

# Challenges and Opportunities for Public Education

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Friday, Oct. 4, 2019  
School of Education Day  
University at Albany

Gary Langer  
President, Langer Research Associates  
[glanger@langerresearch.com](mailto:glanger@langerresearch.com)





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# LANGER RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

SURVEY RESEARCH DESIGN • MANAGEMENT • ANALYSIS

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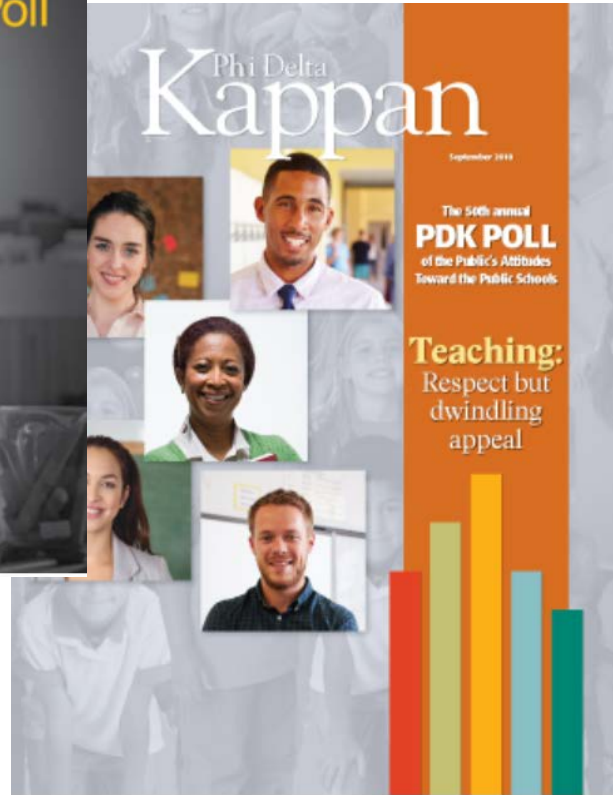
# LANGER RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

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- Long-standing, widely followed national survey on public attitudes toward public education, sponsored by international association of public-school educators.
  - Conducted annually since 1969.
  - Formerly the Gallup/PDK Poll, produced as the PDK Poll by Langer Research since 2016.
  - Includes random national samples of the general public, K-12 parents, and in 2019, K-12 public school teachers and parent, teacher online focus groups.
  - Supported by PDK Educational Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York.
- National nonprofit created by Congress to advance the use of technological innovation in education.
  - Learner Variability Project seeks to advance research-based personalization of learning.
  - Engaged Langer Research Associates to produce a planned annual survey on public attitudes toward learner variability, personalized learning and ed tech.
  - First study, earlier this year, was conducted among random national samples of the general public, parents and K-12 teachers.



# PDK poll in the news

WASHINGTON POST • AUG. 05, 2019

[Poll shows widespread frustration among teachers over pay and respect](#)

THE 74 • AUG. 05, 2019

['We've got a real crisis:' Half of U.S. teachers have considered leaving profession, PDK poll finds](#)

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS • AUG. 05, 2019

[AFT President Randi Weingarten on 2019 PDK Poll Measuring the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools](#)

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS (NASPP) • AUG. 05, 2019

[NASSP Statement on the 2019 PDK Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools](#)

EDUCATION WEEK • AUG. 06, 2019

['I am a fool to do this job': Half of teachers say they've considered quitting](#)

EDUCATION WEEK TEACHER • AUG. 06, 2019

[Americans say civics is a must and religion a maybe in schools](#)

EDUCATION DIVE • AUG. 06, 2019

[PDK Poll: Most parents would support a teacher strike over school funding](#)

EDSURGE • AUG. 06, 2019

[Half of teachers have 'seriously considered' quitting in recent years, survey finds](#)

AJC • AUG. 06, 2019

[Teacher discontent with pay greatest in the South and Midwest](#)

EDUCATION WRITERS ASSOCIATION • AUG. 06, 2019

[Teachers have plenty to say about school discipline and climate. Who's listening?](#)

