly Convincing

## Eligible Parents who Self-Identify as Republicans are Most Convinced by Arguments Against the Expanded Child Tax Credit

Please read the following statement from opponents of extending the expanded Child Tax Credit: The most important thing for the economy is getting people back to work. Giving people free money with no strings attached means many people will stay home rather than going back to work, while the rest of us see our taxes go up. And this is going to encourage people to have more kids just to get a handout. How convincing or not convincing do you find this reason to **oppose** extending the expanded Child Tax Credit?



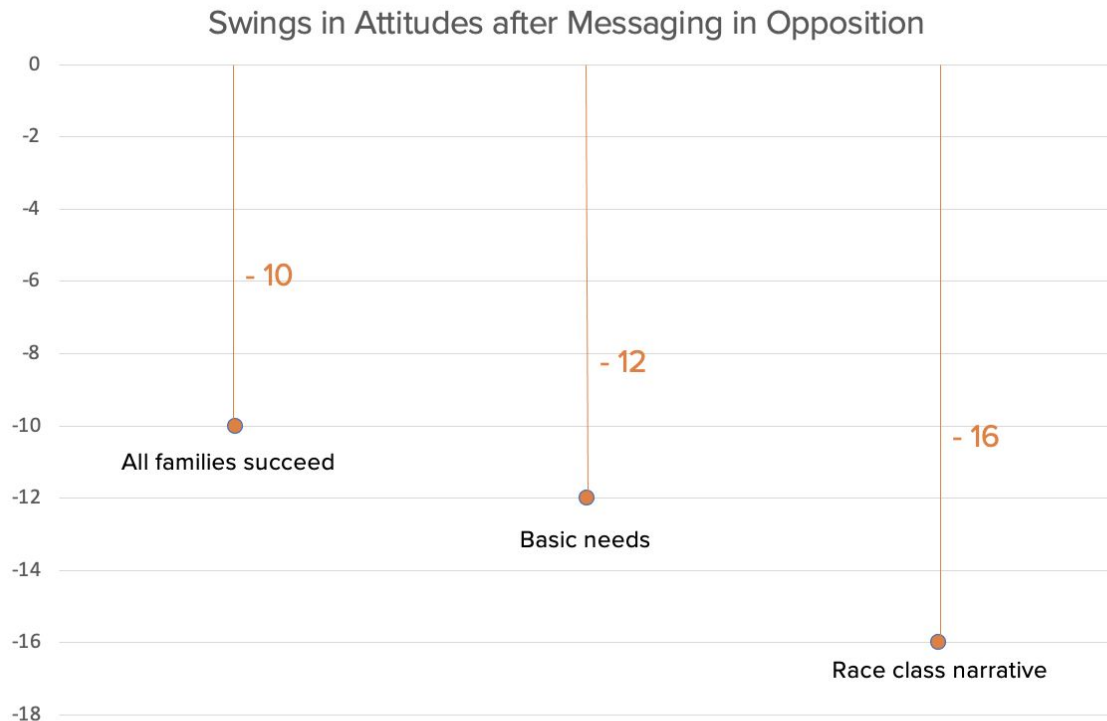
June 7–13, 2021 survey of 1,749 likely voters

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- After testing how the three messages in support of extending the expanded Child Tax Credit performed, we tested one argument against extending the program to measure how this would move attitudes
- We used the same experimental design, first provide eligible parents the treatment message, asking them whether or not they find it convincing.
- We then asked whether they support extending the program, followed by a counterfactual
- The effectiveness of this message is then measured by the difference between the support ask and then counterfactual
- Among all eligible parents, 23 percent find this message convincing.
- Eligible parents who self-identify as Republicans are the group that finds this argument most convincing, with 31 percent rating it 'very convincing'

