

Lawfare Project

Perceptions of foreign funding of
US universities among US adults

September 2021



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Survey Methodology



This survey was conducted online within the United States from September 27 - 29 among 2,009 adults by HarrisX. The sampling margin of error of this poll is plus or minus 2.2 percentage points. The results reflect a nationally representative sample of U.S. adults. Results were weighted for age by gender, region, race/ethnicity, and income where necessary to align them with their actual proportions in the population.

Of the 2,009 adults who took the survey, 1,854 were registered voters. The sampling margin of error of this poll is plus or minus 2.3 percentage points. The results reflect a nationally representative sample of registered voters. Results were weighted for age, gender, region, race/ethnicity, income, political party, education, ideology and area type where necessary to align them with their actual proportions in the population.

The sample size and sampling margin of error:



2,009
US adults

1,854
Registered voters



2.2%
Sampling
Margin of Error

2.3%
Sampling
Margin of Error

Note: Some percentages on the following slides may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding

Key insights

Few have seen news about the topic of foreign funding in American universities, but two thirds of US adults are concerned it could affect teaching and research objectives.



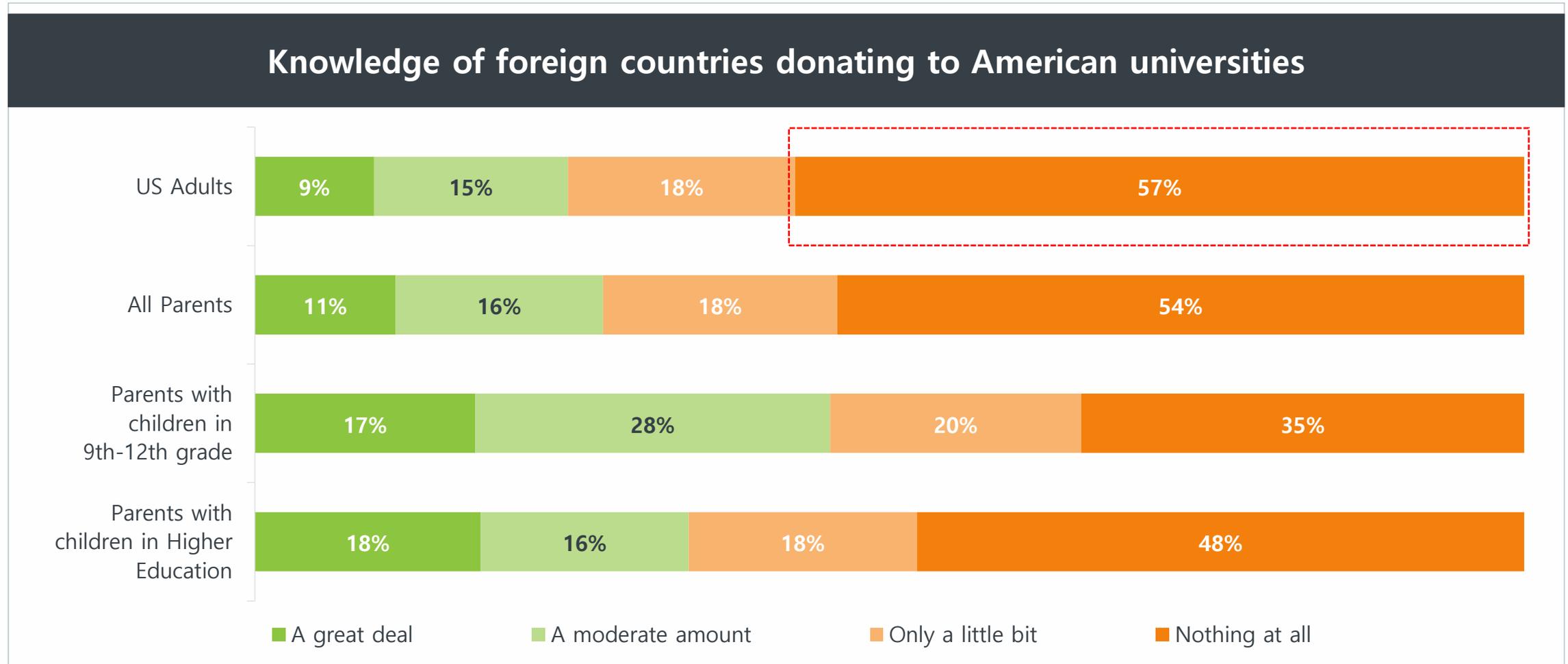
- ) Almost 6 in 10 Americans have heard nothing about foreign countries donating money to American universities.
- ) Most Americans are concerned that money from foreign countries will end up influencing teaching and research objectives.

There is a strong consensus among voters – they want transparency when it comes to funding from foreign countries in universities.



- ) 8 in 10 voters support more stringent legislation requiring universities to account for every dollar they receive from foreign countries and what it's spent on.