NEA TODAY • AUG. 06, 2019

[Poll: Parents continue to stand beside educators in fight for funding](#)

AL.COM • AUG. 06, 2019

[What do you want to know about education?](#)

GOVERNING • AUG. 06, 2019

[The K-12 conundrum: Americans want more education funding, but not higher taxes](#)

ED PREP MATTERS (AACTE) • AUG. 06, 2019

[PDK Poll: U.S. teachers frustrated with lack of pay and feeling valued](#)

KJZZ • AUG. 06, 2019

[Survey: Parents, public support strikes for underpaid teachers](#)

CATO INSTITUTE • AUG. 07, 2019

[Why public schools can't have nice values](#)

# 2019 PDK Poll Research Questions

Do teachers feel valued by their communities?

Does religious study belong in public schools?

How should public schools handle discipline?

Should students study civics?

How do you assess school quality?

How much should schools focus on workforce preparation?

Are schools adequately funded?

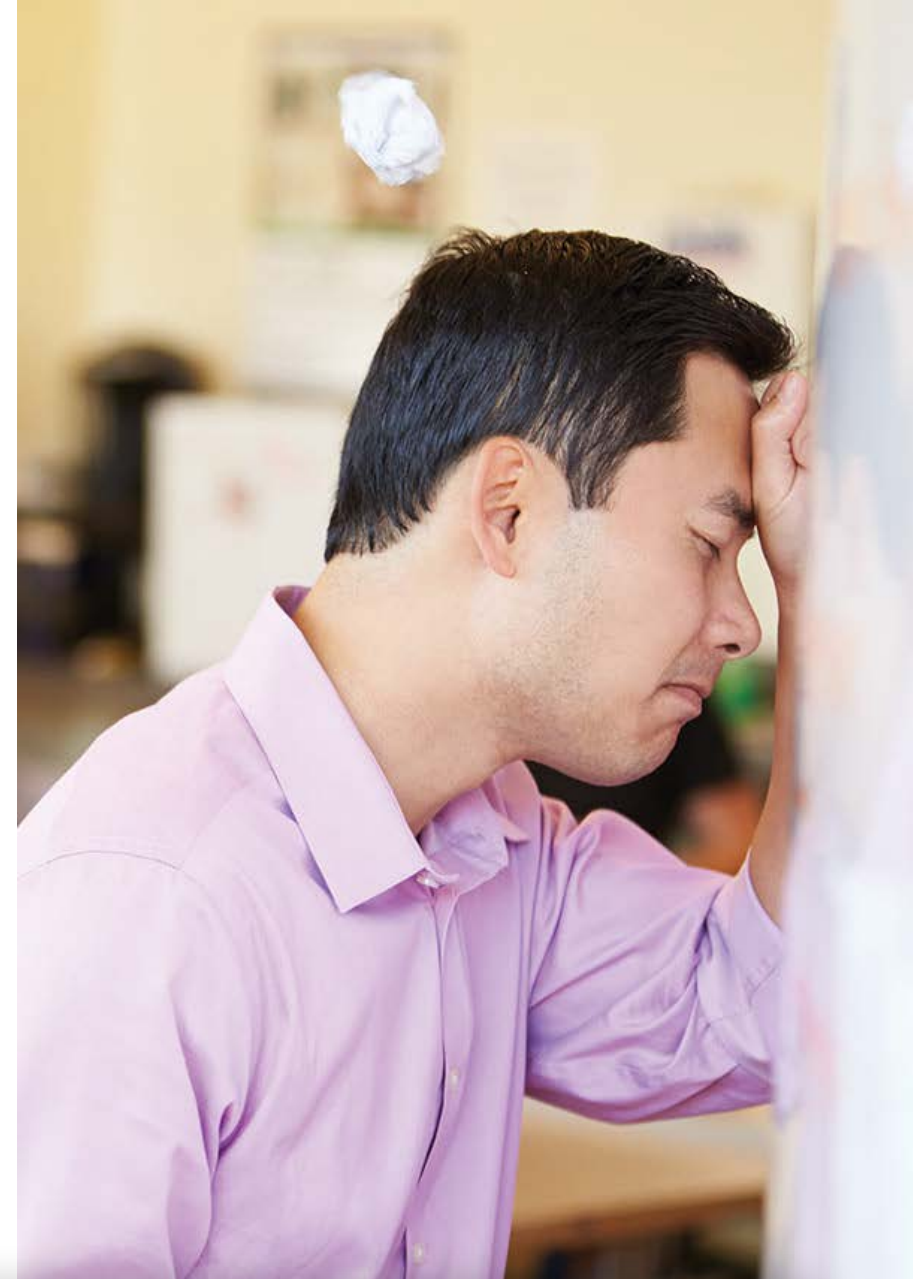
How do you view problems and pressures at school?

