Across the Aisle: 2023 Nationwide Voter & Parent Education Survey Results Summary

About Across the Aisle

Now in its third year, *Across the Aisle* (formerly The Covid Constituency) was developed in partnership with The Honorable Bob Wise (Governor, 2001 – 2005, and U.S. House of Representatives, 1983 – 2001, West Virginia). Across the Aisle seeks to build on the unprecedented political will for educational innovation that emerged in the shadow of the pandemic and connects public needs to policymakers by collecting firsthand experiences, perceptions, and priorities from the public – ultimately translating them into actionable, nonpartisan policies that will fundamentally change education for the better.

As part of this work, The Hunt Institute partners annually with national public opinion and political strategy research firm Lake Research Partners to conduct a nationwide survey of voters and parents to learn about their priorities and concerns in education.

In the following slides, please find summary findings from our 2023 survey. The full survey findings, including further disaggregated data, additional research, information on sample sizes, etc. can be found below.
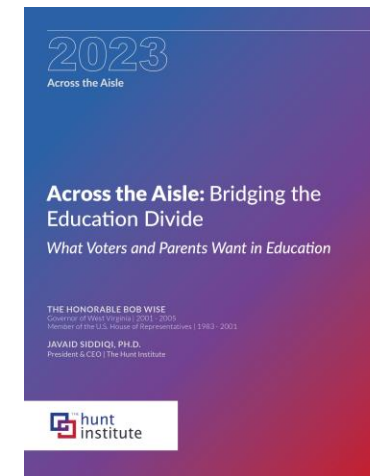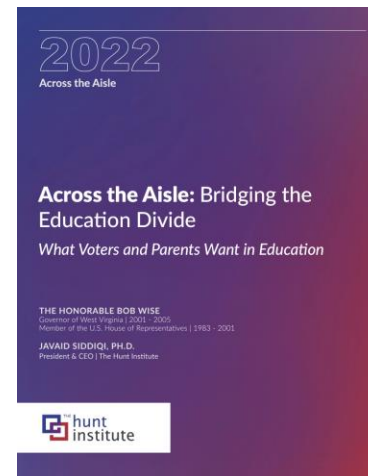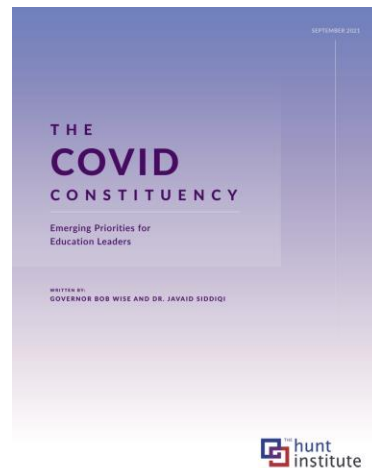
Research Methodology

Quantitative – Online Survey

Lake Research Partners designed and administered a nationwide online survey between July 18-25, 2023. The survey reached a total of **1,300 likely 2024 voters**, which includes a base sample of **800 likely voters and oversamples of 100 African American likely voters, 100 Asian American Pacific Islander likely voters, 100 Latino/a likely voters, 100 Native American likely voters, and 100 likely voters who are parents of school-aged children.**

Survey respondents were drawn from online panels and screened to be likely 2024 voters. To ensure the sample reflects attributes of the actual population, the base sample of likely voters was weighted slightly by region, gender within region, age, gender within age, race, gender within race, party identification, education, and age within race to reflect attributes of the actual population; the African American sample was weighted slightly by education; the Latino/a sample was weighted slightly by region and education; the Asian American Pacific Islander sample was weighted slightly by region, age, and education; the Native American/Indigenous sample was weighted slightly by gender, region, education, and party identification; and the parent of school-age children sample was weighted slightly by gender, region, gender within region, age, education, race, and party identification. All oversamples were weighted down into the base to reflect their actual proportion of likely 2024 voters nationwide.

Because the sample is based on those who initially self-selected for participation in the panel rather than a probability sample, no estimates of sampling error can be calculated. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to multiple sources of error, including, but not limited to, sampling error, coverage error, and measurement error. If this poll were conducted among a probability sample, then the margin of error would be +/- 2.7 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence interval; the margin of error would be higher among subgroups.

Note: Due to rounding, some numbers in the report will not always add to 100%.

Throughout the report, unless otherwise indicated, "parents" in this report are parents or guardians of a child/children under the age of 22. 2024 battleground voters are defined as those living in the following states: Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Florida, Iowa, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, or Wisconsin.

Core Values for Education

What Do Voters Want?

Despite growing rhetoric around division in education, our 2023 survey found significant alignment – across race/ethnicity, gender, and political affiliation, around what voters value and want in education. As such, the below proposals should be viewed not merely as "wants," but rather as "**core values**" that are shared by education stakeholders nationally.

Proposal	Favor – Not so Strongly	Favor - Strongly
Increase job skills and workforce training opportunities in high school, like apprenticeships and internship opportunities*	22%	72%
Teaching critical skills for the workplace in schools, such as problem-solving, communication, teamwork, and professional etiquette*	21%	68%
Train educators and other school personnel to identify warning signs and intervention techniques related to mental health*	22%	66%
Provide all students with education about the risks of being online and how to stay safe	26%	64%
Implement evidence-based literacy programs in classrooms to improve student reading levels*	24%	62%
Ensure equitable access to high quality early childhood and pre-K education*	27%	62%
Train school safety officers to interact in a school environment, including anti-bias training, disability awareness, and cultural awareness training*	27%	61%
Increasing teacher salaries to be more competitive with industries that require a similar level of education and skillset*	26%	60%
Invest in strategies and programs to hire more teachers in hard-to-staff subject areas and regions, like rural areas	30%	60%

Favor - Strongly   Favor – Not so Strongly

*Split sampled

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What are Voters Biggest Priorities?

Voters view many issues as very important for public officials and education leaders to address – but tend to prefer further investments and supports for educators and students over divisive "hot topics," such as teaching about gender and sexuality, book bans, and curriculum censorship.
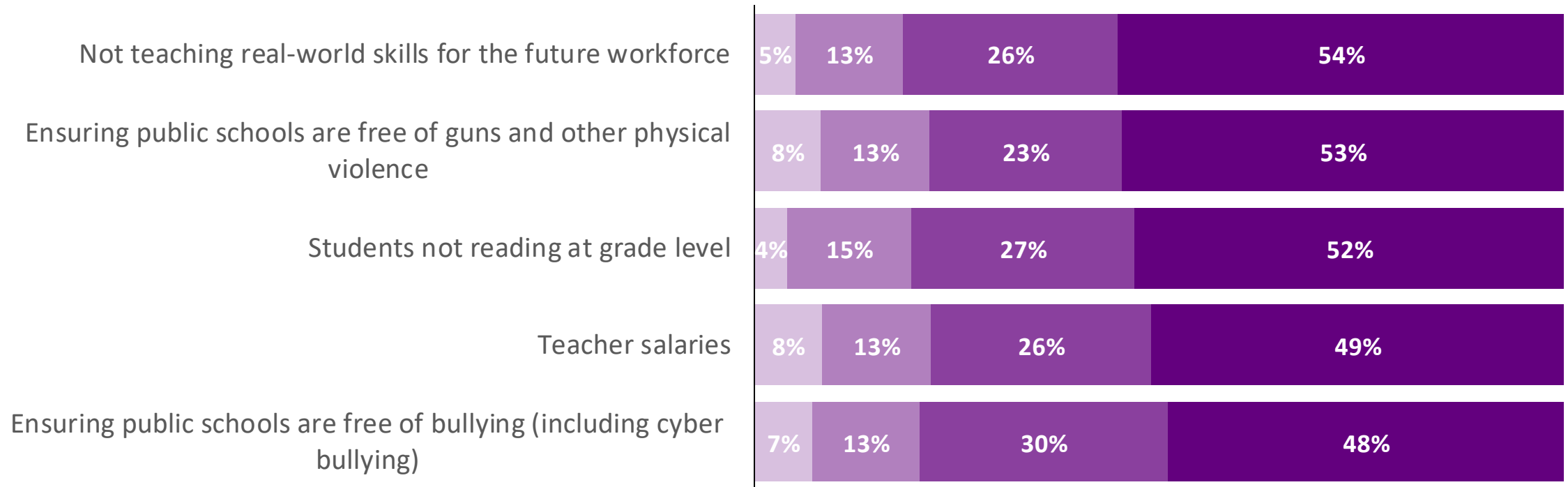
Issue	A Little Important / Somewhat Important		Very Important
Hiring quality teachers	6%	13%	80%
Ensuring public schools are free of guns and other physical violence	6%	13%	79%
Ensuring students are reading at their grade level	5%	18%	73%
Providing support and resources for children with disabilities	7%	20%	72%
Ensuring public schools are free of bullying (including cyber bullying)	9%	18%	71%
Teaching real-world skills for the future workforce	6%	21%	70%
Training and support for teachers and other educators in the classroom	7%	23%	66%
Access to mental health and other support services for all students	7%	24%	66%
Book banning and curriculum censorship	15% / 15%	27%	24%
Teaching about gender and sexuality in the classroom	18% / 18%	24%	26%

Legend:
- Very Important
- Somewhat Important
- A Little Important
- Not Important at All

What Do Voters See as the Biggest Problems Facing Education Today?