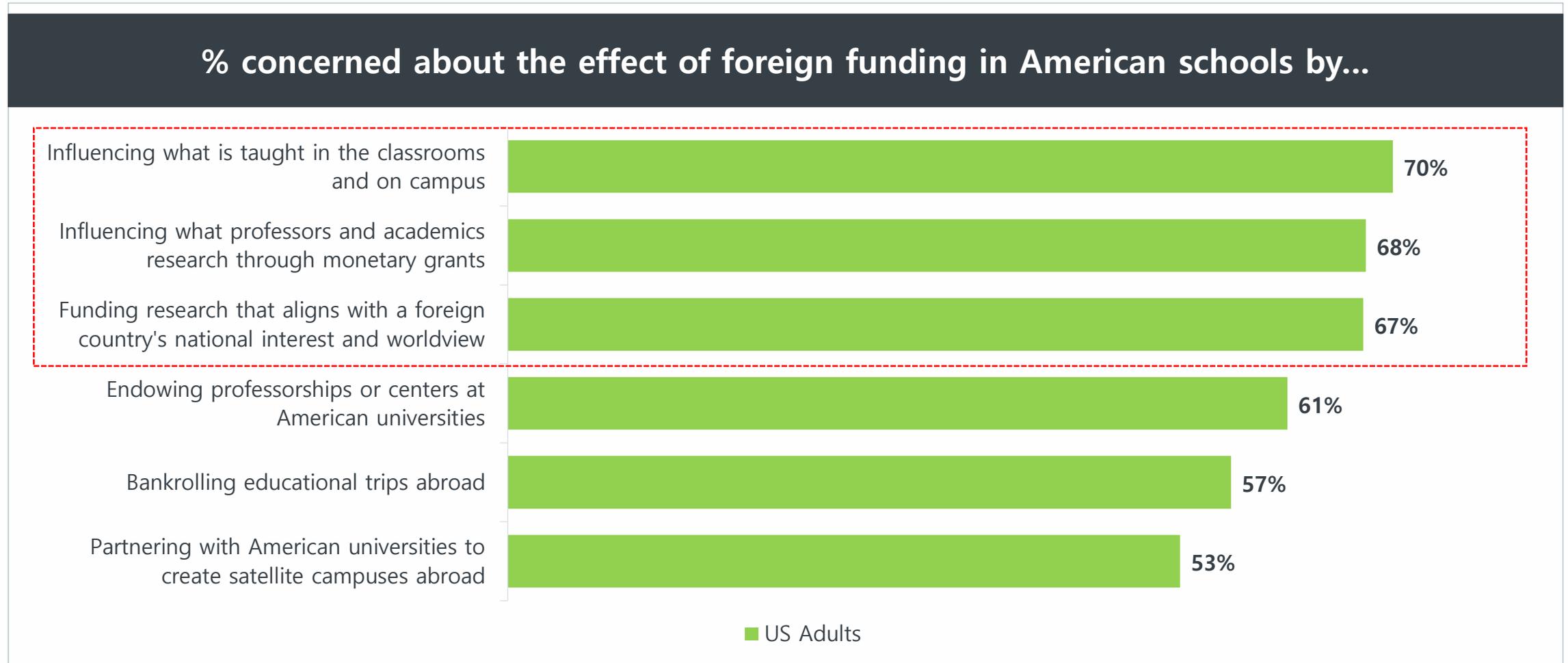
Almost 6 in 10 Americans have heard nothing at all about foreign countries donating money to American universities



BASE: US Adults (n=2,009) All Parents (n=1,307), Parents with children in 9th-12th grade (n=320), Parents with children in Higher Education (n=185)
 LFQ1: How much have you seen, read, or heard in the news about foreign countries donating money to American universities?

Non-parents were least likely to have heard anything about foreign countries donating to American universities (64% have heard nothing at all).

