

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS & SCIENCES

National Service Public Opinion Research *Conducted in May, July, and August 2023*



David Binder Research



 americanacad

www.amacad.org/OurCommonPurpose

 americanacad

Project overview

Objectives

- Provide **data-driven insights** that can help state service commissions to improve recruitment, including information on:
 - **Barriers** that keep young Americans from committing to service and/or recommending it to others
 - **Benefits** that most resonate with audiences for recruitment
 - **Profiles** of potential target audiences for recruitment
 - Examples of effective recruitment **messaging**
- Explore **opinion nationally, and in California**, which has been a leader in launching service opportunities
 - Build on existing research among service program participants in California

Project overview

Research program

- **Focus groups** among young adults and parents of young adults across the political spectrum, conducted in May 2023
- **Large-scale survey** focused on California, with an oversample of young adults aged 18 to 24, and a parallel national sample, conducted in late July and early August 2023
 - In general, national results are similar to California results
 - Subgroup results in this presentation are among Californians because of the larger CA sample size

What's ahead in this presentation

- **Messages** about service that are effective at increasing likelihood to participate across groups
- **Target groups** most likely to serve and most likely to change their opinion
- **Top motivations** to participate
- **Key attitudes** that can increase the likelihood to serve
- **Effective language** to use
- **Value of emphasizing the community** aspects of service

AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES



Likelihood to Participate or Recommend

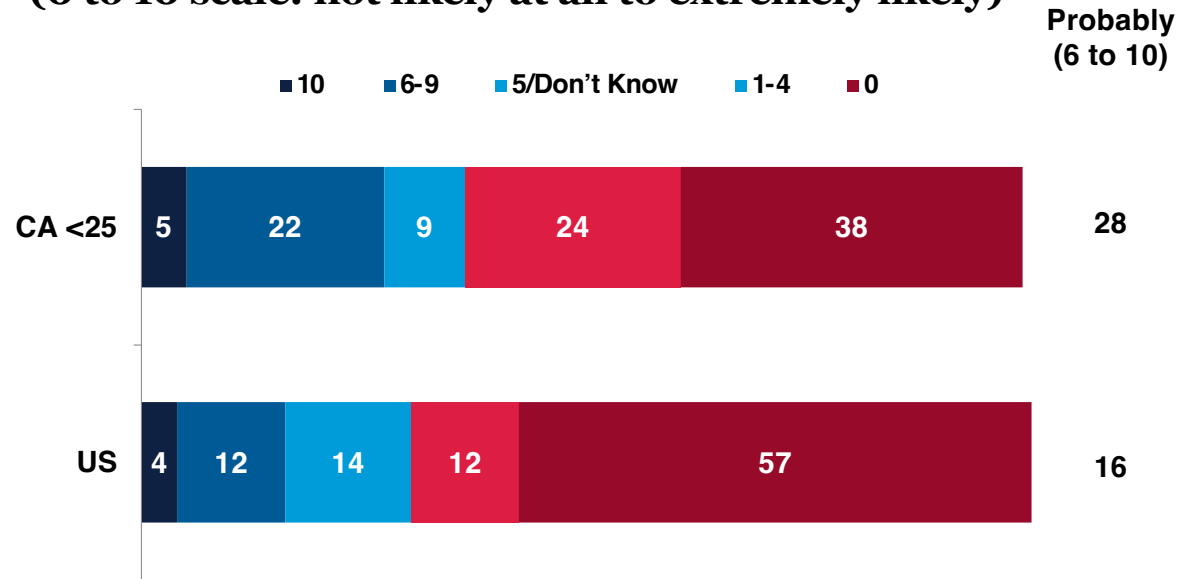
AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES

Given a brief description of a service year, just over 1 in 4 Californians under age 25 say they would probably consider it for themselves

Description given:

“In organizations like AmeriCorps, people voluntarily commit to one year of full-time service and receive some financial support in exchange for doing this work. These programs are administered by state and local governments, often in partnership with community-based organizations, and they are funded by the government and/or private donors.”

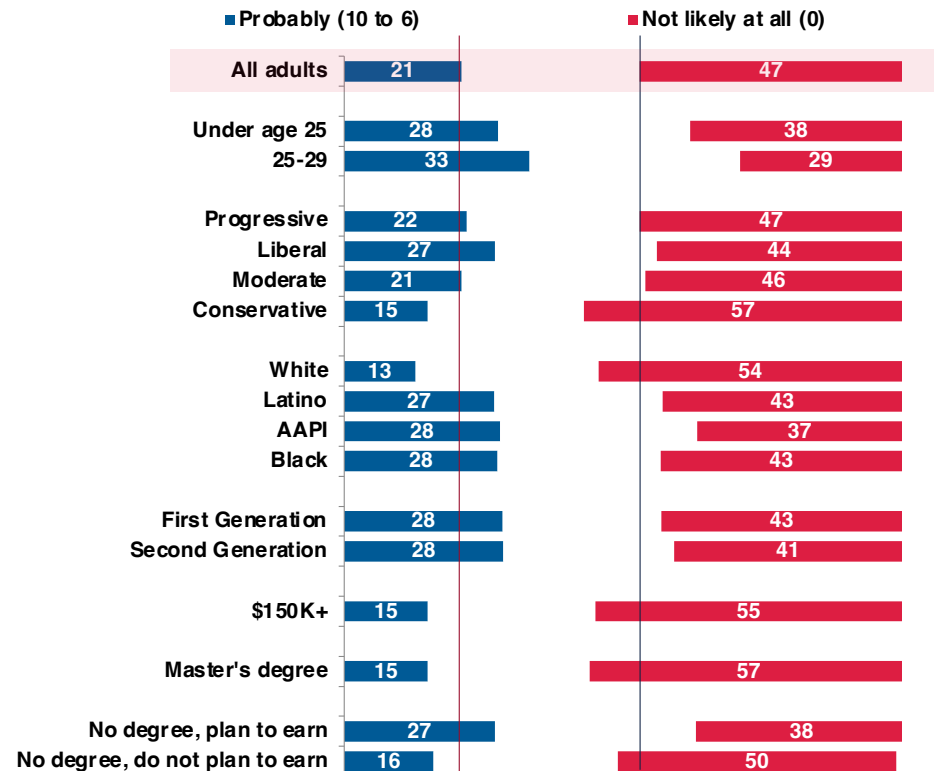
**Likelihood to Consider Service Year for Yourself
(0 to 10 scale: not likely at all to extremely likely)**



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS & SCIENCES

➤ Those more likely to **consider service** are younger adults, people of color, and first or second generation in the U.S.