How would you grade the public schools?



## 2019 national poll

- **2,389 American adults** were surveyed
- Including **556 public school teachers** for the first time since 2000
- **Two online focus groups** — one with public school parents, one with public school teachers.





WHAT AMERICANS SAID

# Teachers' concerns



# Key points

**Half of public school teachers** have seriously considered leaving the profession in the past few years.

Only about **half** say their community values them a great deal or a good amount.

**60%** say they are unfairly paid.

A majority says they'd **vote to go on strike for higher pay.**

**55%** would not want their own child to follow them into the profession.

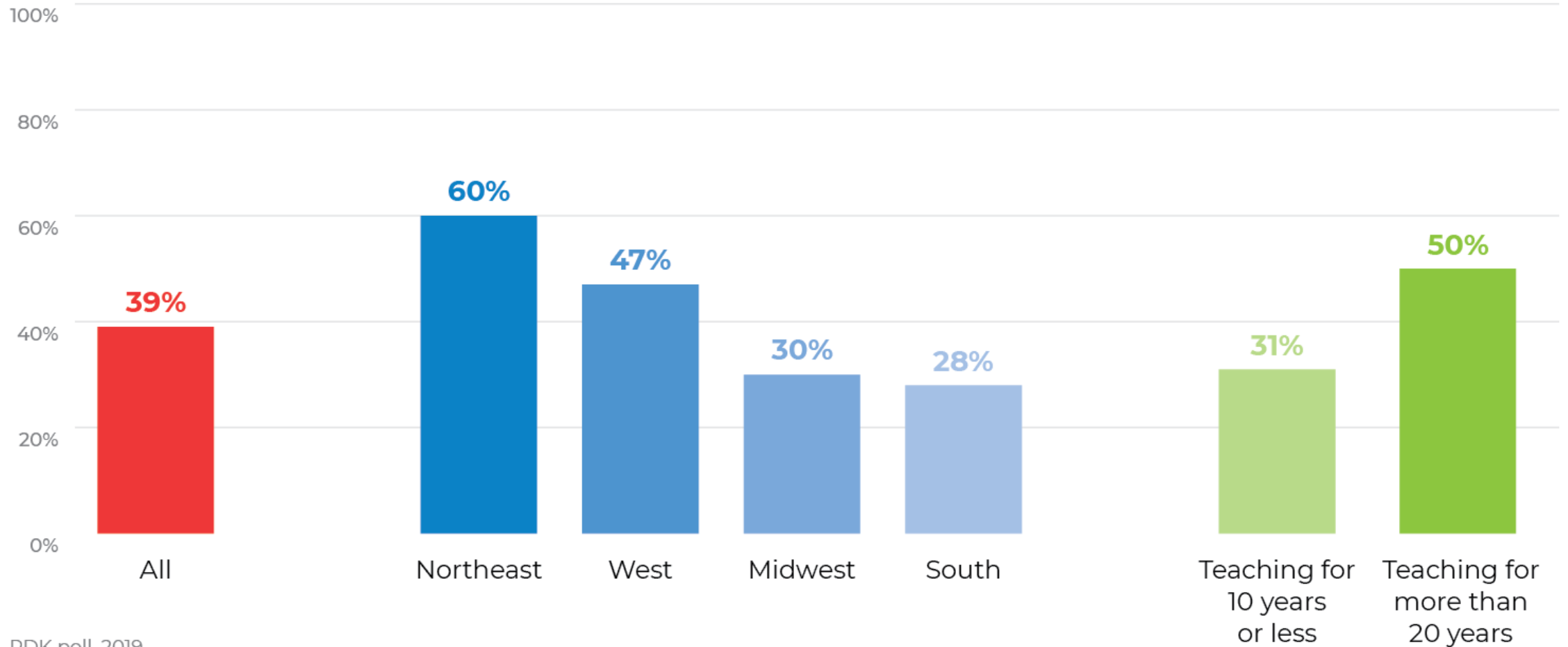
# Teachers' concerns

Public school teachers, 2019



# Feeling fairly paid

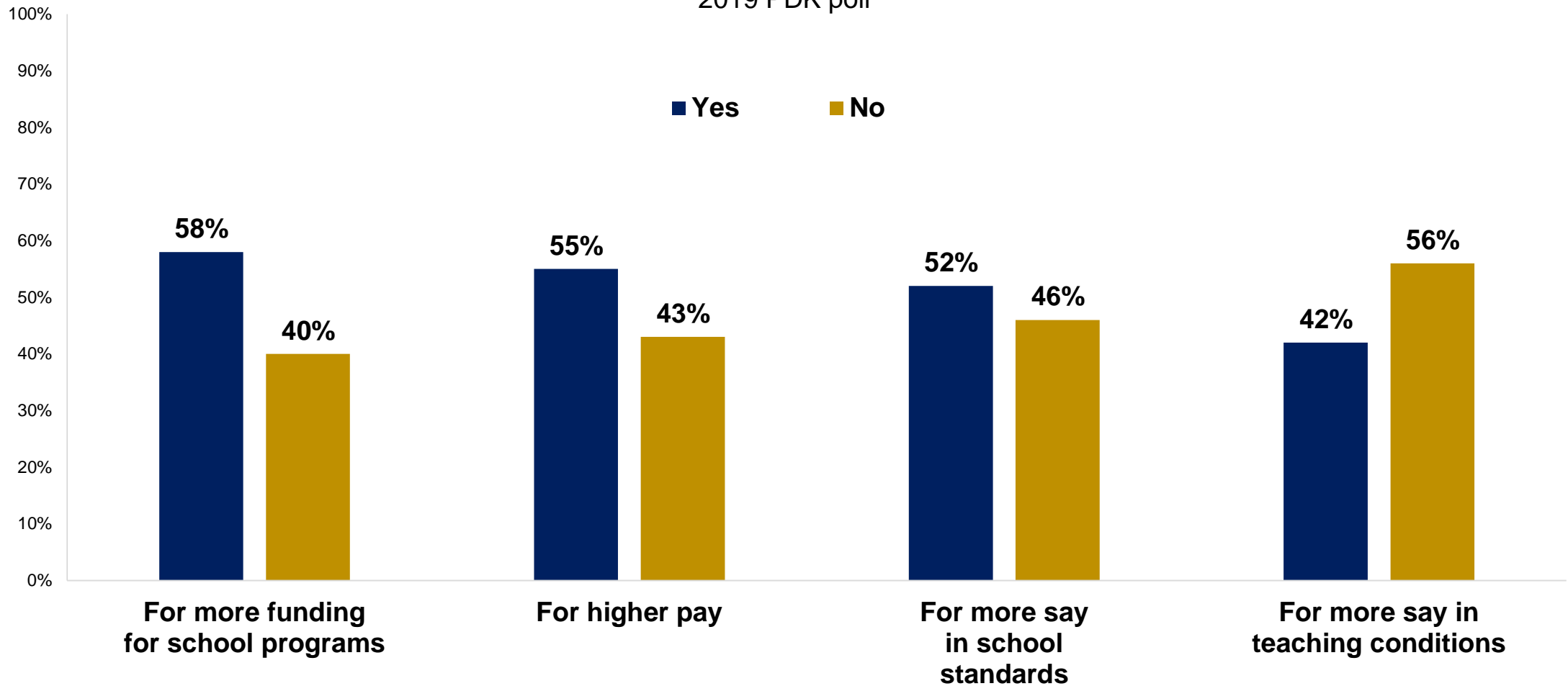
Public school teachers, 2019



PDK poll, 2019

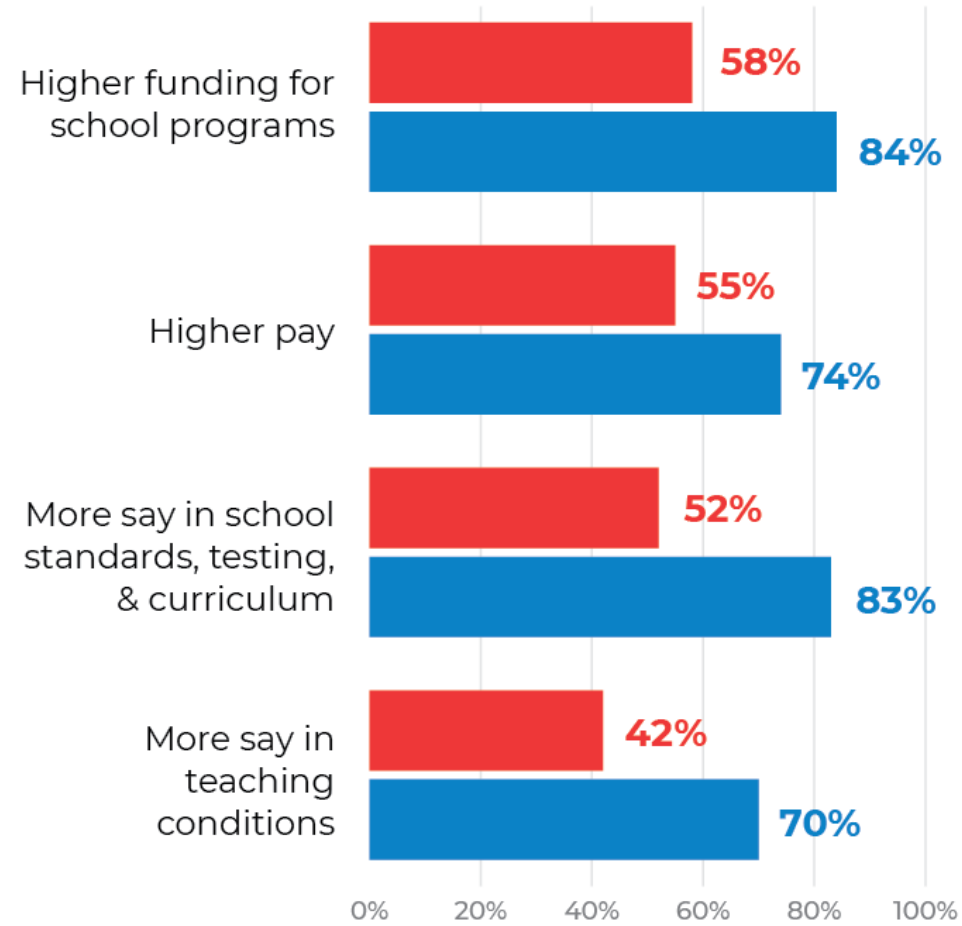
# Would You Vote to Strike?