Voters perceive that **teaching real-world skills for the future of the workforce, ensuring public schools are free of guns and other physical violence, teacher salaries, ensuring students are reading at grade level,** and **ensuring public schools are free of bullying (including cyberbullying**) are very big problems in public education today.

Problem	Not a problem at all	A little bit of a problem	Somewhat of a problem	Very Big Problem
Not teaching real-world skills for the future workforce	5%	13%	26%	54%
Ensuring public schools are free of guns and other physical violence	8%	13%	23%	53%
Students not reading at grade level	4%	15%	27%	52%
Teacher salaries	8%	13%	26%	49%
Ensuring public schools are free of bullying (including cyber bullying)	7%	13%	30%	48%

Legend:
- Very Big Problem
- Somewhat of a problem
- A little bit of a problem
- Not a problem at all

Top "Very Important" Issues in Education by Demographic

While there tends to be mutual agreement about top education issues across demographic groups, some variations exist. For Black, Latino/a, and AAPI voters; voters across gender and age; and among Independents and Republicans, **hiring quality teachers** rises to the top as the most important issue. White voters and Democrats view **ensuring schools are free of guns and other physical violence** as very important, although **hiring quality teachers** is a close second. Differences between demographic groups further emphasize the need for targeted interventions, supports, and messaging.

White
- **Ensuring schools are free from violence (81%)**
- Hiring quality teachers (79%)

Black
- **Hiring quality teachers (81%)**
- Hiring staff in schools (77%)
- Ensuring schools are free of violence (73%)
- Ensuring students are reading at grade level (73%)

Latino/a
- **Hiring quality teachers (82%)**
- Ensuring schools are free of bullying (72%)
- Ensuring schools are free from violence (70%)

AAPI
- **Hiring quality teachers (84%)**
- Ensuring schools are free from violence (79%)
- Teacher salaries (61%)

Native/ Indigenous^
- **Ensuring students are reading at grade level (79%)**
- Hiring quality teachers (77%)
- Ensuring schools are free from violence (75%)
- Teaching real-world skills (75%)

Men
- **Hiring quality teachers (74%)**
- Ensuring schools are free of violence (72%)

Women
- **Hiring quality teachers (84%)**
- Ensuring schools are free of violence (84%)
- Providing support for children with disabilities (82%)

<50
- **Hiring quality teachers (70%)**
- Ensuring schools are free of violence (70%)

50+
- **Hiring quality teachers (88%)**
- Ensuring schools are free of violence (87%)
- Ensuring students are reading at their grade level (86%)

Democrat
- **Ensuring schools are free from violence (83%)**
- Hiring quality teachers (79%)

Independent/ Don't know
- **Hiring quality teachers (78%)**
- Ensuring schools are free from violence (77%)
- Ensuring students are reading at grade level (71%)

Republican
- **Hiring quality teachers (81%)**
- Ensuring schools are free from violence (76%)
- Ensuring students are reading at grade level (75%)
- Requiring students to use the bathroom and locker rooms that match their biological sex (67%)

Note: Percentage values indicate the percentage of a demographic who indicated the issue was "very important"

*split sampled
^note small n size

What Resonates With Voters?

Voters were provided various statements about education today and asked to reflect on whether they agreed with those statements – the top three responses further highlight **"core values"** among voters nationwide, with over **90 percent** of voters in agreement.

Total

Schools should teach history and current events accurately so that our students don't have an incomplete understanding compared to other students around the world — 77% — 15% — 92%

Investing in our children is not a political choice, it is a moral choice, it is the right choice, and it is a smart choice — 76% — 16% — 92%

Our public-school teachers need resources in the classroom that allow for personalized learning, up-to-date textbooks, and technology — 73% — 18% — 91%

Strongly agree   Not so strongly agree
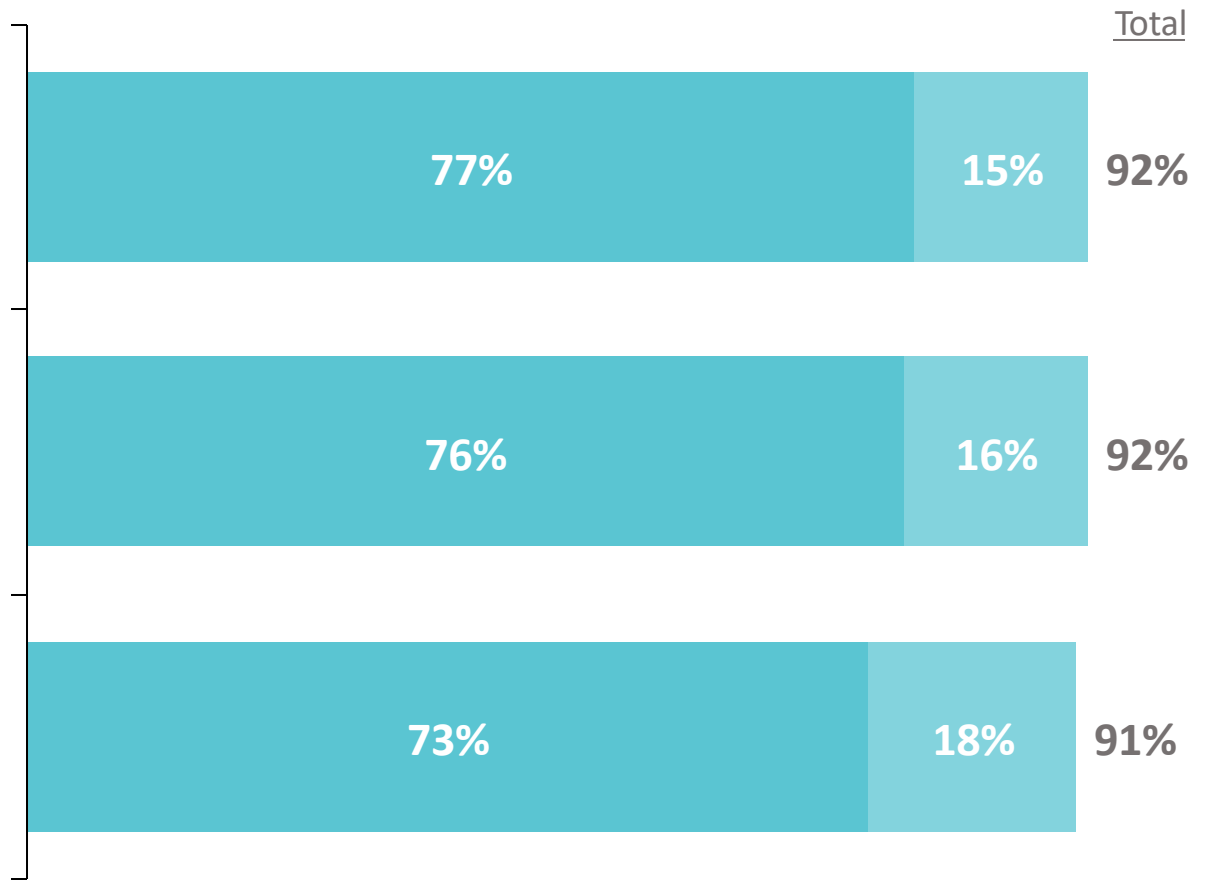
The State of Education

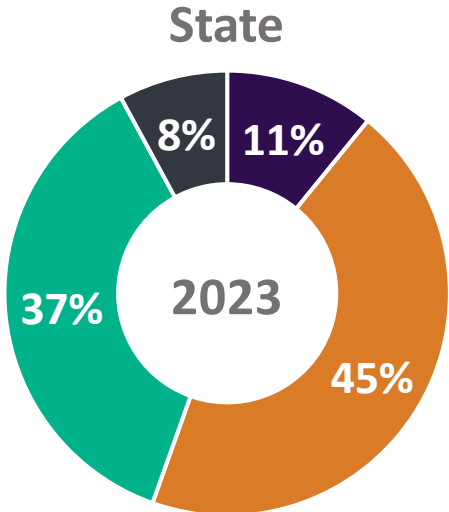# How Do Voters View Education Spending?