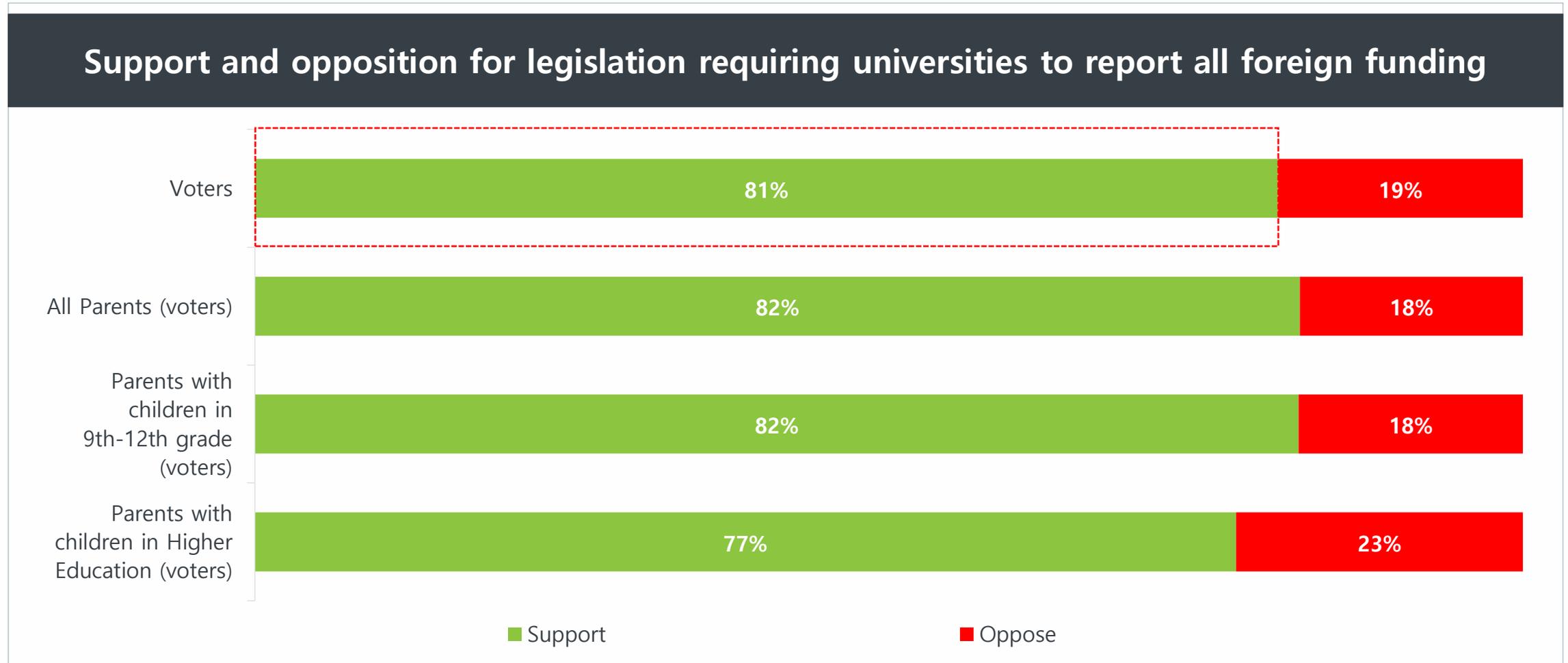
2 in 3 Americans are concerned that money donated from foreign countries to US universities will influence teaching and research objectives



BASE: US Adults (n=2,009).

LFQ2r: Top 2 Box – For each of the following statements, how concerned or not concerned are you about the effect that money from foreign countries might have on American universities that receive it?

8 in 10 US adults support more stringent legislation requiring universities to be transparent about foreign funding and how it is spent



BASE: Registered voters (n=2,009) All Parents (n=1,307), Parents with children in 9th-12th grade (n=320), Parents with children in Higher Education (n=185)

LFQ4: All U.S. colleges and universities are required to report gifts from foreign countries totaling more than \$250,000 in a given year. Would you support or oppose more stringent legislation from Congress requiring universities to specifically account for every dollar they receive from foreign countries and what it is spent on?

Key insights

The American public is split on whether they support or oppose American universities accepting foreign funding. A plurality of college graduates say it wouldn't affect likelihood to donate to their alma mater.