Among public school teachers  
2019 PDK poll



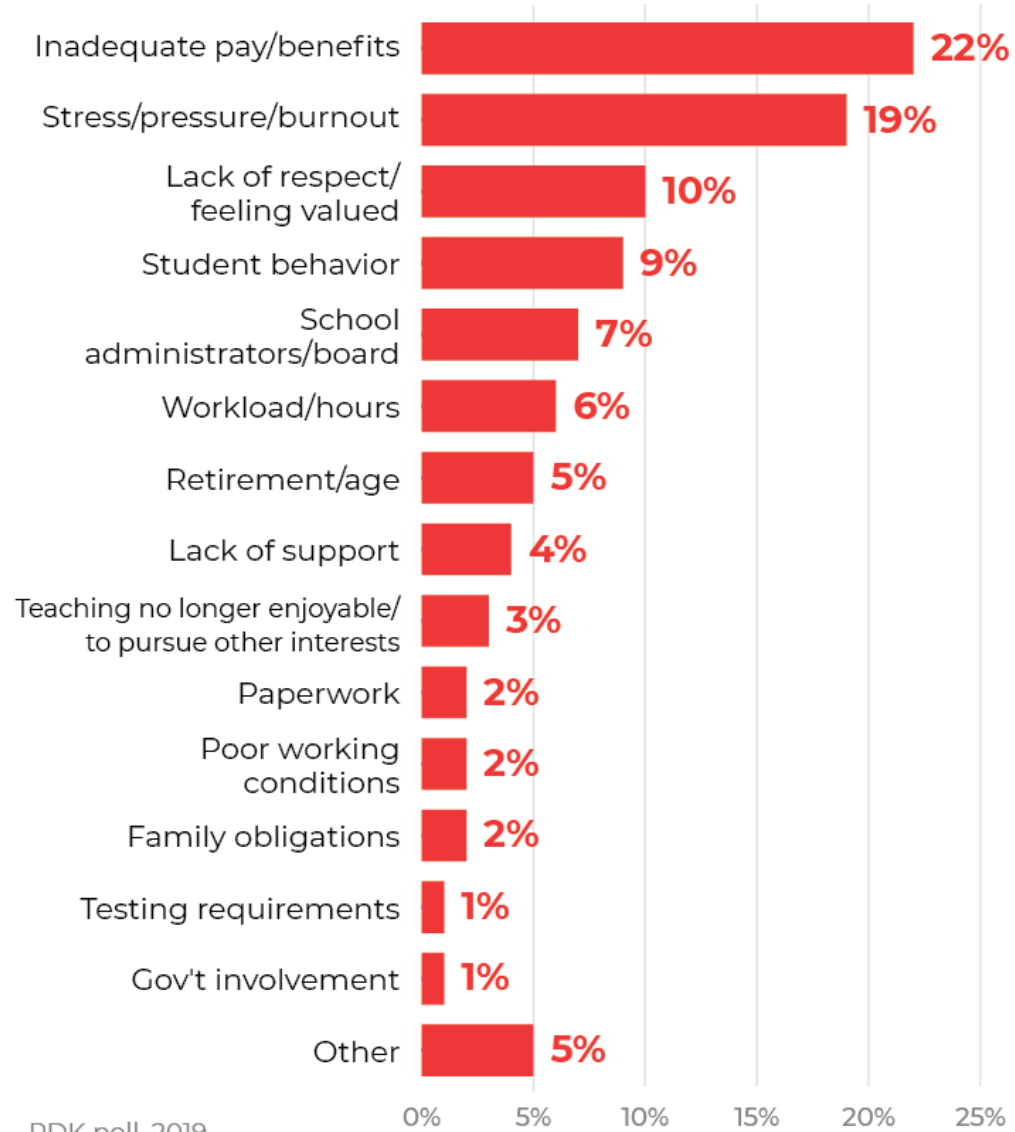
# Support for a teachers strike

- Public school teachers who would vote to strike for...
- K-12 parents who would support teachers who go on strike for...



PDK poll, 2019

# Reasons teachers have considered leaving the profession



PDK poll, 2019

- *“I have a master's degree and more than 25 years' experience and am making less than I was making 10 years ago, but am putting in many more hours now.”*
- *“The pressures all around have become all-encompassing and we are losing sight of the role of a classroom teacher in a primary classroom. Testing, standards, grading, scoring, constant evaluations are getting in the way of hands-on, meaningful learning opportunities.”*



- *“The demands placed on public school teachers are quite literally impossible to reasonably accomplish.”*
- *“Disrespect, anger issues, lack of initiative in students. I am retiring because of it.”*
- *“Too much testing, paperwork, top-heavy administration that is out of touch with campus-level issues.”*
- *“Low pay and high stress.”*

- *“I feel that our system is broken and doesn’t do enough to help struggling students.”*
- *“So many hoops to jump through. Constantly trying out new programs that don’t teach basic skills, character, good citizenship. Lots of extra professional development and paperwork, not much parental support and low pay. I work late nights, weekends, and have PD for nearly half of my summer.”*
- *“Ridiculous evaluation system relying 50% on things/tests outside of the teacher's control.”*