A plurality of voters nationwide say their state is **spending too little** on public school funding, down from last year. The Hunt Institute is also one of the few organizations collecting community-level findings. We found that voters are less likely to view their local schools as spending too little, which has remained consistent over time.

While voters are less likely to view their *local* communities as spending too little on education, the prevailing belief nationally continues to be that schools are underfunded.

State — 2023 donut chart: Too much 11%, Too little 45%, Right amount 37%, Not sure 8%

Community — 2023 donut chart: Too much 10%, Too little 38%, Right amount 38%, Not sure 14%

State

	2023	2022	2021
Too much	11%	12%	11%
Too little	45%	52%	45%
Right Amount	37%	26%	31%
Not sure	8%	10%	12%

Legend:
- Too much
- Too little
- Right amount
- Not sure

Community
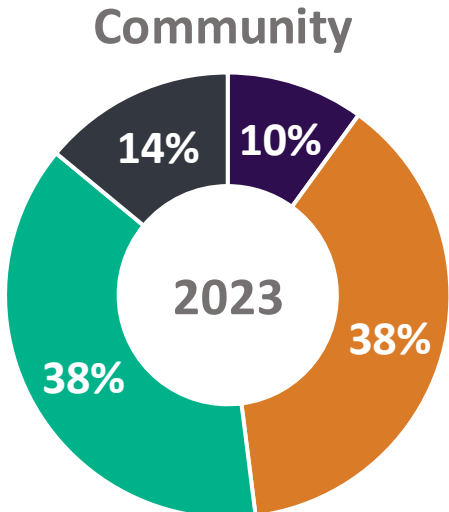
	2023	2022	2021
Too much	10%	15%	10%
Too little	38%	40%	40%
Right Amount	38%	29%	37%
Not sure	14%	15%	13%

How Do Voters Feel about Various Education Entities?

Very few voters say that any particular entity is doing an excellent job when it comes to education today. Two-thirds believe that **teachers** and **4-year colleges** in their state are doing a good job overall, while a majority of voters believe that **elected officials**, **K-12 public schools nationwide**, and **school board members** are doing just fair/poor. In fact, **more than 1 in 5** say that elected officials and school board members are doing a poor job, highlighting that voters remain skeptical of the role of elected officials in public education. These findings further highlight that voters tend to feel more positively about their *local* schools and education systems vs. K-12 schools generally and statewide.

Entity	Poor	Just Fair	Good	Excellent
Teachers*	10%	18%	45%	22%
4-year colleges in your state	7%	19%	44%	21%
K-12 public schools in your community	15%	25%	37%	16%
Teachers and other educators*	11%	23%	45%	16%
Vocational and technical schools in your state	6%	22%	43%	15%
2-year colleges in your state	6%	23%	44%	14%
Pre-K schools and programs in your state	9%	28%	35%	14%
K-12 public schools in your state	14%	31%	36%	12%
Elected officials in your state	26%	32%	27%	10%
K-12 public schools nationwide	18%	38%	26%	9%
School board members	23%	30%	27%	9%

Legend: Excellent | Good | Just Fair | Poor

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*Split sampled

How Do Voters Feel about Various Education Entities Over Time?

Voters have become more positive toward educational entities, particularly for **colleges (both two- and four-year) in their state**, **K-12 public schools at the community level, and K-12 public schools in their state**. **Vocational or technical schools, pre-k schools and programs, and K-12 public schools nationwide** have remained consistent since 2021.

	4-year colleges in your state	Vocational or technical schools in your state	2-year colleges in your state	K-12 public schools in your community	Pre-K schools and programs in your state	K-12 public schools in your state	K-12 public schools nationwide
Change	+13%	+2%	+6%	+5%	-	+5%	+1%
2023	65%	58%	58%	53%	49%	48%	36%
2022	52%	56%	52%	48%	N/A	43%	35%
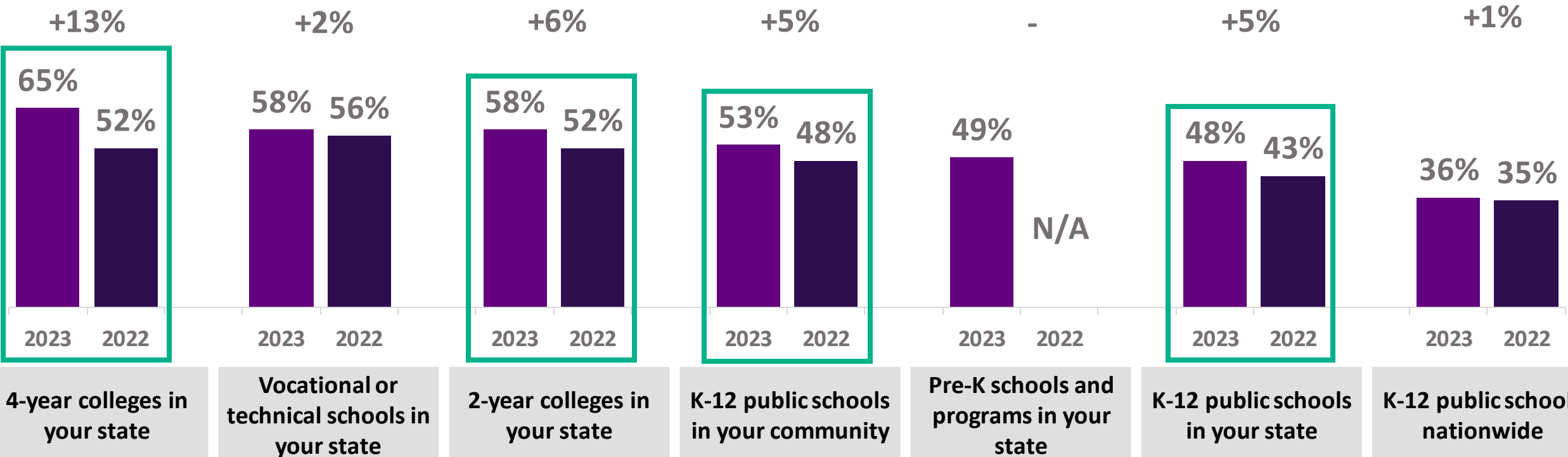
"in your state" was added to answer options in 2022

Percent excellent/good

*Split sampled

Students and Support

What Do Voters Think Would Be Most Helpful for Students?

Afterschool programs and/or summer learning opportunities top the list of things that voters believe would be helpful to students moving forward, followed by additional counseling or social, emotional, and mental health supports; individualized learning plans; and connecting families to community-based support services. A significant number of voters believe that increasing the length of the school day or year, or adding additional days for instruction would *not* be helpful. As such, education leaders are likely to see the greatest support for initiatives that allow families to "opt in" or that take place during the traditional school day. These findings have remained consistent over time.