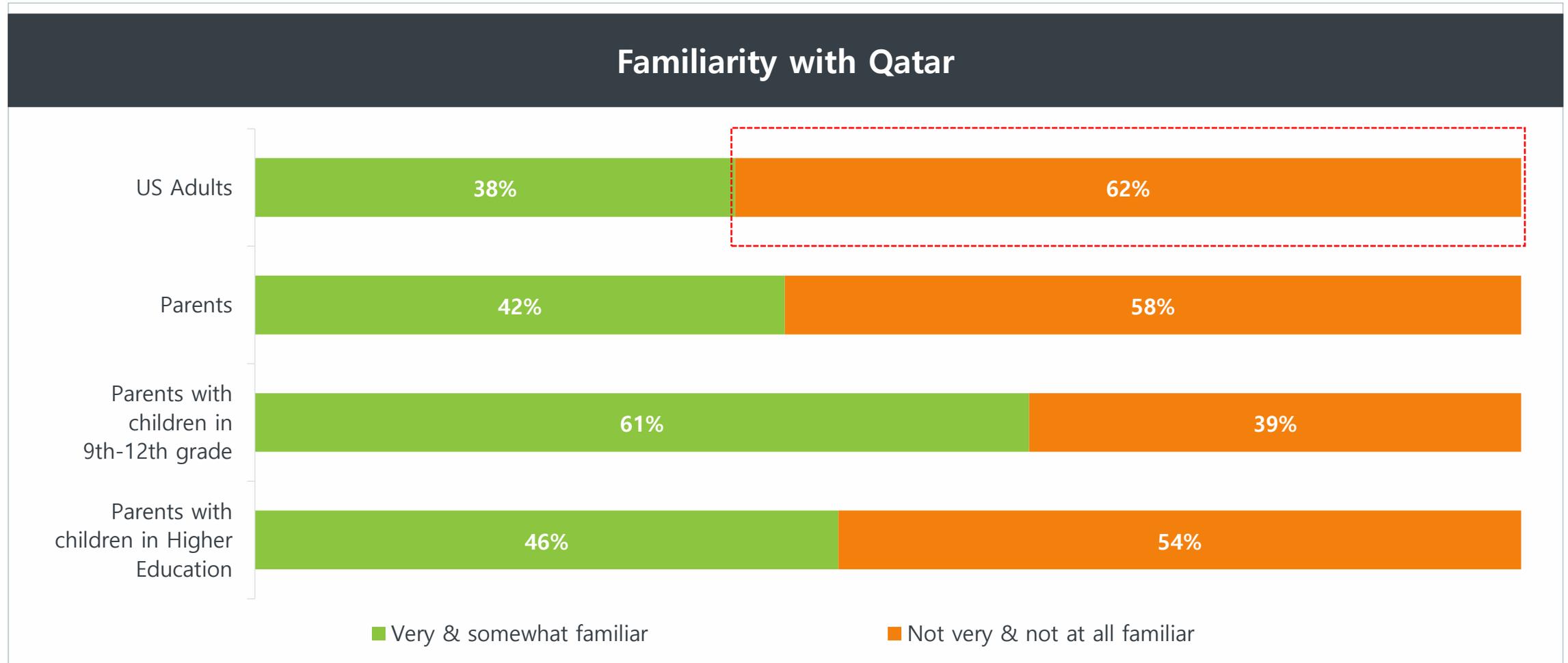
- ) Americans are split on whether they support American universities accepting financial donations from foreign countries.
- ) College graduates are ambivalent on whether learning their alma mater has accepted funding from Qatar would impact their likelihood to donate to their university, although a plurality younger graduates say accepting this funding would make them more likely to donate, but half of older graduates hold the opposite position.

Few Americans are aware of Qatari funding, but become concerned about it as they learn about Qatar's ties to Iran and terrorist organizations; Americans overwhelmingly say parents have a right to know if their children's schools are accepting Qatari funding.



- ) Almost 2 in 3 Americans have heard nothing at all about Qatar being the largest foreign donor to US universities.
- ) Americans become more concerned about Qatari donations to American universities as they learn about Qatar's ties to Iran and the Taliban (65%) and that it's being sued for allegedly funding terrorists (66%).
- ) 84% of Americans say parents have a right to know if Qatar is funding their children's education.

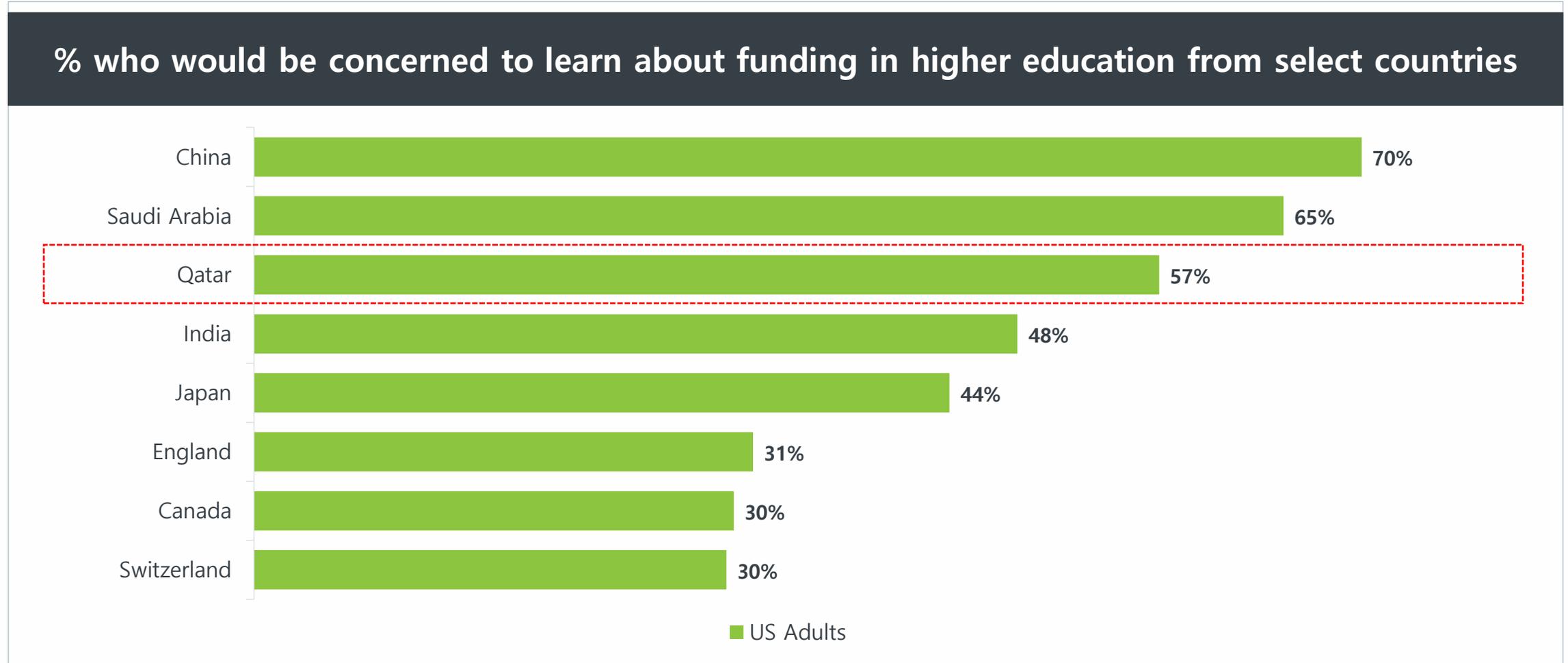
6 in 10 Americans, and fewer than half of parents with high school children, are not familiar with Qatar