- *“The job is impossible to do well. The expectations placed on teachers are unrealistic and not attainable.”*
- *“The lack of respect from society along with the increasing amount of bureaucratic nonsense that I am required to waste time on.”*
- *“They took away my pension.”*
- *“Common core ruined the curriculum and made it a dead, meaningless and tedious thing.”*

*And yet...*

*“I have taught school now for 37 years, and I find working with youth to be the most rewarding and delightful career there could be. Teaching is a calling in life. I wouldn't have been happy doing any other career.”*

WHAT AMERICANS SAID

# Teacher profile



	Teachers
<\$50,000	9%
\$50,000-<\$100,000	37
\$100,000+	54
Liberals	40%
Moderates	31
Conservatives	28
Democrats	39%
Republicans	25
Independents	24

	All adults
	34%
	31
	35
	28%
	34
	34
	34%
	26
	20

# Teachers are...

Seventy-six percent are women, vs. 52 percent of all adults.

Ninety-two percent have a bachelor's degree or higher, vs. 33 percent of all adults.

Fifty-eight percent have a master's degree or higher, vs. 15 percent of all adults.

Seventy-six percent are white, vs. 64 percent of all adults.

Sixty-four percent are married, vs. 53 percent of all adults.

Thirty-seven percent are evangelical Christians, essentially the same as all adults, 36 percent.

WHAT AMERICANS SAID

How do you assess  
school quality?





# Key points



94% of teachers say the better way to assess school quality is by looking at students' improvement over time, rather than the percentage who pass a standardized state test at any given time. 77% of parents and 75% of all adults agree.



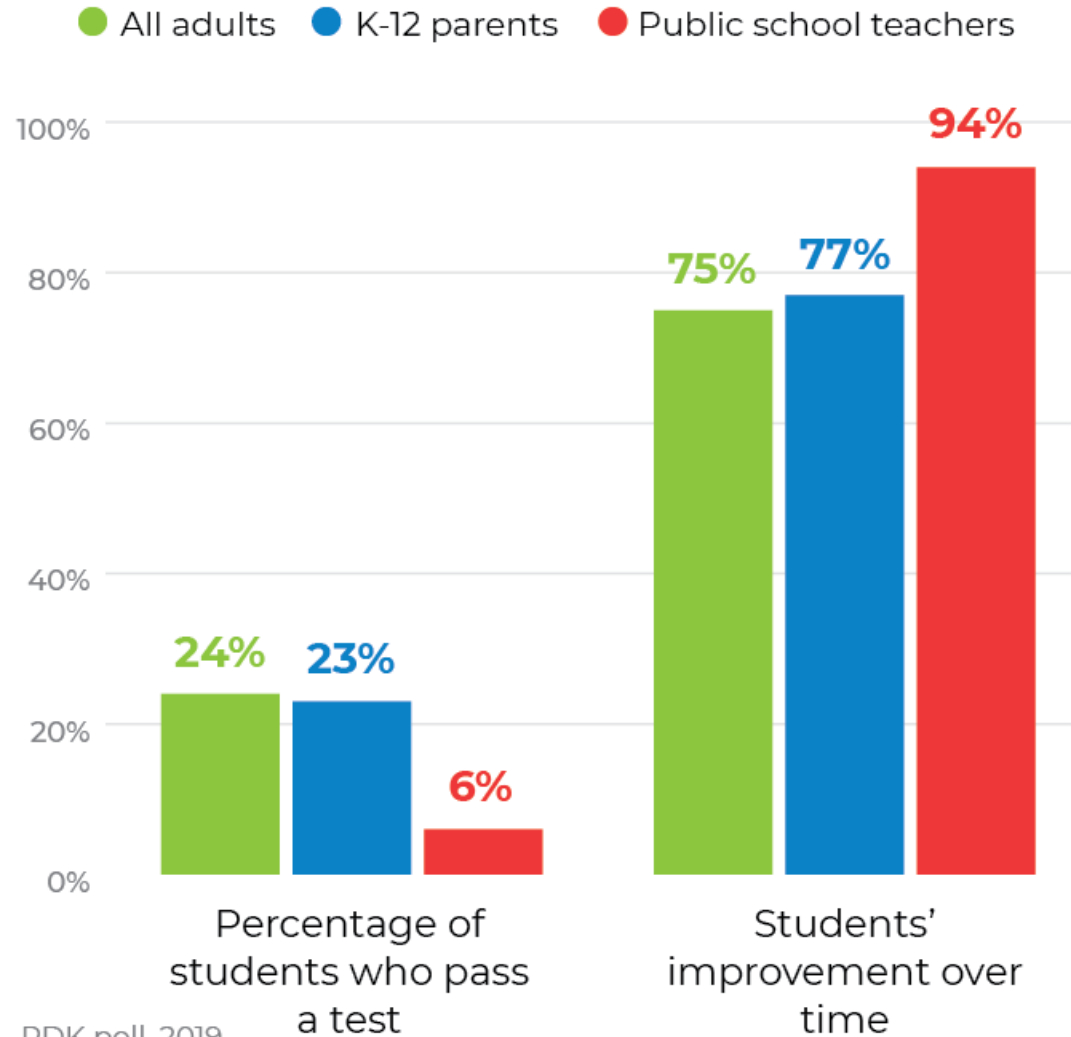
Just 52% of parents know that their state issues a report card on the local schools. 66% who know about the state report card have read it; 82% who've read it found it helpful.