Likelihood to Consider Service Year for Yourself⁺

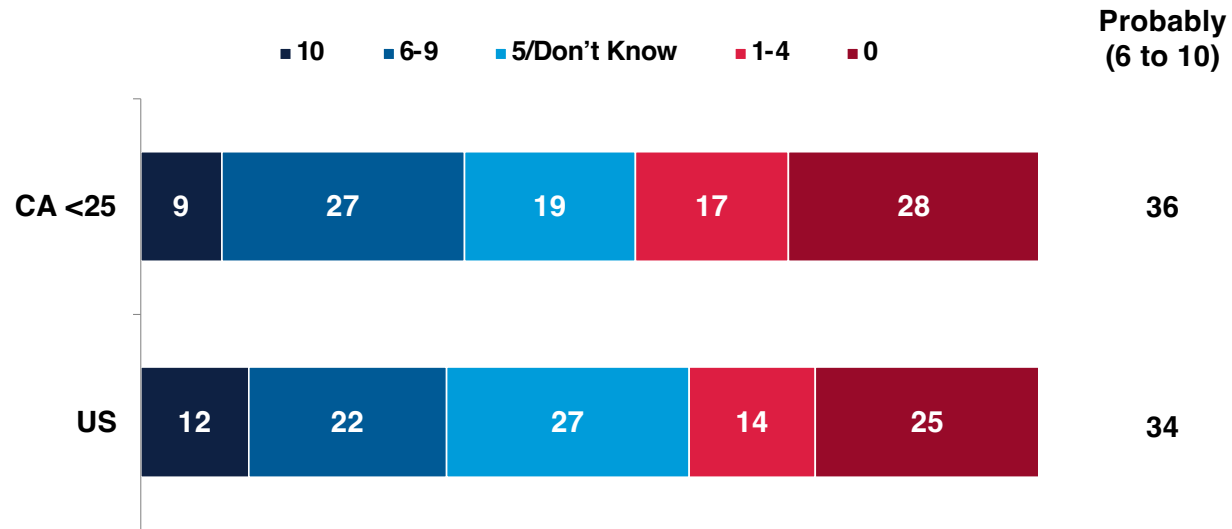


⁺Results shown among California adults

AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES

Just over 1 in 3 say they would probably recommend a service year to a close friend or family member

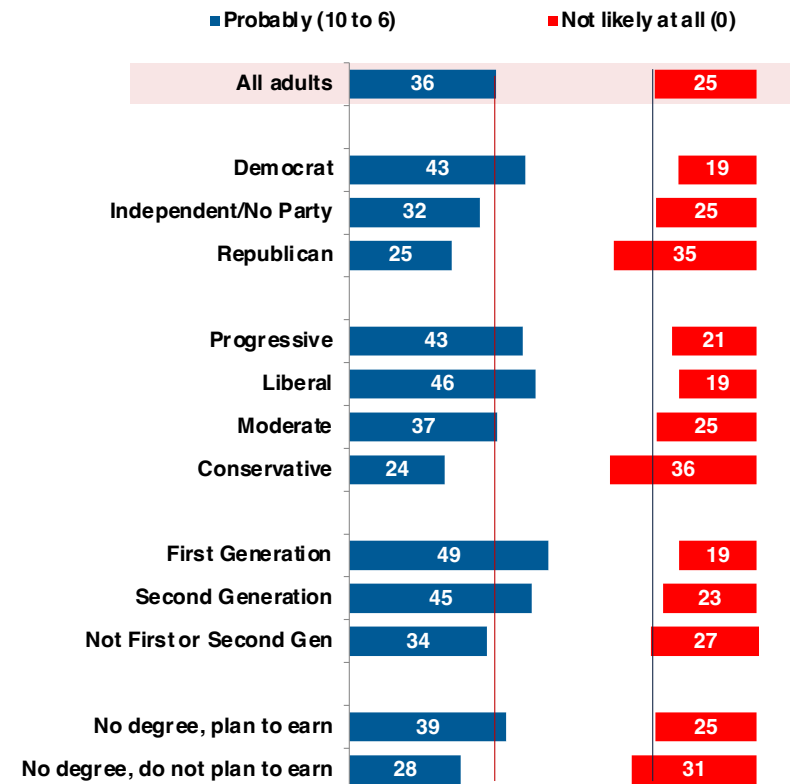
Likelihood to Recommend a Service Year
(0 to 10 scale: not likely at all to extremely likely)



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS & SCIENCES

Likelihood to Recommend a Service Year⁺

- Those most likely to **recommend service** include Democrats, first or second generation in the U.S., and those planning to earn a degree.



⁺Results shown among California adults

AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES

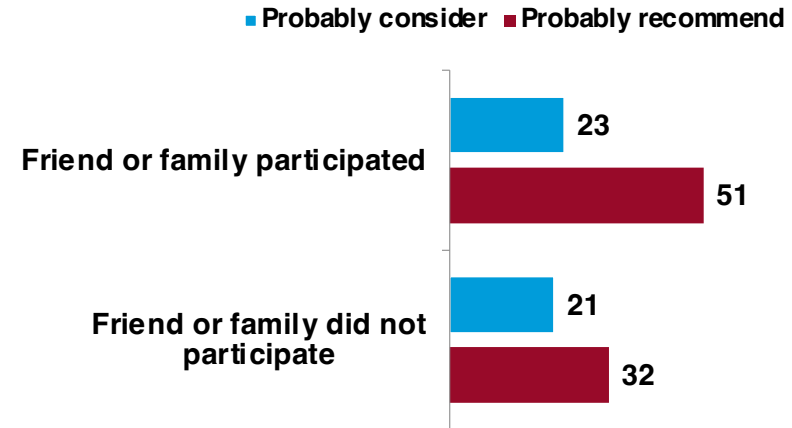
Nearly 1 in 4 adults have a friend or family member who has participated in a service year – they are more likely to recommend but not more likely to participate

Do you have a friend or family member who has participated in a service year program like AmeriCorps?