# The 'All Families Succeed' Message Sees the *Smallest* Drop in Support After Oppositional Messaging



Results of the support ask compared to the counterfactual

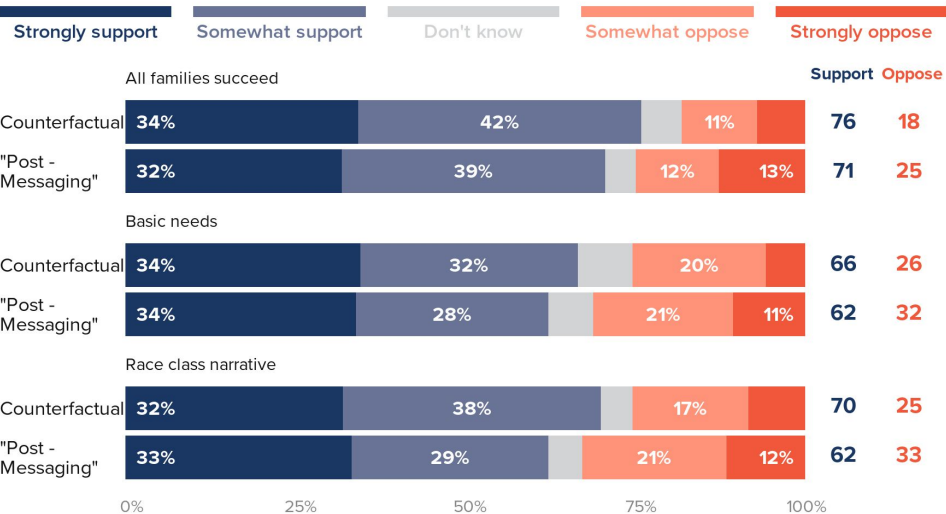
- This experimental design allows us to see how each of three messages in support of extension would stand up to arguments against
- After exposure to messaging against extending the Child Tax Credit, support among those parents who saw the 'All families succeed' message fell the least when compared to a second counterfactual
- Support among those who saw the 'basic needs' message drops by 12-points
- Support among those who saw the 'race class narrative' message falls by 15-points



# After Exposure to Messaging Both For and Against the ‘All Families Succeed’ Message Induces the Only Positive Effect

## Performance of all Three Messages Compared to Their Counterfactuals After Negative Messaging

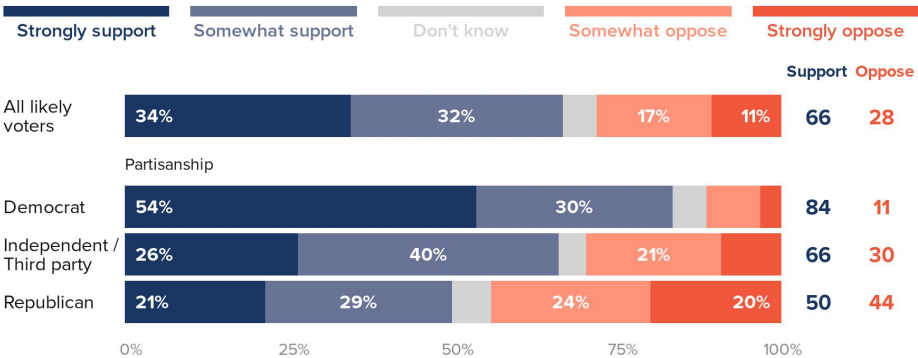
Eligible parents were all shown the same message against extending the expanded Child Tax Credit. Parents were then asked whether they support or oppose extending the expanded Child Tax Credit. Parents were then posed a counterfactual, asking them how they would have answered this question if they had not seen the messaging opposing extending the program. Here, responses are broken out according to which of the three messages parents saw in support of extending the expanded Child Tax Credit, after



June 7–13, 2021 survey of 1,751 likely voters

## A Majority of Parents Support Extending the Expanded Child Tax Credit After Seeing Both Positive and Negative Messaging

