



DATA FOR *PROGRESS*

New York Voters Support State Budget Measures to Raise Taxes on the Wealthy and Invest in Public Goods

May 2021

Last year, New York's state budget was a widely criticized failure. In the midst of a surging global pandemic that upended the state's economy, Governor Andrew Cuomo forced through a budget that cut Medicaid, underfunded schools, and rolled back crucial bail reforms.

This year, the New York state legislature asserted itself and led in the opposite direction — rejecting these austerity measures and passing a massive \$212 billion budget that will reshape the state's economy and help millions of low-income New Yorkers. The budget, passed by the state legislature and signed by Gov. Cuomo in April, will raise taxes on the wealthiest New Yorkers and use these funds to make public investments in infrastructure that will benefit all New Yorkers. The bill includes record-level investments in schools, funding for clean energy, and critical assistance to renters, childcare providers, and undocumented immigrants. Importantly, the enacted legislation rejects Cuomo's threats to cut vital services and limits his attempt to give himself near-complete control over the state's pandemic relief funds.

Altogether, the recently-passed New York state budget would help millions of families in need, help the state recover from the economic impact of the coronavirus, build clean energy infrastructure, and address the state's profound levels of income inequality.

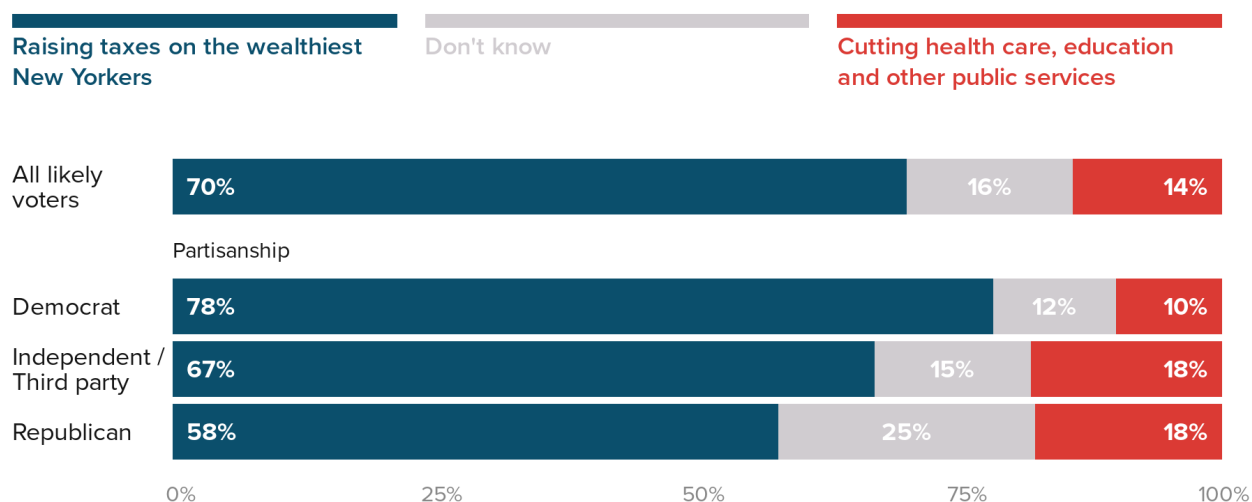
Some conservative state legislators have pushed back against the budget, urging a return to an austerity budget. In a April 2021 survey of 1,197 likely New York voters, Data for Progress tested voter support for the provisions of the New York state budget and other recently passed measures. We find that voters reject pro-austerity arguments, instead sharing a vision of government that invests in the common good; they support raising taxes on the wealthiest New Yorkers to fund healthcare, education, and other public services. Furthermore, we find that major provisions of the plan — including raising taxes on the rich and big corporations, providing rent assistance, and boosting education funding —are highly popular. We also tested voter support for a number of bills currently being considered in the state legislature and find that they similarly enjoy high levels of support.