CA <25: 15%

US: 24%

**Likelihood to Consider or Recommend,
by Connection to Service⁺**



⁺Results shown among California adults

Questions for consideration

- **How can you incorporate this data insight into your recruitment practices?**
- **Who are the trusted sources in the communities where you recruit from?**
- **How can they be activated to help with recruitment?**

AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES



Summary: Likelihood to Participate or Recommend

- Those **most likely to consider service before messages** include people of color, first generation adults, and second-generation adults.
- Conservatives and those with higher incomes are **less likely to consider service**.
- Those **who know someone who participated in a service year** can be good advocates, but they may not be more likely to participate themselves.

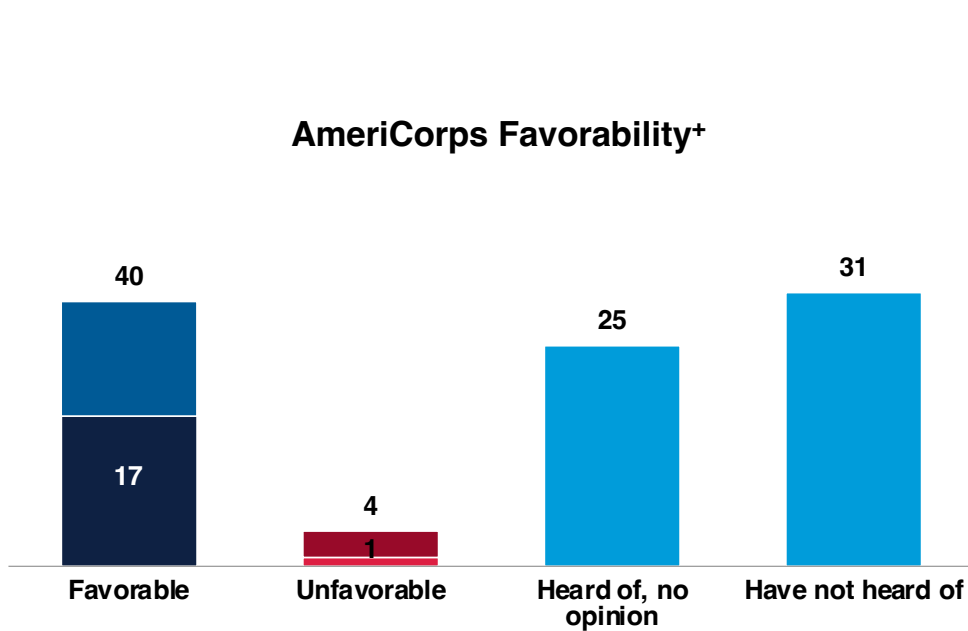
AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES



Attitudes toward Service

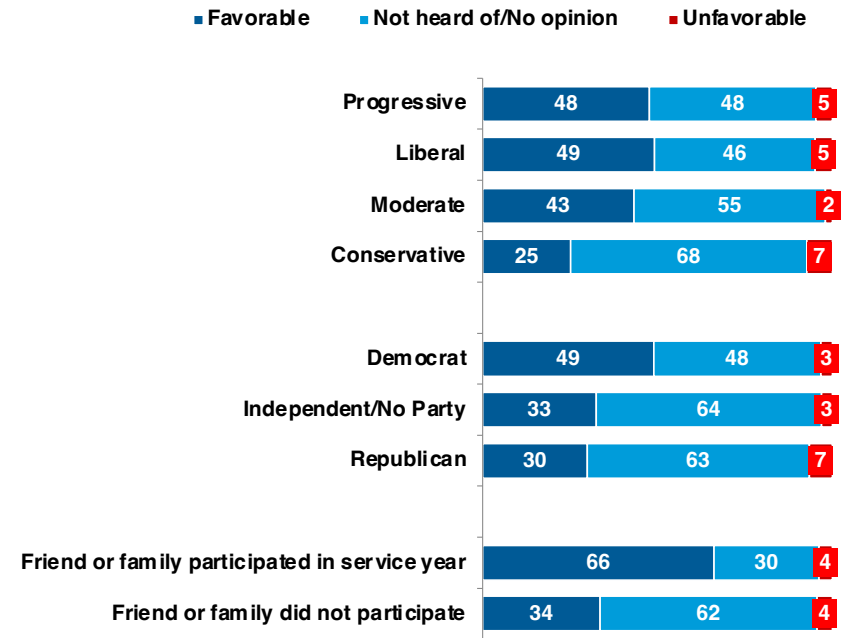
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS & SCIENCES

Those who have an opinion of AmeriCorps are overwhelmingly positive



⁺Results shown among California adults

americanacad americanacad



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

**small sample size*

AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES

In focus groups, the phrase “paid national service” gets mixed reactions

Paid National Service

- Asked about the term, some think of **military service or compulsory service**.
- Many have negative reactions to the phrase “**paid national service**”:
 - Some liberal parents associate it negatively with **nationalism**.
 - Conservatives link “national” to the **federal government, handouts, and government employees**.

“I don’t know if the Peace Corps is the same thing. I was considering it. I think it’s a great opportunity for people who want to travel and help people, especially if you don’t have so much money to travel.”

—Non-College Young Adult, Black Female

“National service made me think of something the government has sponsored provided by our tax dollars, but in my experience the government never does anything efficiently.”

—Conservative Parent

AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES

Focus group participants say they would prefer a label for service that emphasizes community

Community

- After seeing examples of service programs, several volunteer that a **name including “community”** would be better.
- Participants say it is local **communities who benefit**.
- Some say the focus should be on **individuals who need help**—not on the nation.

“It is about community, not about the nation. ‘Community service’ is saying I care about people in general. Community can be anyone.” —Liberal White Mother

Bottom-up Framing

- Compared to describing service as individuals participating in a large national project, a bottom-up description can have greater effect:

Individuals and communities coming together across the country.

AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES

Community-focused description of service rates better than national focus

Descriptions of Service
(Percent saying makes them much more positive)

	CA <25	US
COMMUNITY EMPHASIS ⁺ The core of service year programs is people working at the local level, improving lives and neighborhoods, and strengthening communities. Together, programs across the country add up to better lives and opportunities for the individuals involved and stronger futures for our communities and our country.	31	36
NATIONAL EMPHASIS ⁺ Service year programs are part of a national effort to increase civic engagement, build stronger connections and understanding between people, and in this way, help strengthen our democracy.	24	33

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS & SCIENCES

➤ Among labels tested, “**civilian community service**” rates highest among most target groups.

<i>Net favorable⁺</i>	Civilian community service [^]	Civilian service [^]	National service	A service year
Under 25	33	16	27	14
25-29*	31	29	28	15
Female	27	25	25	13
Male	32	32	23	15
White	26	26	20	13
Latino	31	26	27	15
Asian	33	33	32	15
Black*	30	48	25	16
Mixed/Other*	22	39	23	9
Progressive	29	36	23	18
Liberal	34	33	31	16
Moderate	34	30	29	17
Conservative	22	19	14	4
Young with Degree/Plan to Earn*	38	19	30	14
Career-Age Low Income*	30	27	28	12
Career-Age POC	31	32	27	14
Young Progressive*	32	25	27	15
Mod/Cons Women of Color	36	25	31	18
Advocate, Familiar Dem	38	38	30	24
Advocate, Unfamiliar Dem	30	32	29	16
Advocate, Latino/Female Rep	25	15	16	6
Advocate, Non-Cons Ind	30	31	25	17

Detail on the identification of target groups is included in an appendix.

+asked of half the sample
*small sample size

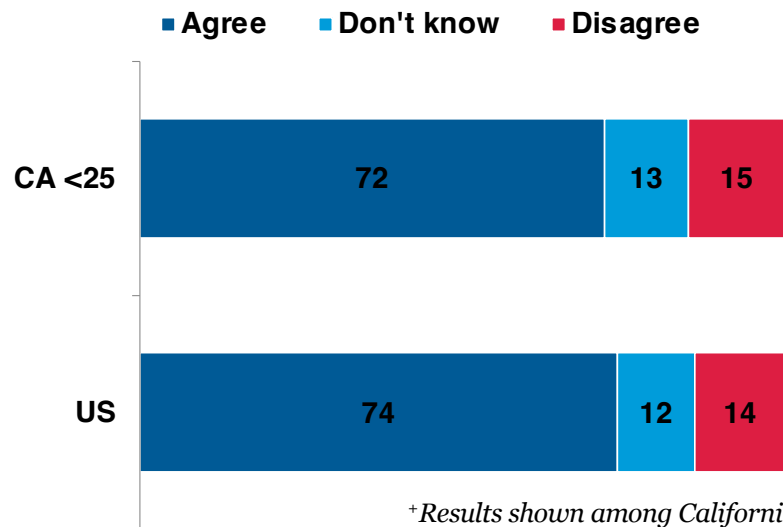
35+ 30+ 25+

+Results shown among California adults

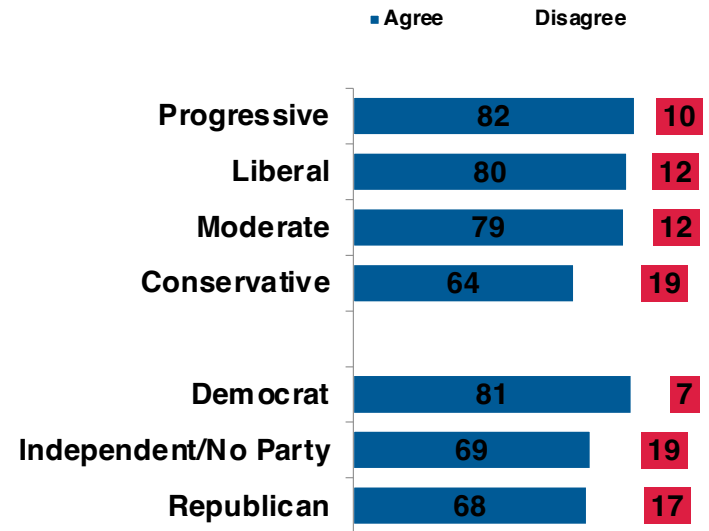
AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES

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 California adults



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

Question for consideration

- **How can this insight help you in tailoring your recruitment messaging such that it resonates with your target audiences?**

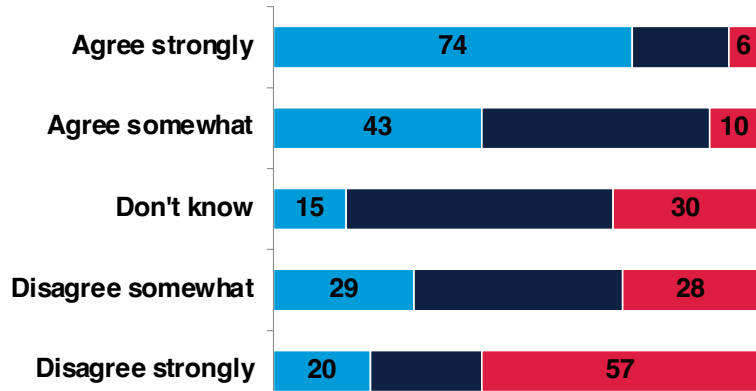
AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES

Those agreeing that more participation would be good for the country are far more likely to recommend service, but not necessarily more likely to consider it

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

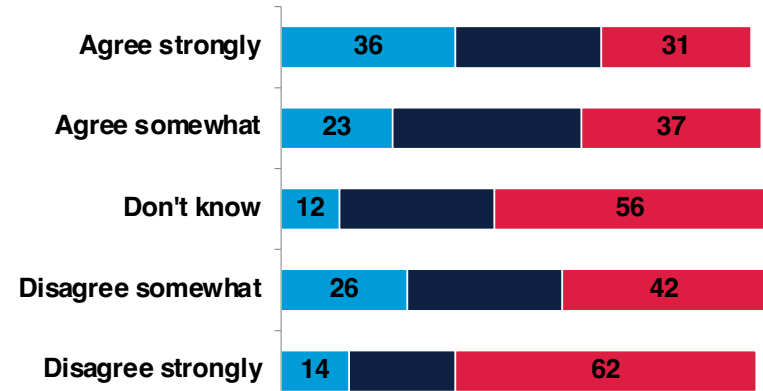
***Likelihood to Recommend
(after messages)***