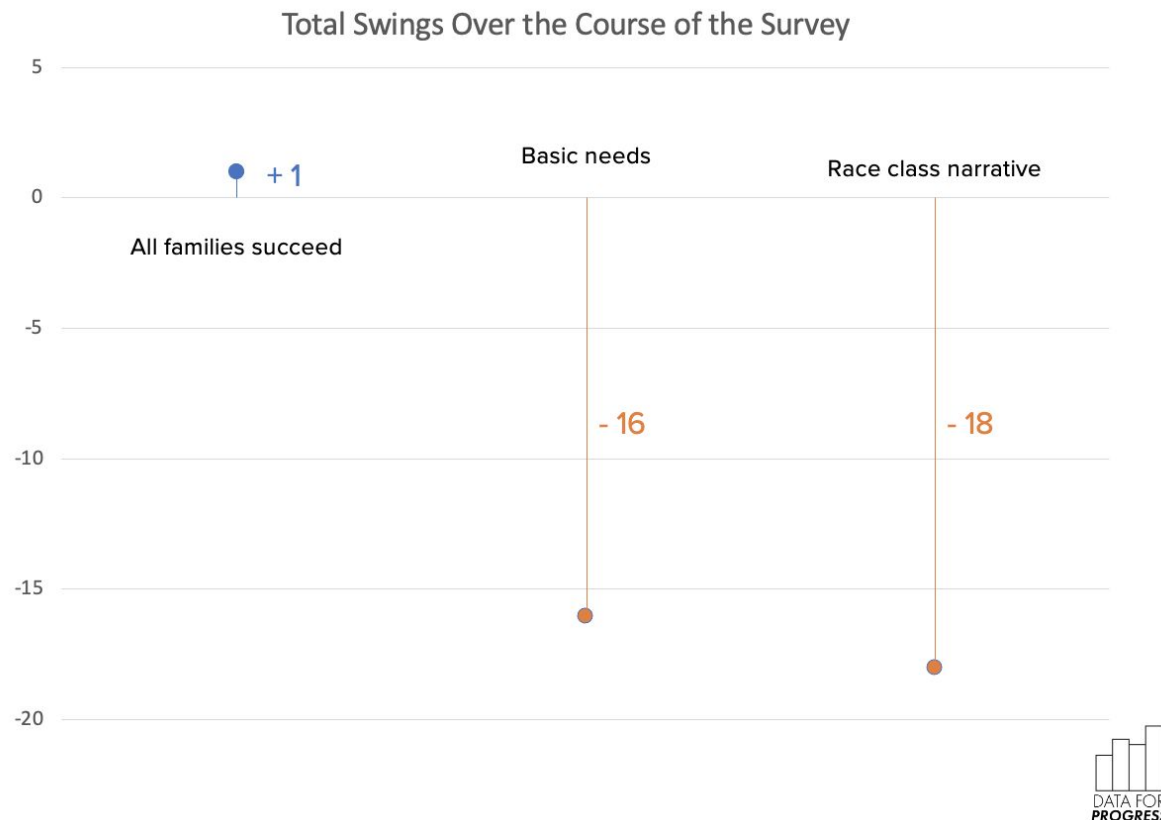
After reading the previous statement, do you support or oppose extending the expanded Child Tax Credit, which provides monthly financial support to most families with children age 17 or under?



June 7–13, 2021 survey of 1,749 likely voters



## After Exposure to Messaging Both For and Against the 'All Families Succeed' Message Induces the Only Positive Effect

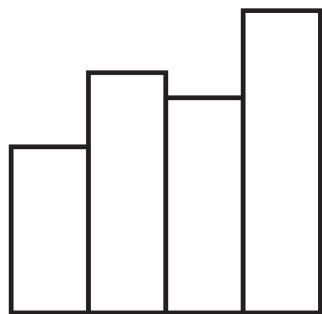


- Here the swings displayed in the proceeding two slides were added together to measure movement among the three different message groups across the entire survey
- This provides us a view as to how opinions may have shifted throughout the survey in its entirety
- Those who saw the 'all families succeed' message are the sole group of respondents who became more supportive of extension after exposure to messaging both for and against

## A Strong Message for the Child Tax Credit

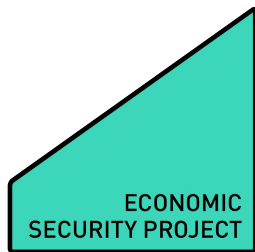
Everyone should have the ability to provide for and care for their families. Supporters say this expansion of the Child Tax Credit — essentially a tax cut of \$150 to \$300 per child every month for most families with children — will help all families succeed, from working families struggling with basic needs like food, rent, and bills, to middle-class families that need help with childcare and college savings. This helps Main Street businesses and the whole community thrive.

# Expanded Child Tax Credit: Survey of Eligible Parents Messaging Test



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ParentsTogether

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