New York Voters Continue to Reject Austerity

Data for Progress asked likely voters about their preferred approach to dealing with the state's projected multi-billion dollar deficit in the coming years. Specifically, voters were asked whether they preferred closing the deficit by raising taxes on the wealthiest New Yorkers, or by imposing austerity measures that include cuts to healthcare, education, and other public services. We find that among all likely New York voters, two-thirds say they prefer raising taxes over austerity by a 56-point margin. This trend of support continues when considering partisanship where likely voters that identify as Democrats, Independents, and Republicans all say they prefer raising taxes on wealthy New Yorkers by margins of 68-points, 49-points, and 40-points, respectively. This is consistent with similar recent polling over the past year in New York.

Likely New York Voters Oppose Austerity Measures as a Solution to Future Deficit Projections

New York State faces a projected deficit of tens of billions of dollars in the coming years. How would you prefer the state close this deficit?



April 23–29, 2021 survey of 1,197 likely voters

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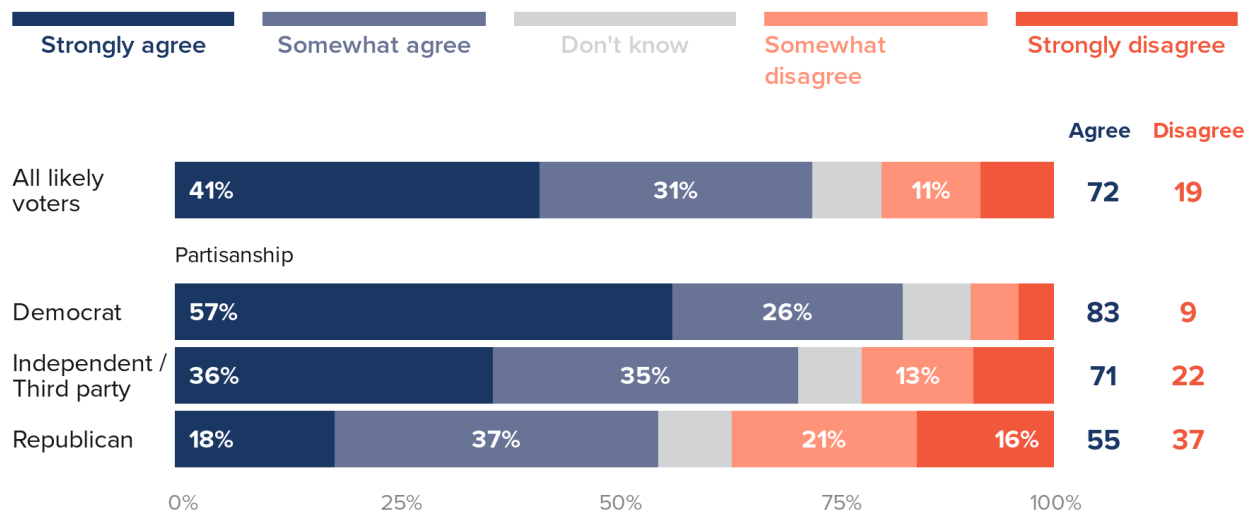
New Yorkers Want an Economy Focused on the Common Good

To better understand New Yorkers' views on the role of government in shaping the economy, we asked voters a broad worldview question. Likely New York voters were asked whether they agree or disagree with a statement where an economy focused on the good of everyone was proposed, one that ensures fair wages, good jobs, worker protections, universal broadband, small business support, and taxing corporations and the wealthy more. We find that all likely voters agree with this view by a 53-point margin (72 percent agree, 19 percent disagree). Moreover, this particular view of a comprehensive worker-oriented economy, one that is in part funded by raising taxes on the rich and large corporations, extends across party lines. Democrats, Independents, and Republicans all agreed with the statement by margins of 74-points, 49-points, and 18-points, respectively.