	Not Helpful at All	Not that Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Very Helpful
Offering afterschool and/or summer learning opportunities	5%		33%	57%
Additional counseling or social, emotional, and mental health support	8%		33%	55%
Individualized learning plans based on each student's needs	7%		34%	54%
Connecting families to community-based support services and resources	8%		36%	52%
Providing an optional additional year of schooling for students who will otherwise age out*	8%	14%	33%	38%
Provide an optional additional year of schooling to help recover pandemic-related learning loss for students who will otherwise age out*	10%	14%	36%	32%
Longer school years to provide more time for instruction*	17%	24%	32%	24%
Additional school days over weekends or school breaks to provide more time for instruction	25%	22%	24%	24%
Longer school days to provide more time for instruction*	27%	25%	24%	20%

Legend:
- Very Helpful
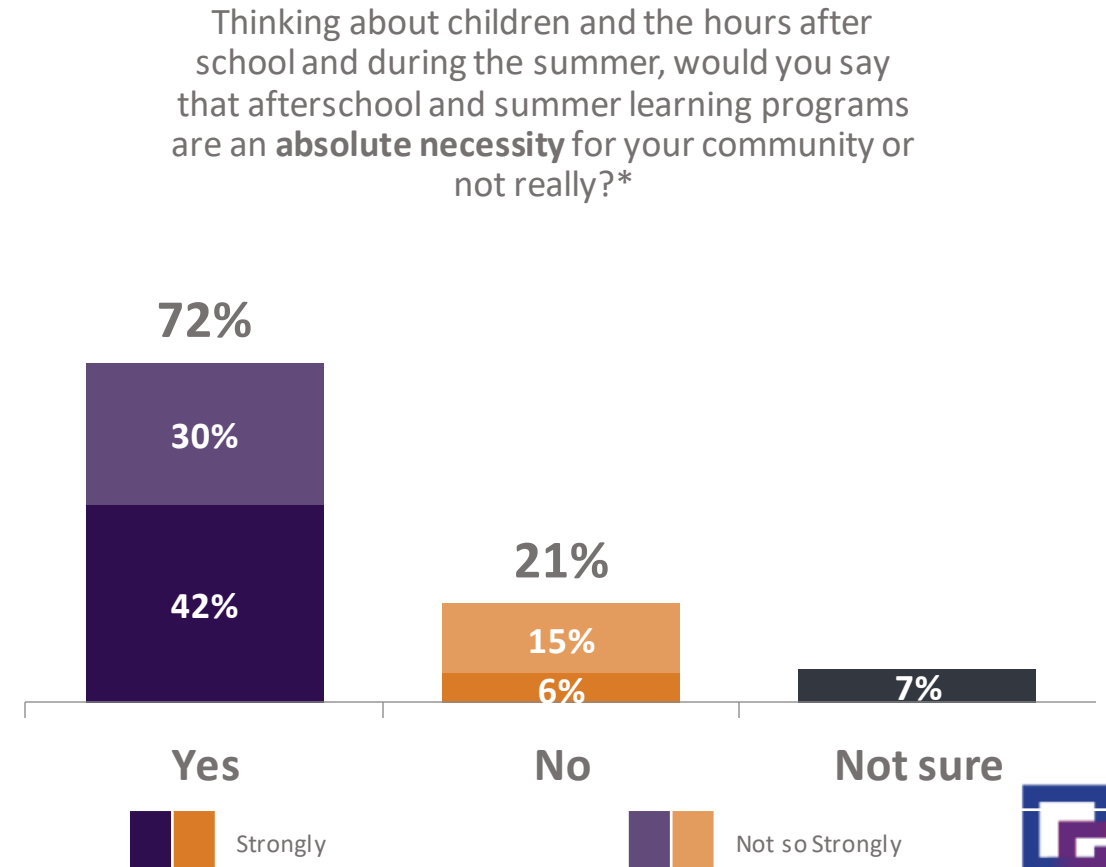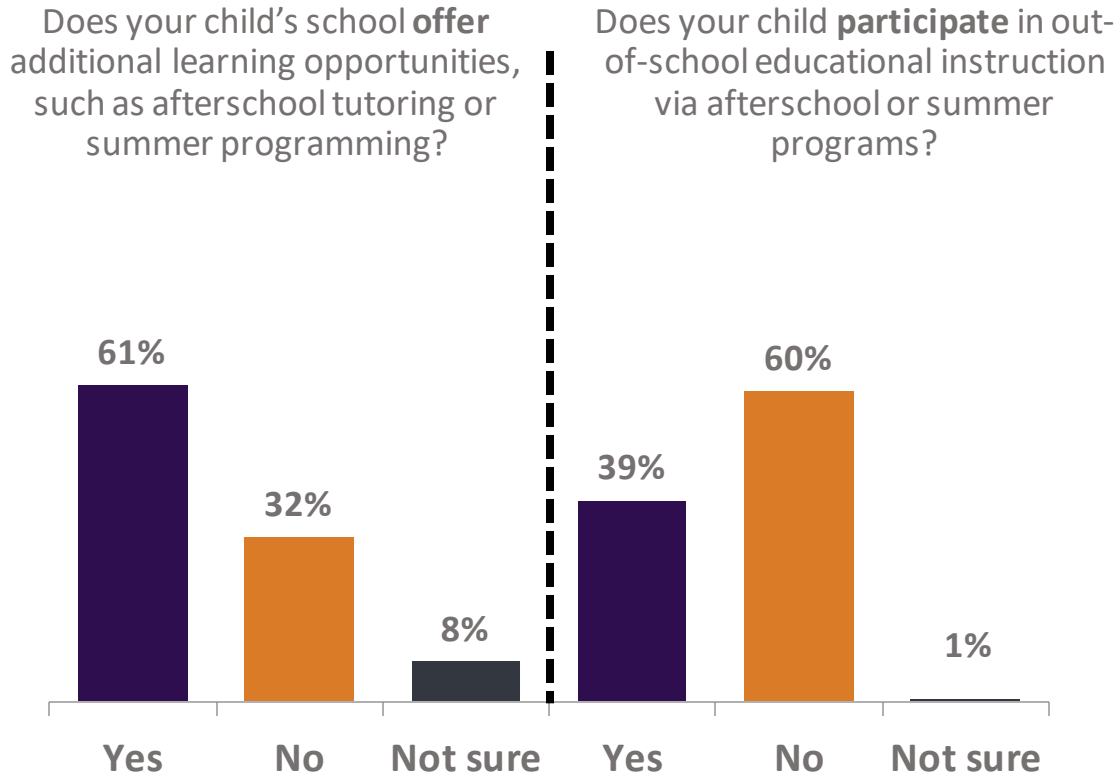- Somewhat Helpful
- Not that Helpful
- Not Helpful at All

*Split sampled

What is the Role of Afterschool Programs?

Interest in afterschool and other out-of-school time programs underlined continues to grow, particularly as states work to recover lost learning time and get students back on track academically. **While more 70 percent of voters** think these programs are an **absolute necessity**, a majority of families aren't participating in afterschool or summer programming.

Does your child's school **offer** additional learning opportunities, such as afterschool tutoring or summer programming?

Yes	No	Not sure
61%	32%	8%

Does your child **participate** in out-of-school educational instruction via afterschool or summer programs?

Yes	No	Not sure
39%	60%	1%

Thinking about children and the hours after school and during the summer, would you say that afterschool and summer learning programs are an **absolute necessity** for your community or not really?*