BASE: US Adults (n=2,009) All Parents (n=1,307), Parents with children in 9th-12th grade (n=320), Parents with children in Higher Education (n=185)

LFQ6: How familiar or unfamiliar are you with Qatar, a country in the Arabian Peninsula?

Just behind China and Saudi Arabia, Qatar is the country whose funding causes the most concern among US adults



BASE: US Adults (n=2,009)

'LFQ5r: Top 2 Box – Would you be concerned or not concerned to learn that an American university received financial donations from any of following countries?

Americans are split on whether they support American universities accepting financial donations from foreign countries

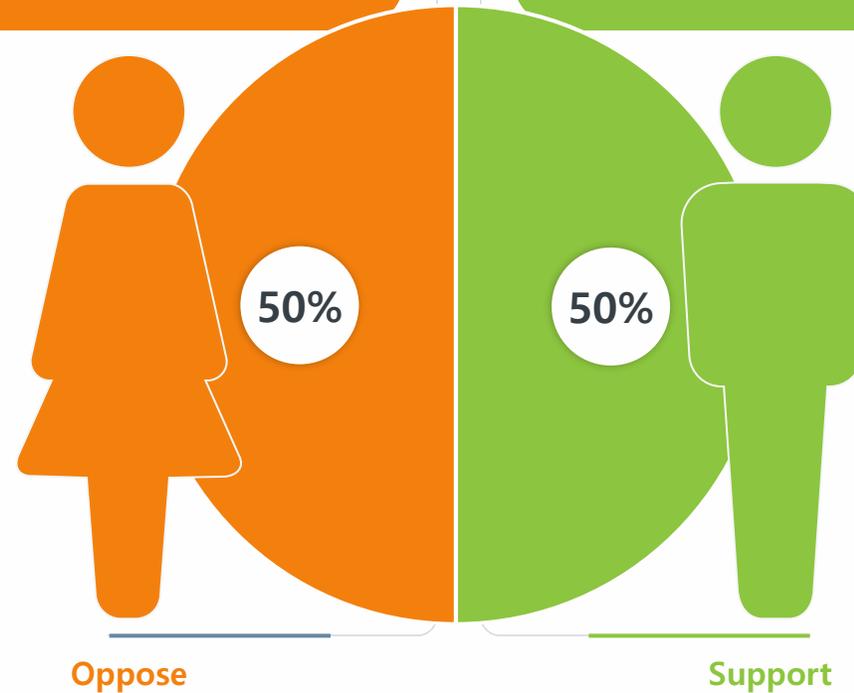
Support and opposition for American universities accepting donations from foreign countries

Opposed to US universities accepting foreign monies

- Slight lean female
- Tend to be older (50+)
- Lean white
- Lean less educated
- Most make under \$75k/year
- Lean suburban/rural
- Lean Republican

Supportive of US universities accepting foreign monies

- Slight lean male
- Tend to be younger (Under 50)
- Lean POC
- Lean more educated
- About half make over \$75k/year
- Lean urban
- Lean Democrat