■ Probably (10 to 6) ■ Unsure (5 to 1, DK) ■ Definitely Not (0)



***Likelihood to Consider
(after messages)***

■ Probably (10 to 6) ■ Unsure (5 to 1, DK) ■ Definitely Not (0)

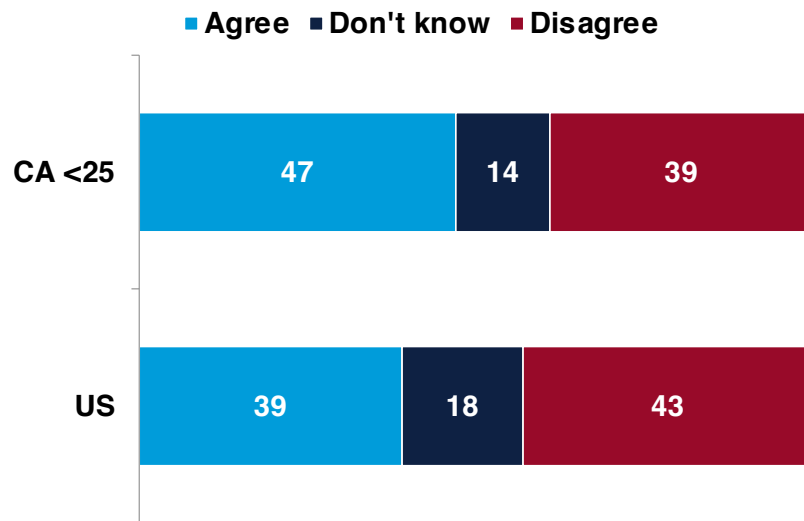


⁺Results shown among California adults

AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES

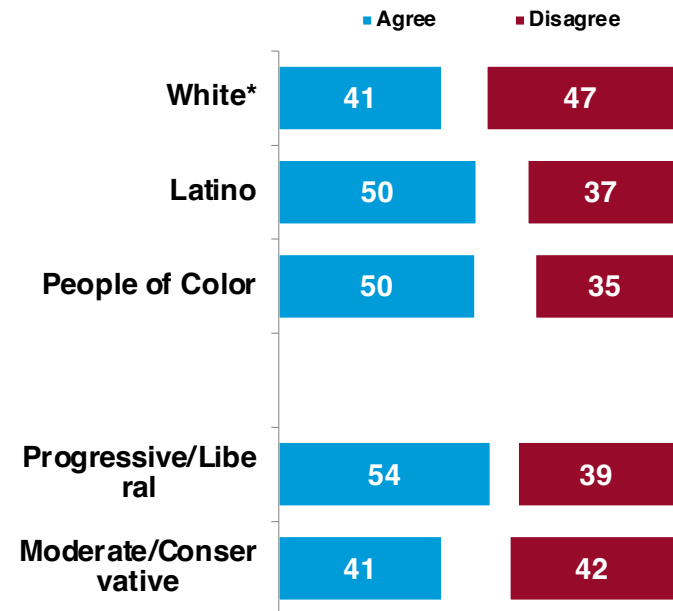
44% expect a service year would help with their own goals

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



americanacad americanacad

CA age 18 to 24



**small sample size*

Question for consideration

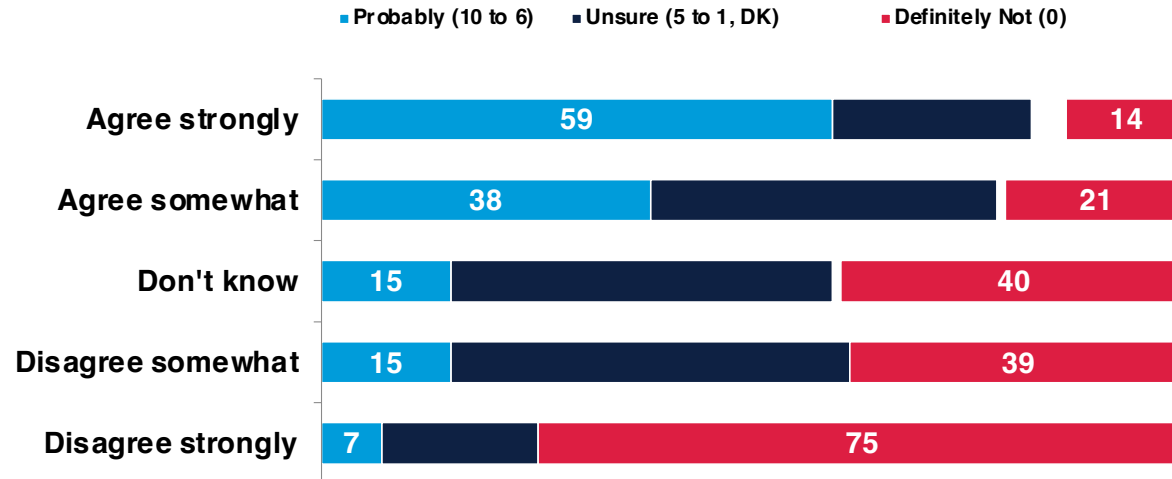
- **In your recruitment messaging, how can you highlight the opportunities available for service year participants to advance their own learning and goals?**

AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES

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)*



⁺Results shown among California adults

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS & SCIENCES



Summary: Attitudes toward Service

- Focusing on the **community aspects of service** can be more effective than emphasis on a national program.
- Most agree **service is positive for the country**, and this belief increases likelihood to recommend service (but not likelihood to participate).
- Belief that **service can help with one's own goals** is closely related to considering service.

AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES



Reasons to Participate

AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES

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 |
|--|--|

AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES

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

Language and Concept Tests

% saying "very good reason"		CA <25	US
✓	Giving back to your community	62	75
	Giving back to the country	49	61
✓	Helping your community	64	70
	Helping communities other than your own	58	58
✓	Money for college	58	58
	Education awards	36	53
=	Professional skills	47	64
=	Job skills	52	65

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS & SCIENCES

Among 34 reasons to serve tested, top ratings go to helping people and communities, health insurance, money for college, technical training and job certifications

(% saying very good reason)

Top Reasons

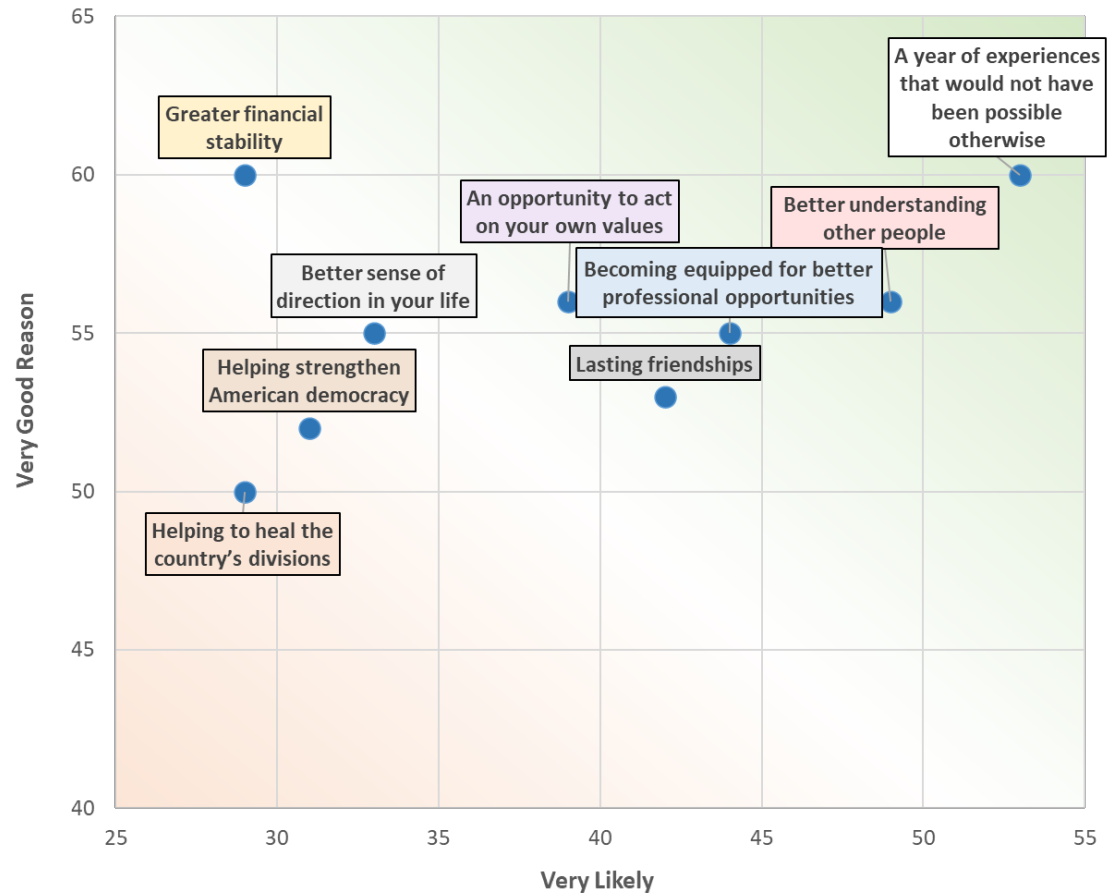
	CA <25
Helping people	65
Helping your community+	64
Giving back to your community+	62
Health insurance	58
Money for college+	58
Technical training and job certifications	58
Helping communities other than your own+	58
Greater financial stability+	57
Working on a cause you choose	56

Additional Reasons

	CA <25
A living stipend+	53
Better sense of direction in your life+	52
An opportunity to act on your own values+	51
Lasting friendships+	44
Seeing new places	44
Building a personal network+	42
Building a professional network+	41
Helping strengthen American democracy+	40
Education awards+	36
Meeting people similar to you+	36
Loan deferment	35

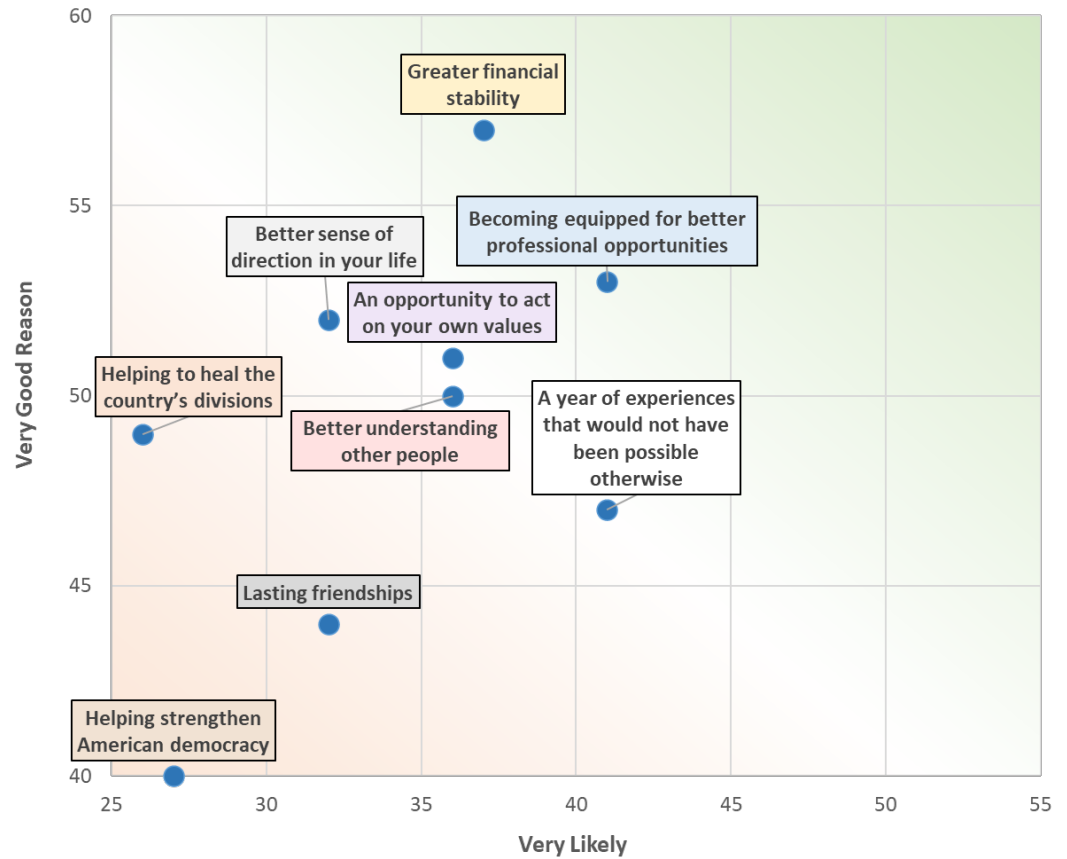
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS & SCIENCES