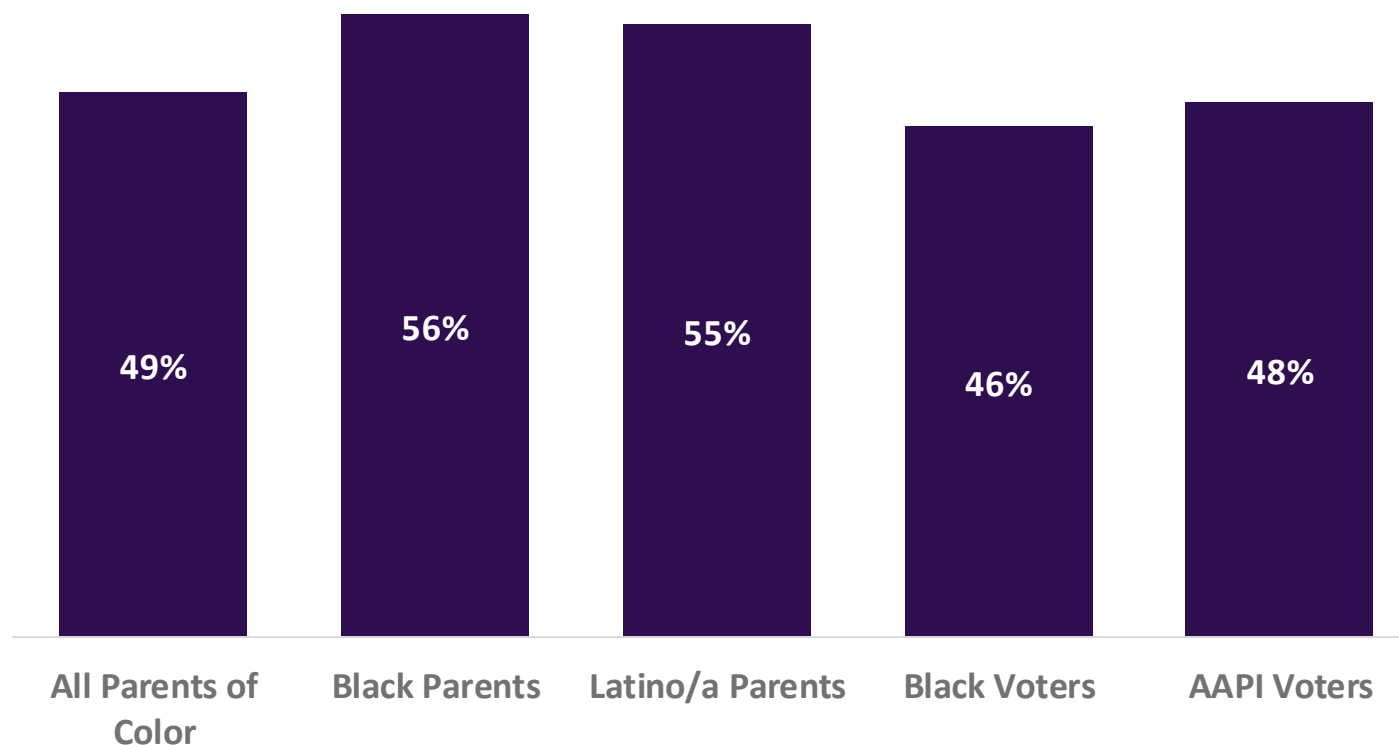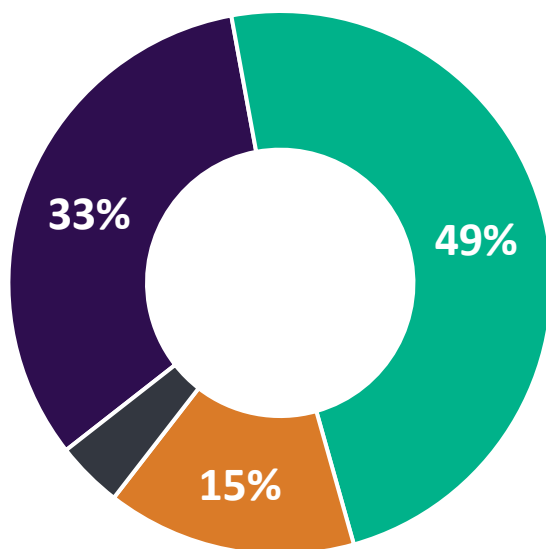|	Yes	No	Not sure
Total	72%	21%	7%
Not so Strongly	30%	15%	
Strongly	42%	6%	

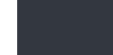Strongly | Not so Strongly

*Split sampled

What is the Role of Standardized Testing?

More than **8 in 10 voters** nationwide see a role for standardized testing in evaluating students' proficiency, but **only a third** say they should play a major factor, possibly opening the door for states to explore alternative methods of evaluating student achievement. Notably, **voters and parents of color** are more likely to say standardized assessments should be a major factor in evaluating student proficiency.

How much of a factor should standardized test scores be in evaluating students' proficiency in different subjects?

33%

49%

15%

49% All Parents of Color

56% Black Parents

55% Latino/a Parents

46% Black Voters

48% AAPI Voters

■ A major factor

■ A minor factor

■ Not a factor at all

■ Not sure

*Split sampled

How Do Voters Feel About Various Levers for School Choice?

Both **vouchers** and **education savings accounts** (ESAs) are popular among voters nationwide, but *intense* support continues to be limited for both, despite [growth](#) in the usage of public funds for private schooling options nationally.

Do you support or oppose states using taxpayer dollars for Education Savings Accounts?*

- Support: 56% (Strongly support 31%, Not so strongly support 24%)
- Oppose: 34% (Strongly oppose 22%, Not so strongly oppose 12%)
- Not sure: 11%
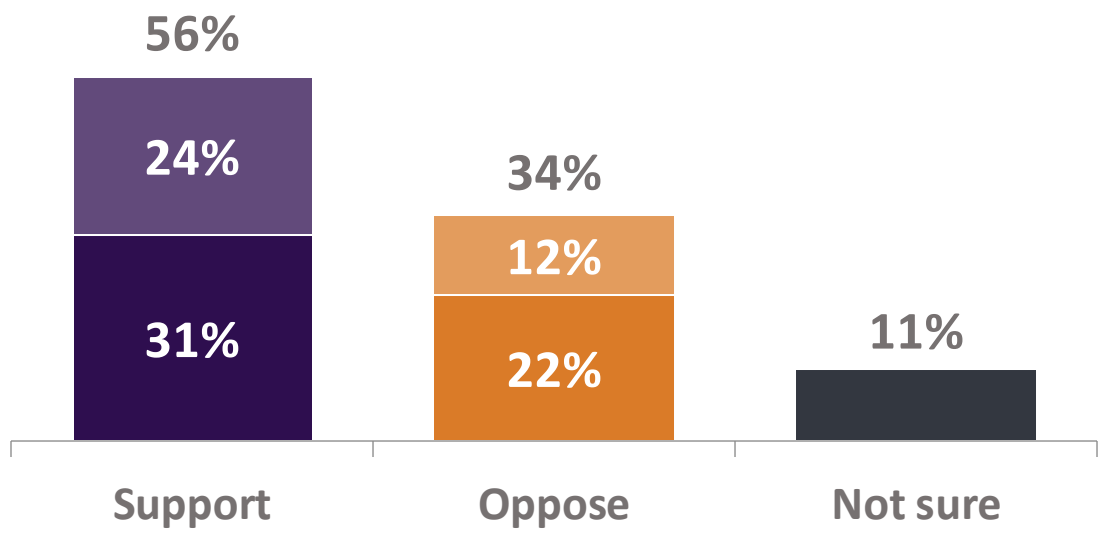
Do you support or oppose states using taxpayer dollars for school vouchers?*

- Support: 49% (Strongly support 29%, Not so strongly support 19%)
- Oppose: 44% (Strongly oppose 28%, Not so strongly oppose 15%)
- Not sure: 8%

Strongly support
Not so strongly support

Strongly oppose
Not so strongly oppose

*Split sampled
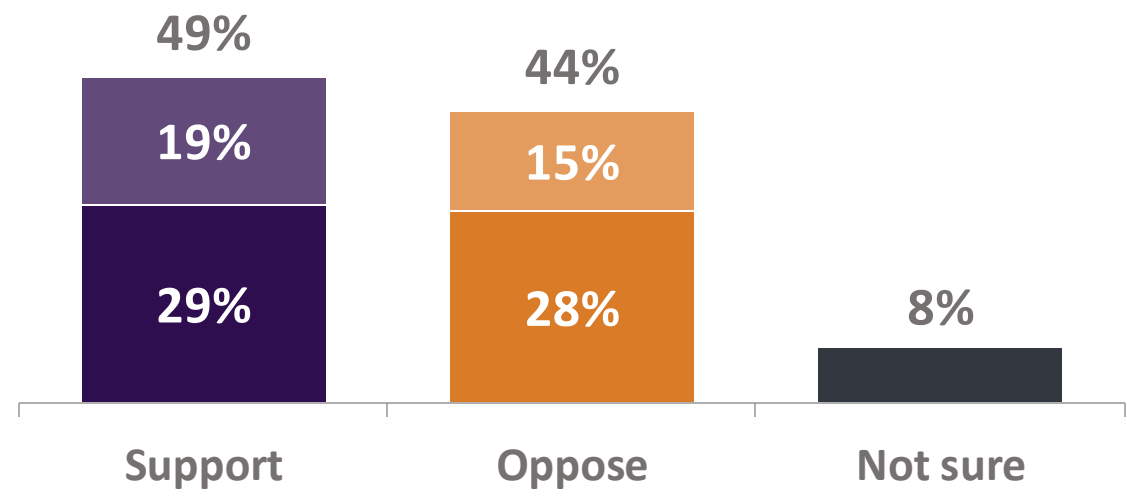
Parental Involvement

How Confident Are Parents in Their Understanding of Their Child(ren)'s Development?