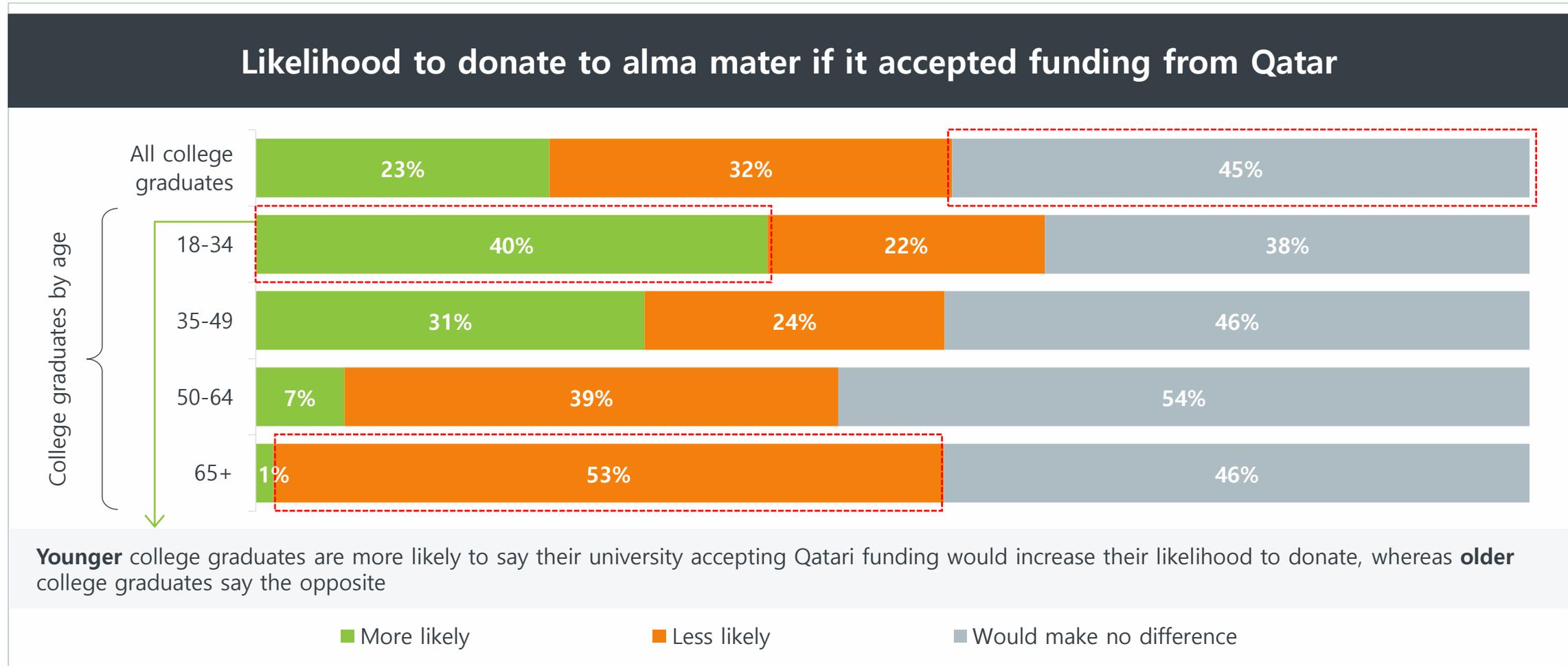


Majorities of parents with children in 9th-12th grade (65%) or higher education (57%) **support** schools accepting foreign funding

BASE: US Adults (n=2,009)

LFQ3: Do you support or oppose American universities accepting financial donations from foreign countries?

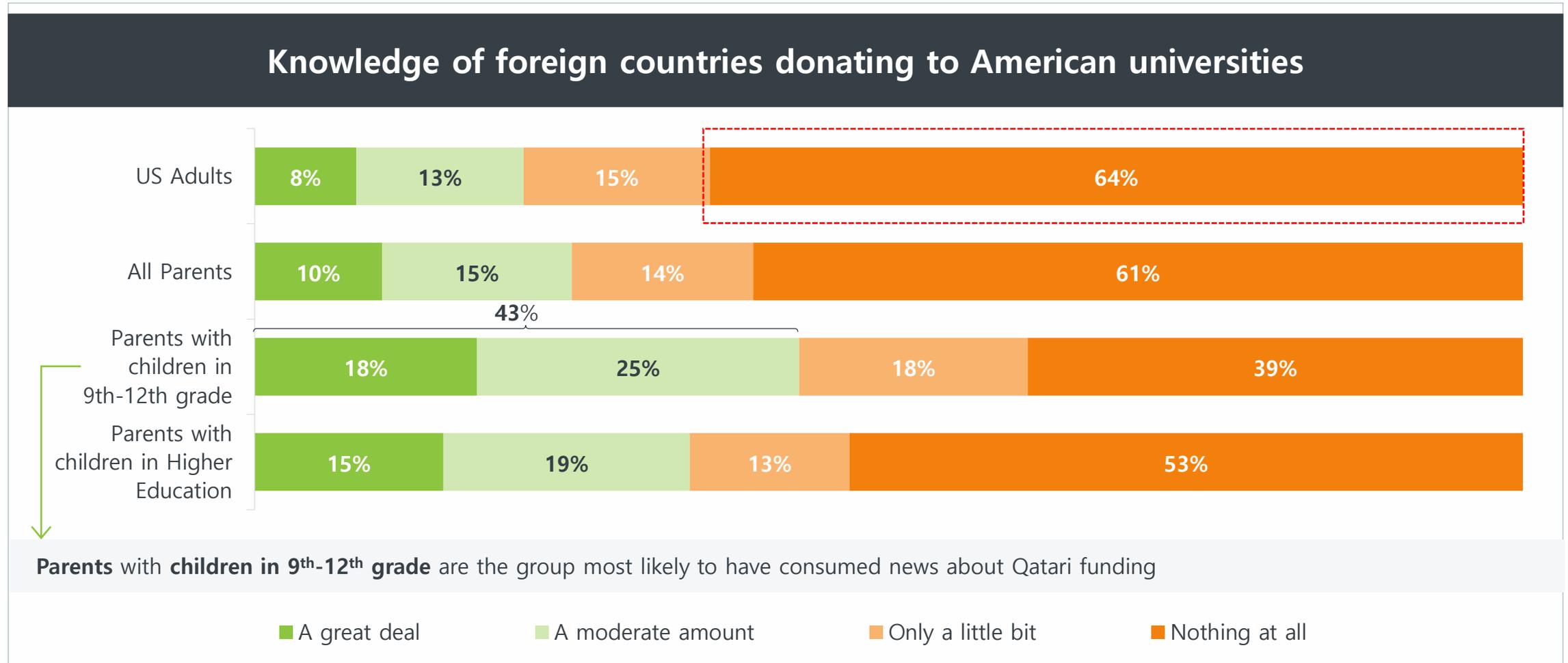
Almost half of college graduates say it would make no impact on their likelihood to donate to their alma mater if their college accepted Qatari funding