A Large Majority of New York Voters Believe in Good Jobs, Fair Wages, and Worker Protections as Part of an Economy That Works for Everyone

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Our economy should promote the common good. First and foremost, that means the economy needs to work for every New Yorker, no matter who they are, where they come from, or what they do. It also means good jobs with fair wages and worker protections; universal broadband access; support for small businesses; and making sure the wealthiest New Yorkers and corporations pay more in taxes.



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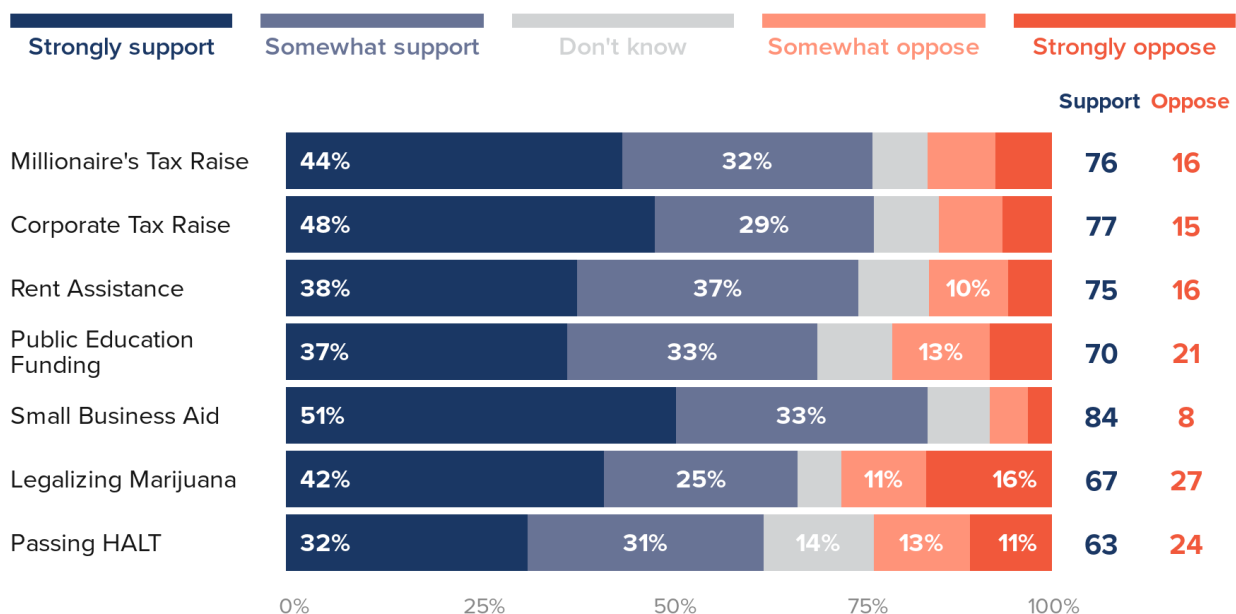
Likely New York Voters Support Key State Budget Provisions

We also asked voters about a number of proposals that were included in the recently passed state budget. Specifically, voters were asked about increased funds for public school districts, part of which fulfill Foundation Aid debt, increased tax rates for millionaires and corporations, small business relief, and rental assistance. Additionally, while not part of the budget, voters were also asked if they supported or opposed the HALT Act and the legalization of the recreational use of marijuana for adults in the state.

We find that a vast majority of New York voters support these provisions. Relief for small businesses enjoys the most support by a margin of 76-points (84 percent support, 8 percent oppose). Raising tax rates on corporations and millionaires, and rental assistance follow closely, each enjoying the support of more than three-fourths of voters by margins of 62-points, 60-points, and 59-points. Increased public education funding is also supported by over two-thirds of voters with a margin of 49-points. Finally, legalizing marijuana and passing the HALT Act both enjoy large majority support, with 40- and 39-point margins, respectively.