A solid majority of parents across all surveyed demographics are confident in their understanding of how their children are doing both academically and in other aspects of their development, including socially, emotionally, and mentally. **More than 7 in 10** Black and Latino/a parents are **very confident** in their understanding of how their child is doing academically.
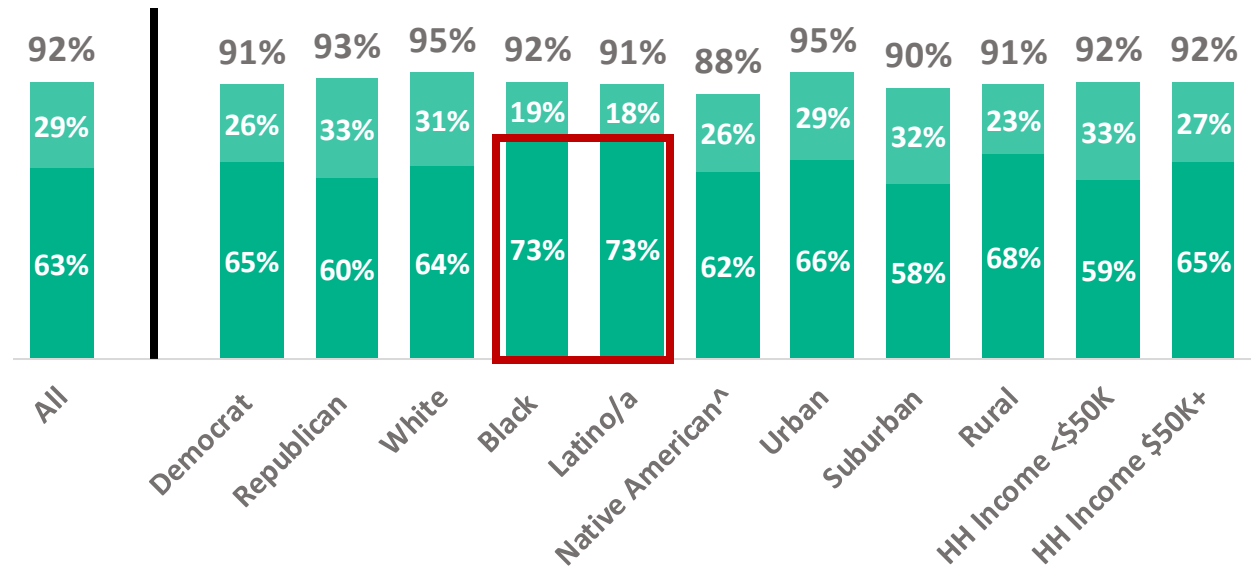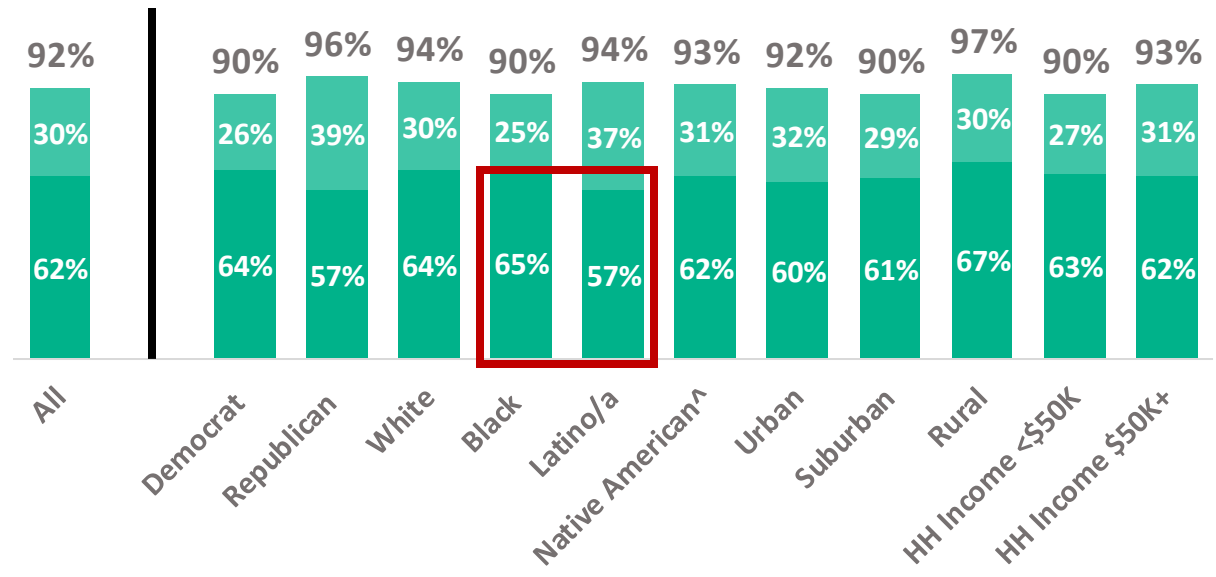
How confident are you that you have a clear understanding of how well your child(ren) are doing academically?*

Group	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Total
All	29%	63%	92%
Democrat	26%	65%	91%
Republican	33%	60%	93%
White	31%	64%	95%
Black	19%	73%	92%
Latino/a	18%	73%	91%
Native American^	26%	62%	88%
Urban	29%	66%	95%
Suburban	32%	58%	90%
Rural	23%	68%	91%
HH Income <$50K	33%	59%	92%
HH Income $50K+	27%	65%	92%

How confident are you that you have a clear understanding of how well your child(ren) are doing in other aspects of their development, like socially, emotionally, and mentally?*

Group	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Total
All	30%	62%	92%
Democrat	26%	64%	90%
Republican	39%	57%	96%
White	30%	64%	94%
Black	25%	65%	90%
Latino/a	37%	57%	94%
Native American^	31%	62%	93%
Urban	32%	60%	92%
Suburban	29%	61%	90%
Rural	30%	67%	97%
HH Income <$50K	27%	63%	90%
HH Income $50K+	31%	62%	93%

Legend: ■ Very Confident ■ Somewhat Confident

*Split sampled; ^note small sample size

Do Voters Feel Parents are Involved in Education?

More than **8 in 10** voters believe that parents *should* be included in their child's education, and about **7 in 10** voters agree that parents *are* included in their child's education and what they are taught. In general, voters feel that parents already have a partnership with teachers – and this feeling has increased since last year (by 11 points).
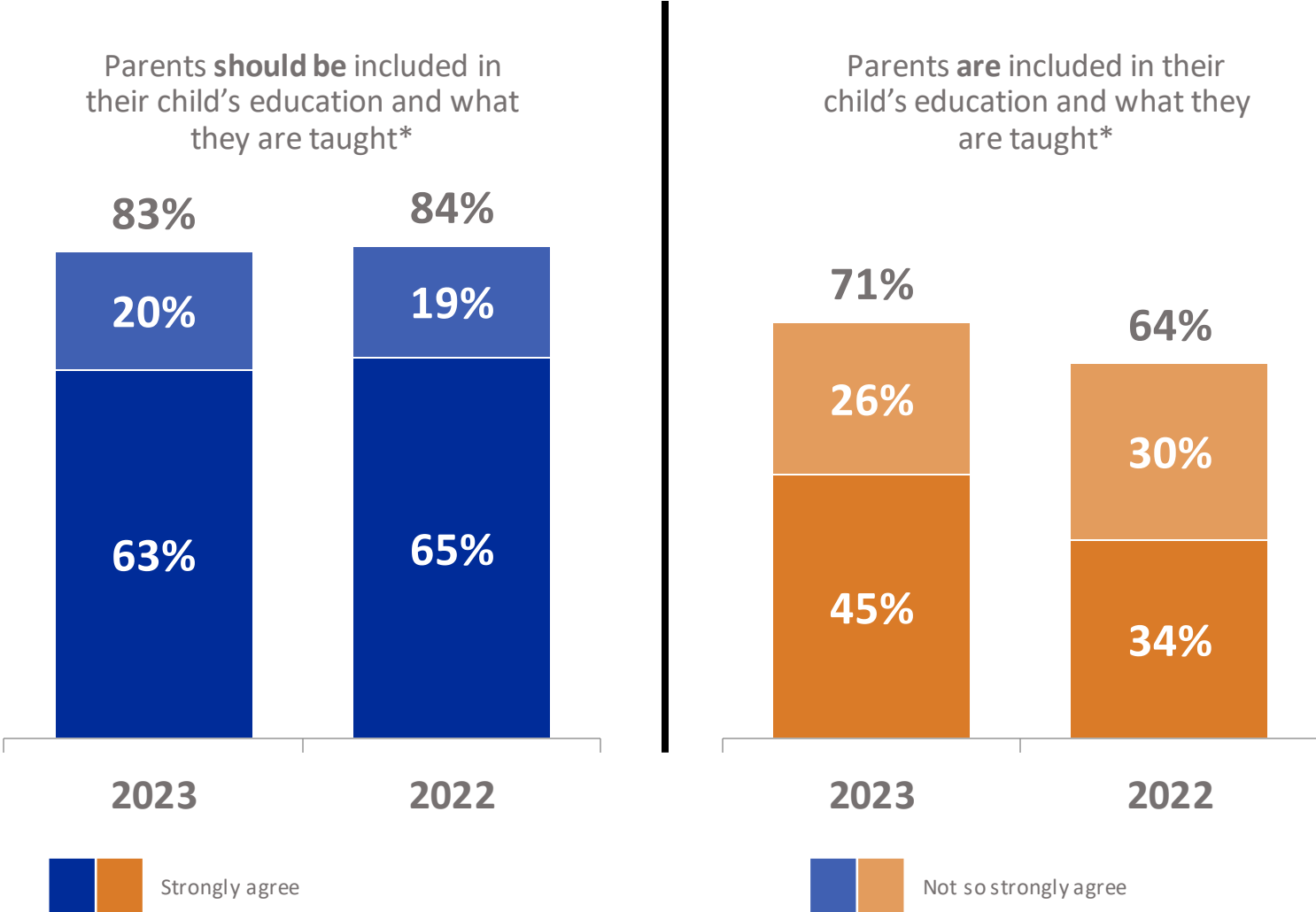
Parents **should be** included in their child's education and what they are taught*