Aspirational outcomes: Adults Nationwide



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS & SCIENCES

Aspirational outcomes: Californians 18 to 24



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS & SCIENCES



Summary: Reasons to Participate

- Service is seen as having the potential to **benefit individuals who participate** and the **communities they work in**.
- **Top reasons to participate** include helping people and communities, health insurance, money for college, technical training and job certifications.
- **Money for college** is a strong incentive to participate, and it is important to communicate the concept clearly.
- Greater **financial stability** could be a strong motivation, but many don't believe this is a likely outcome.

AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES



Messages

AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES

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

Message Learnings 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.”*
—College Young Adult
 - *“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.”*
—College Young Adult

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS & SCIENCES

The top-rated messages address money for college, cost of living challenges, and skills

% saying "very motivating"

Positive Statements

COLLEGE. Aaron is working toward his bachelor's degree and wants to graduate with as little debt as possible. He joined his campus's service year program, and he will complete 450 hours of service tutoring and assisting with after school programs. For doing this work, Aaron will earn \$10,000 towards his college education.

CA <25	US
50	58
47	47
44	51

CHALLENGES. The cost of housing, education, and even basic necessities are making it harder to build the foundation for a family and a successful life. In a single year, a service program can provide life skills, career skills, and valuable connections that make a real difference in the ability to make a good living and get ahead.

SKILLS. A service year is an opportunity to build career skills that will give you an advantage. This can include technical experience and career-specific training and certifications, along with the leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, and critical-thinking skills that employers look for. A service year is a valuable addition to your resume, and it will give you connections to others who can help develop your career.

College testimonial is stronger with progressives and liberals, while skills and challenges messages are stronger with moderates and conservatives.

50+ 45+ 40+

All asked of half the sample

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS & SCIENCES



Summary: Messages

- Young adults want a full picture of **what their experience would look like** and what **its outcomes** would be. They also want to know service would be a good use of their time.
- **Top-rated messages** include a testimonial about earning funds for college and statement about cost of living challenges and skills.

AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES



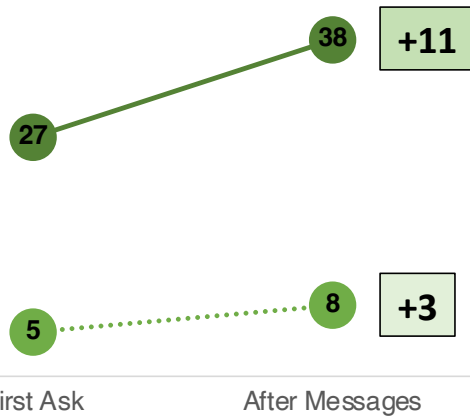
Opinion after Messages

Likelihood of considering a service year increases after messages

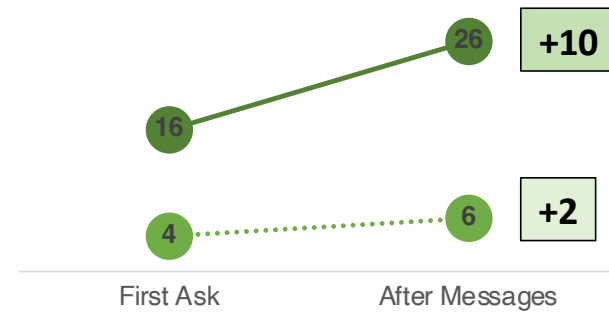
Likelihood to Consider Service Year for Yourself

CALIFORNIA < 25

- Extremely likely (10)
- Probably (6 to 10)



NATIONAL



AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES

**Likelihood to Consider Service Year for Yourself
(California 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

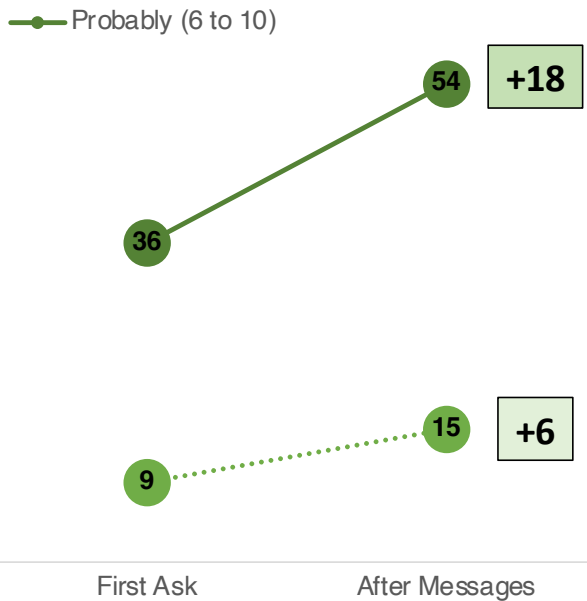
**small sample size*

AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES

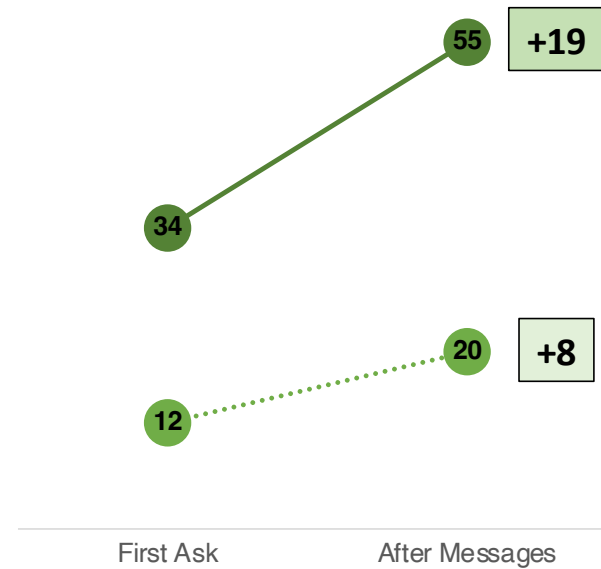
Likelihood of recommending a service year increases after messages