Likely New York Voters Overwhelmingly Support Provisions Recently Passed by the State Legislature

Voters were told about various proposals recently passed by the state legislature and their provisions, and asked whether they supported or opposed each one.



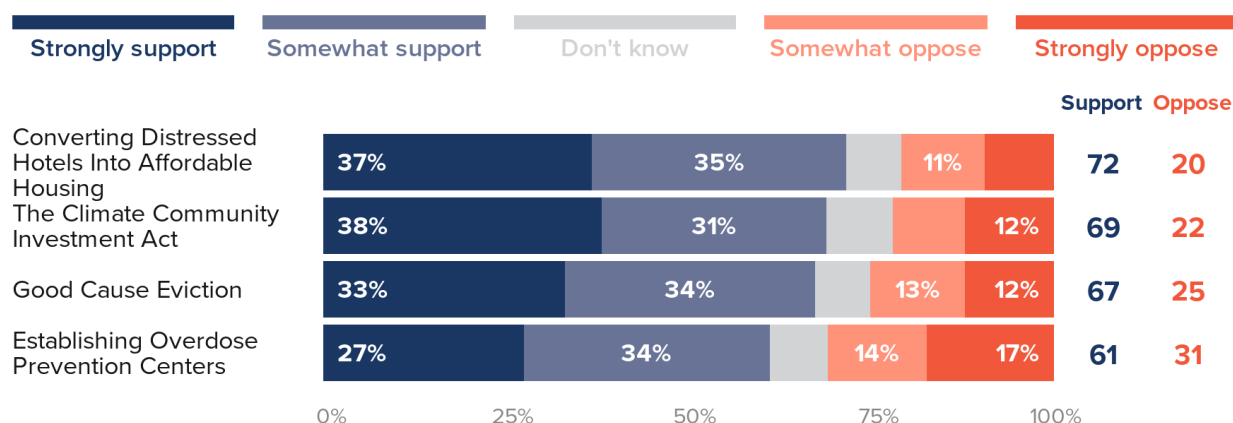
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Additionally, voters were also asked whether they support or oppose a number of measures being considered in the state legislature's current session. Particularly, we asked about the main provisions of the Housing Our Neighbors with Dignity Act (HONDA), the Climate Community Investment Act (CCIA), the Good Cause Eviction Bill, and establishing Overdose Prevention Centers that would seek to address the record breaking overdose deaths in the state. We find that overall support for these proposals among voters is high. By a margin of 52-percentage-points, likely New York voters say they support converting distressed hotels and commercial spaces into permanent housing for New Yorkers experiencing homelessness and low-income people. Similarly, voters said they backed the CCIA, a program that would impose climate pollution fees on corporations and invest the revenue into a renewable energy economy, by a margin of 47-points. The Good Cause Eviction Bill, which would ban eviction without a reasonable cause, such as not paying rent, and guarantee the right to a lease renewal and protections against large rent hikes is also popular, enjoying a 42-point margin of support. Finally, establishing Overdose Prevention Centers that would create controlled settings for people to use pre-obtained drugs under the supervision of trained professionals who can intervene in case of an overdose or other medical event and make referrals for counseling and treatment is backed by New York voters by a margin of 30-points.

A Strong Majority of New York Voters Support Further Progressive Measures on Housing, Climate, and Overdose Prevention

Voters were told about various proposals being currently considered in the state legislature and asked whether they supported or opposed each one.



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Conclusion

New York voters widely support raising taxes on the wealthiest New Yorkers to invest in the common good and ensure healthcare, education, and other public services remain funded. By overwhelming margins, they also reject pro-austerity arguments. Furthermore, we find that major provisions of the budget plan — including raising taxes on the rich and big corporations, providing rent assistance, and boosting education funding — are highly popular. As New York legislators consider proposals for the rest of the legislative session and next year's budget, they shouldn't be afraid to continue to move in this progressive direction.

COVER PHOTO
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