	83%	84%
2023	20% / 63%	
2022		19% / 65%

Parents **are** included in their child's education and what they are taught*

	71%	64%
2023	26% / 45%	
2022		30% / 34%

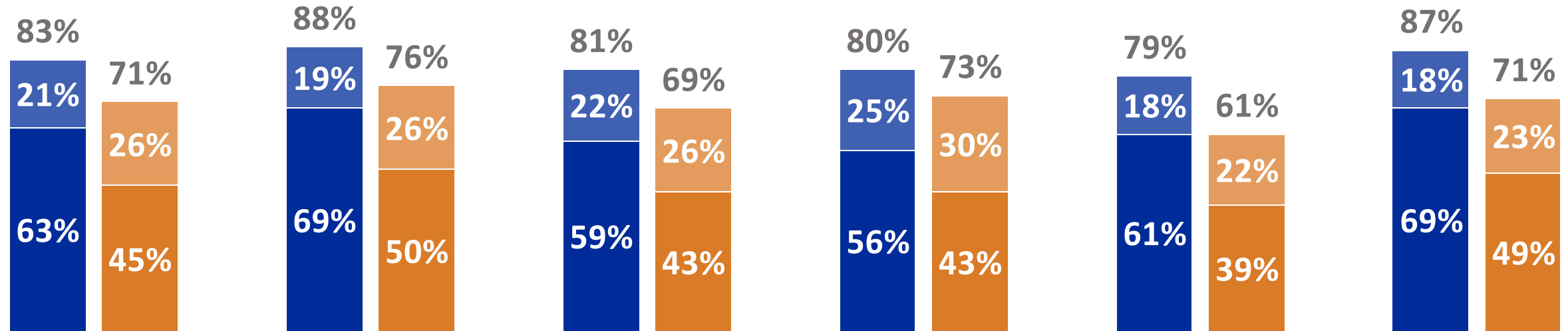Strongly agree

Not so strongly agree

Do Voters Feel Parents are Involved in Education?

More than **8 in 10** voters believe that parents *should* be included in their child's education, and about **7 in 10** voters agree that parents *are* included in their child's education and what they are taught. In general, voters feel that parents already have a partnership with teachers already – and this feeling has increased since last year.

Parents **should be** included in their child's education and what they are taught.*	Parents **are** included in their child's education and what they are taught.*

All Voters
- 83%: 21% / 63%
- 71%: 26% / 45%

Parent/Guardian
- 88%: 19% / 69%
- 76%: 26% / 50%

Non-Parent/Guardian
- 81%: 22% / 59%
- 69%: 26% / 43%

Democrat
- 80%: 25% / 56%
- 73%: 30% / 43%

Independent/Don't Know^
- 79%: 18% / 61%
- 61%: 22% / 39%

Republican
- 87%: 18% / 69%
- 71%: 23% / 49%

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◼◼ Strongly agree   ◼◼ Not so strongly agree

*split sampled
^note small n size

Do Voters Feel Parents are Involved in Education?

Across racial and ethnic lines, Black, AAPI, and Native/Indigenous voters are most likely to believe that parents should be included in their child's education and what they are taught **and** that they are included.

Parents <u>should be</u> included in their child's education and what they are taught.*	Parents <u>are</u> included in their child's education and what they are taught.*

White
- 83%: 21% / 62%
- 70%: 26% / 44%

Black
- 85%: 20% / 65%
- 83%: 27% / 56%

Latino/a
- 83%: 21% / 62%
- 67%: 26% / 41%

AAPI^
- 91%: 28% / 63%
- 70%: 62%

Native/Indigenous^
- 85%: 21% / 64%
- 79%: 29% / 50%

Strongly agree Not so strongly agree

*split sampled
^note small n size

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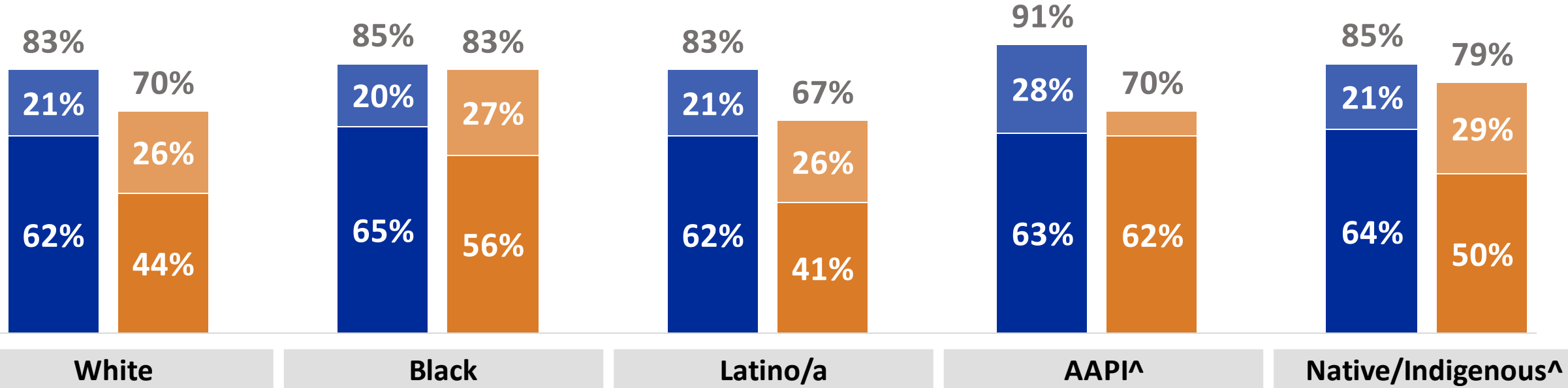
Who Should Have Oversight of Curriculum?

Voters see a major role for **teachers** in determining curriculum, as well as for **parents of school-age children** – highlighting that despite narratives placing these groups at odds with each other, voters see **both groups** as necessary for curriculum oversight. Notably, fewer voters say **school principals** or **local school boards** should have a lot of oversight in curriculum decisions and largely feel that **local and national elected officials** should not play a role.