BASE: College graduates (n=947) 18-34 (n=274), 35-49 (n=303), 50-64 (n=191) 65+ (n= 178)

LFQ9: Would you be more likely or less likely to donate to your alma mater if you learned that your university had accepted funding from Qatar, or would it make no difference?

Almost 2 in 3 US Adults have heard nothing at all about Qatar being the largest foreign donor to American universities



BASE: US Adults (n=2,009) All Parents (n=1,307), Parents with children in 9th-12th grade (n=320), Parents with children in Higher Education (n=185)
 LFQ7: How much have you seen, read, or heard about Qatar being the largest foreign donor of financial gifts to American universities?

Adults without kids are the group least likely to have consumed any news about Qatar's donorship, with 70% not having seen, read, or heard anything about the topic,

2 in 3 Americans become more concerned about Qatari funding of US universities when they learn about the gulf state's ties to Iran, terrorist organizations

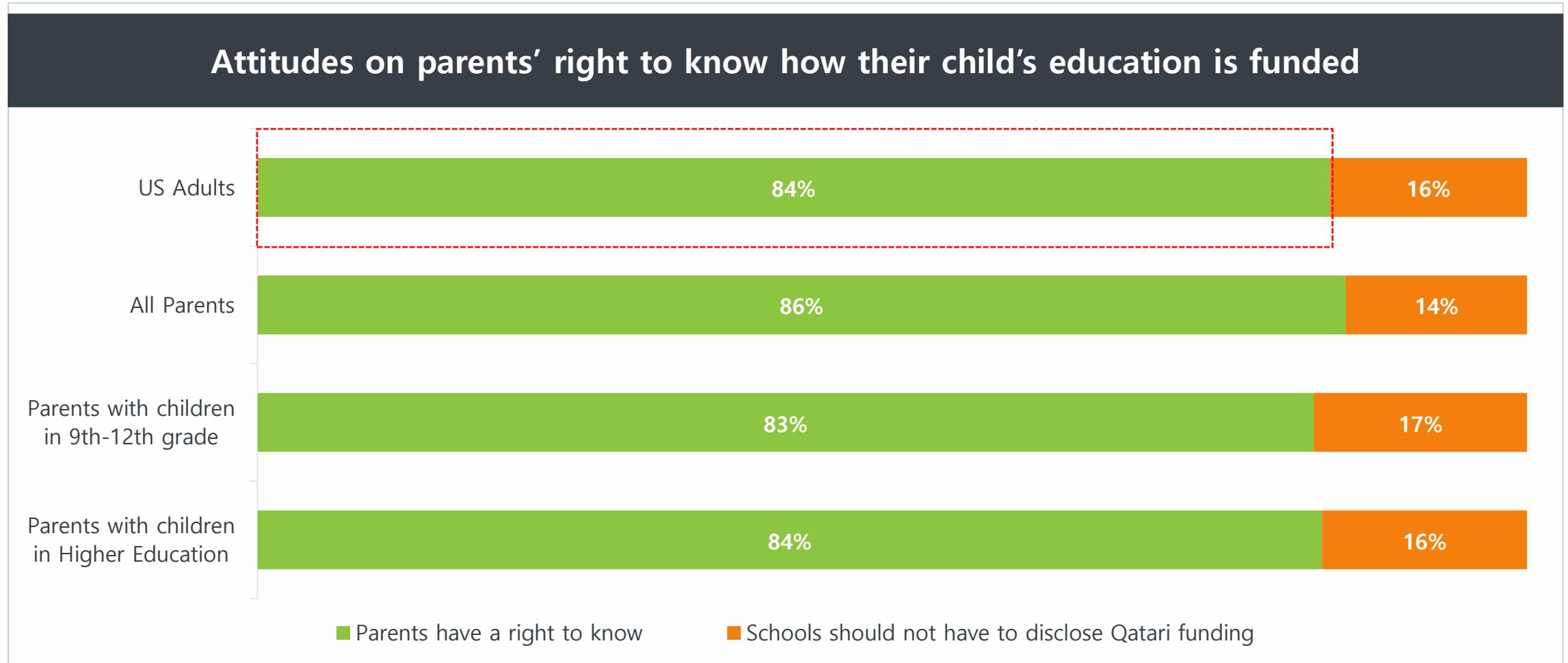
% more concerned about Qatari donations due to the following statements