Likelihood to Recommend a Service Year

CALIFORNIA < 25



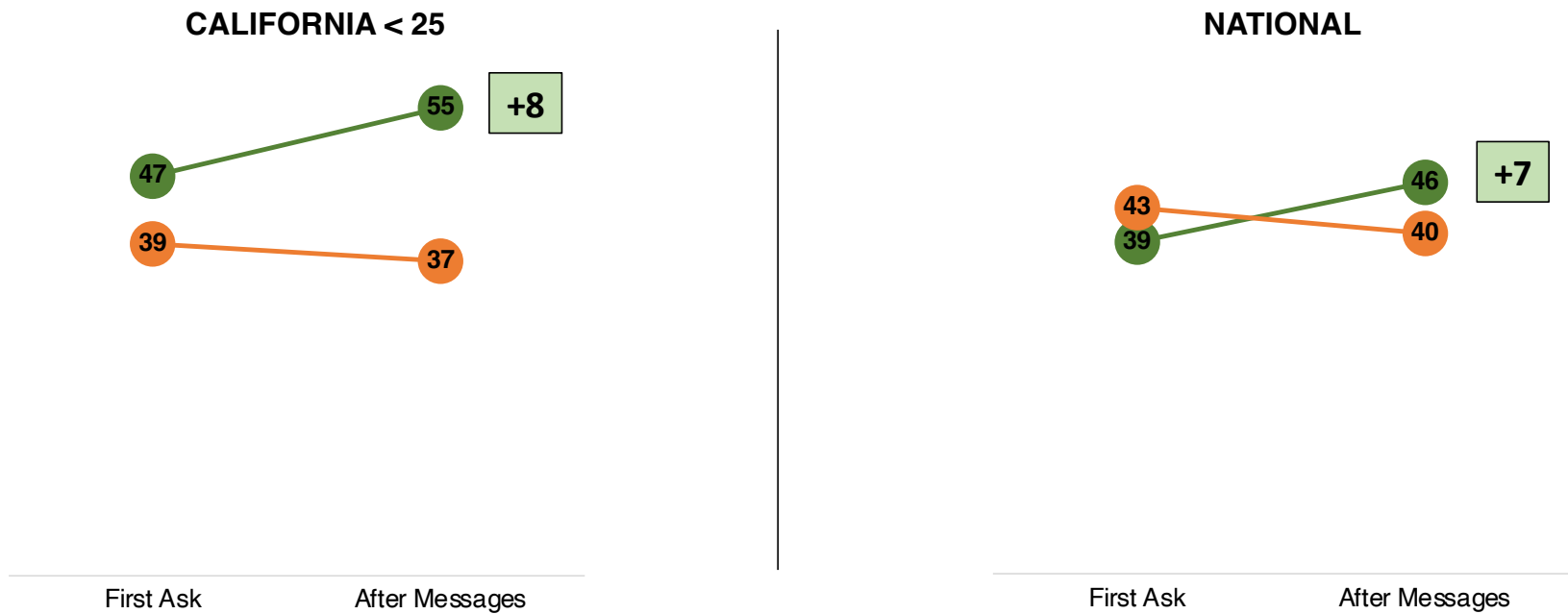
NATIONAL



AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES

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

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



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS & SCIENCES

- Agreement that service can help with one's goals increases most among those with **household incomes under \$75K** and those **planning to earn a degree.**

Participating in a service year could help me achieve my own goals (California 18 to 24)

% saying "agree"	First Ask	After Messages	Change
All CA 18 to 24	47	55	+8
Prog/Lib	54	62	+9
Mod/Cons	41	48	+6
Under \$75K	48	62	+14
\$75K+	47	51	+5
Not College Graduate	47	55	+8
College Graduate	46	51	+5
Plan to earn degree	51	62	+11
City	48	53	+5
Suburban	43	53	+10
Town/Rural	50	58	+8

**small sample size*

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS & SCIENCES

Profiles of target audiences

- Target groups were identified using responses to questions about the likelihood to consider service and likelihood to recommend service, along with change in opinion after hearing positive messages.
- Target groups were estimated among California adults because of the large sample size available.

Most Interested in Service Before Messages

Young (18 to 29) with Degree or Planning to Earn One

Career-Age (30 to 64) Low Income

Career-Age (30 to 64) People of Color

Biggest Increase in Interest After Messages

Young (18 to 29) Progressive

Moderate/Conservative Women of Color, Not High Income (less than \$150K)

Most Likely to be an Advocate

Familiar Democrat

Unfamiliar Democrat

Latino or Female Republican

Non-Conservative Independent

AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES



Summary: Opinion after Messages

- Across groups, **messages are effective** at increasing the likelihood to consider a service year and the likelihood to recommend one.
- **Young progressives** and **moderate/conservative women of color** are most likely to increase in likelihood to participate.

AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES



Recommendations

AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES

Research demonstrates the ability to move opinion on service

- **Positive messages about service are effective** at increasing likelihood to participate across groups.
- Messages tested in this survey are most effective among **young progressives** and **moderate/conservative women of color**.

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. Move **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”)

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS & SCIENCES



David Binder Research



 americanacad

www.amacad.org/OurCommonPurpose

 americanacad

Discussion Questions

- **What resonated with you in the data findings?**
- **What surprised you about the data findings?**
- **How do these data findings and recommendations connect to your recruitment efforts?**