	Not sure	Not a factor at all	A minor factor	A Major Factor
Teachers	4%	10%	30%	55%
Parents of school-age children	7%	19%	28%	44%
School principals	6%	18%	38%	36%
Local school boards	8%	22%	39%	29%
Taxpayers	17%	24%	30%	25%
Local elected leaders	24%	29%	28%	16%
National elected officials	30%	29%	23%	14%

Legend:
- A Major Factor
- A minor factor
- Not a factor at all
- Not sure

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How do Parents want to Engage in Curriculum Oversight?

When presented with a proposal to ensure parents are involved in setting the curriculum around what their children are taught, **76 percent** favored the idea, including **45 percent** who strongly favored. Drilling deeper, The Hunt Institute found that phrasing such as "review and **provide feedback**" on curriculum drew even stronger responses, with a majority of voters, **54 percent**, favoring such proposals. Fathers of school-age children are especially likely to say they'd be willing to review and provide feedback, with **93 percent** showing agreement.

	Total	All parents of color	White Parents	Black Parents	Latino/a Parents	NA/IA Parents	Fathers	Mothers
Total	78%	87%	91%	92%	90%	82%	93%	88%
Not so strongly agree	25%	27%	26%	31%	28%	15%	33%	21%
Strongly agree	54%	61%	64%	61%	62%	67%	60%	66%
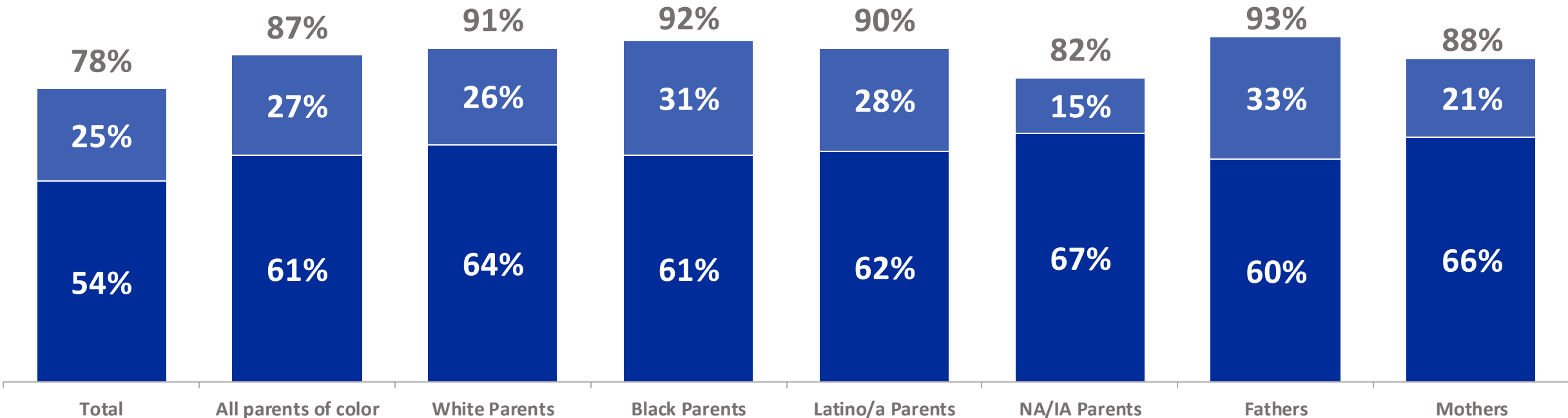
I would be willing to review and provide feedback on student curriculum:
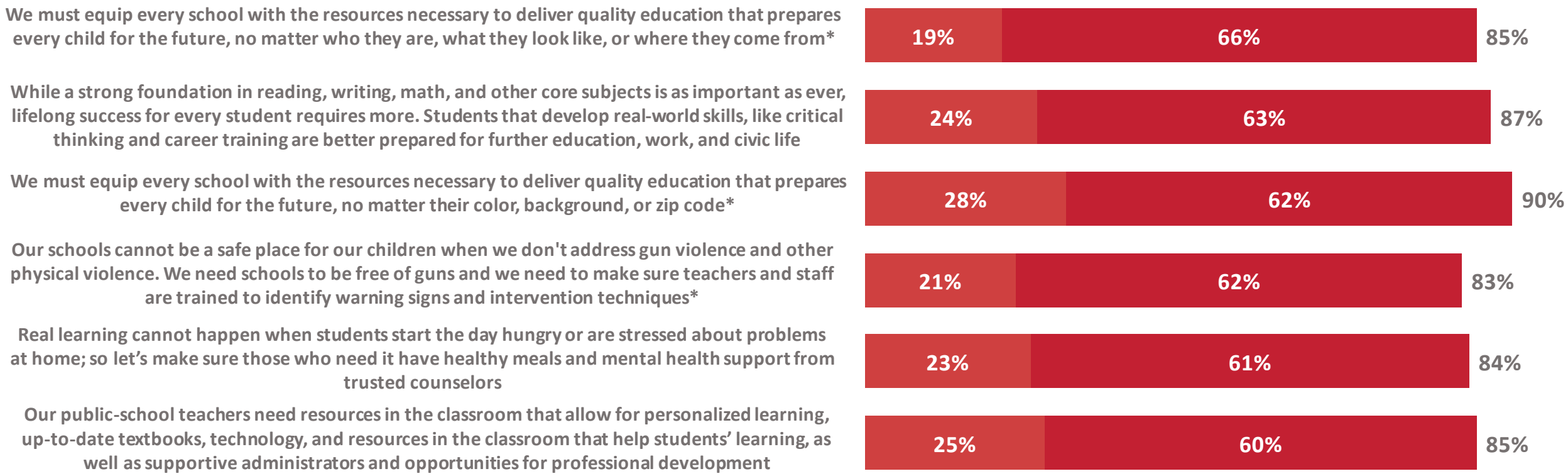
Strongly agree

Not so strongly agree

Education Messaging

Educational Statements That Garner Voter Support

Voters are most likely to support public officials or educational leaders who say, **"We must equip every school with the resources necessary to deliver quality education that prepares every child for the future, no matter who they are, what they look like, or where they come from."** Advocating for policies that empower students to be **critical thinkers**, prioritize **mental health resources**, support **school and child safety**, and **encourage students, regardless of their skin color or zip code, to follow their dreams** are all winning messages with voters.

Statement	Somewhat likely	Very likely	Total
We must equip every school with the resources necessary to deliver quality education that prepares every child for the future, no matter who they are, what they look like, or where they come from*	19%	66%	85%
While a strong foundation in reading, writing, math, and other core subjects is as important as ever, lifelong success for every student requires more. Students that develop real-world skills, like critical thinking and career training are better prepared for further education, work, and civic life	24%	63%	87%
We must equip every school with the resources necessary to deliver quality education that prepares every child for the future, no matter their color, background, or zip code*	28%	62%	90%
Our schools cannot be a safe place for our children when we don't address gun violence and other physical violence. We need schools to be free of guns and we need to make sure teachers and staff are trained to identify warning signs and intervention techniques*	21%	62%	83%
Real learning cannot happen when students start the day hungry or are stressed about problems at home; so let's make sure those who need it have healthy meals and mental health support from trusted counselors	23%	61%	84%
Our public-school teachers need resources in the classroom that allow for personalized learning, up-to-date textbooks, technology, and resources in the classroom that help students' learning, as well as supportive administrators and opportunities for professional development	25%	60%	85%

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■ Very likely   ■ Somewhat likely

*Split sampled

The Work Ahead

- Continuing to elevate public voices and support stakeholder engagement through:
  - Our annual nationwide survey on parent and voter priorities
    - View our full 2023 findings here.
    - Explore findings from 2021 and 2022.
  - The Homeroom with Education Leaders Webinar Series
    - Across the Aisle: Parent and Voter Priorities One Year from the ESSER Deadline
    - Going the Distance: Closing Gaps Through High-Dosage Tutoring
    - Using the Science of Reading to Teach All Learners
    - An Invisible Threat: Addressing Mental Health Concerns in K-12 Education
    - Education for the Real World: Strengthening Access to Work-Based Learning Opportunities
- Supporting and guiding policymakers and education leaders on education issues important to the public:
  - State Education Leaders Retreats
    - Read about our Spring 2023 Retreat.
    - Read about our Summer 2023 Virtual Retreat.
    - Read about our inaugural Women's State Education Leaders Retreat.
  - Direct state technical assistance to support educational improvements
  - ESSER guides for policymakers
- Engaging with partners on key Across the Aisle issues