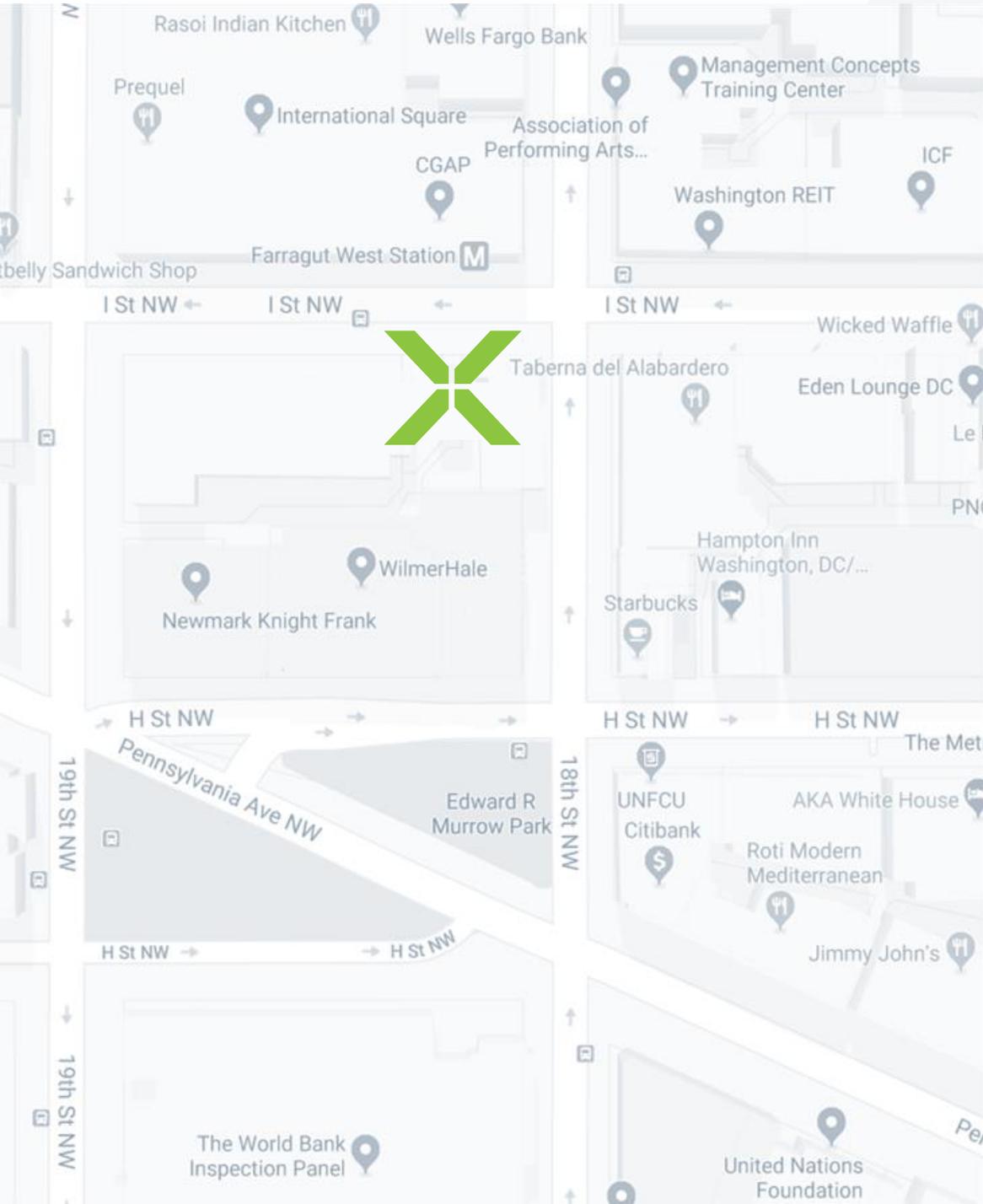
BASE: US Adults (n=2,009)

LFQ10r: Top 2 Box – Do each of the following statements make you more or less concerned about Qatari donations to American universities, or do they have no effect?

84% of US adults say parents have a right to know if their children's education is being funded by Qatar



BASE: US Adults (n=2,009) All Parents (n=1,307), Parents with children in 9th-12th grade (n=320), Parents with children in Higher Education (n=185)
LFQ8: Do you think parents have a right to know if Qatar is funding their children's education or should schools not have to disclose Qatari funding?



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