More parents say their own child's report card is most helpful in assessing school quality.

# Best way to measure school performance

National totals, 2019



PDK poll, 2019

WHAT AMERICANS SAID

# Studying religion and civics in the public schools



# Key points



Majorities of all adults, parents, and teachers say schools should offer classes in Bible studies and comparative religion, as elective not required classes.



Evangelical Christians are most supportive of offering Bible studies in schools — at 82% — and most concerned that comparative religion courses could cause their child to question their family's faith.



Only 1 in 7 teachers worry that comparative religion classes could lead students to question their family's faith.

# Key points

**97% of Americans say public schools should be teaching civics; 70% say it should be required.**

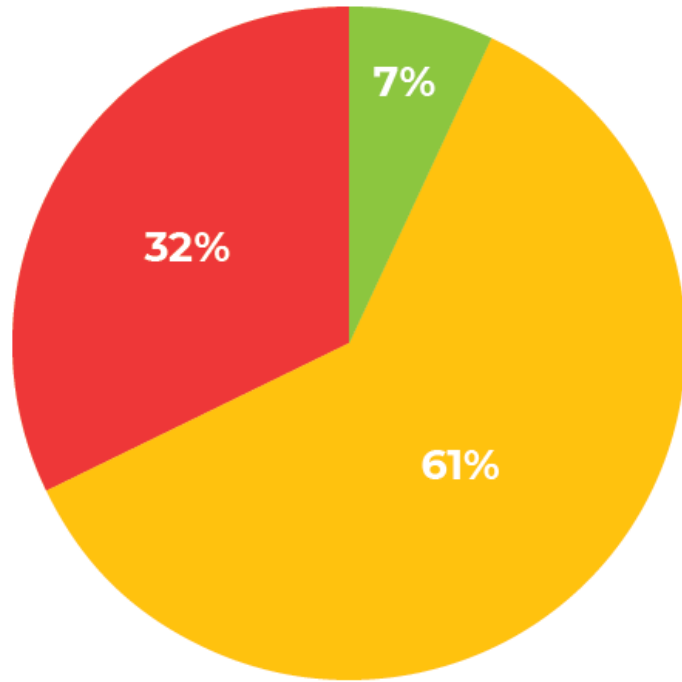
**A minority of parents — 29% — worry that civics classes might include political content that they disagree with. Even fewer teachers — 16% — share that concern.**

**Majorities of parents, all adults, and teachers say school should teach values as well as factual information.**

## Bible studies in the public schools

K-12 parents, 2019

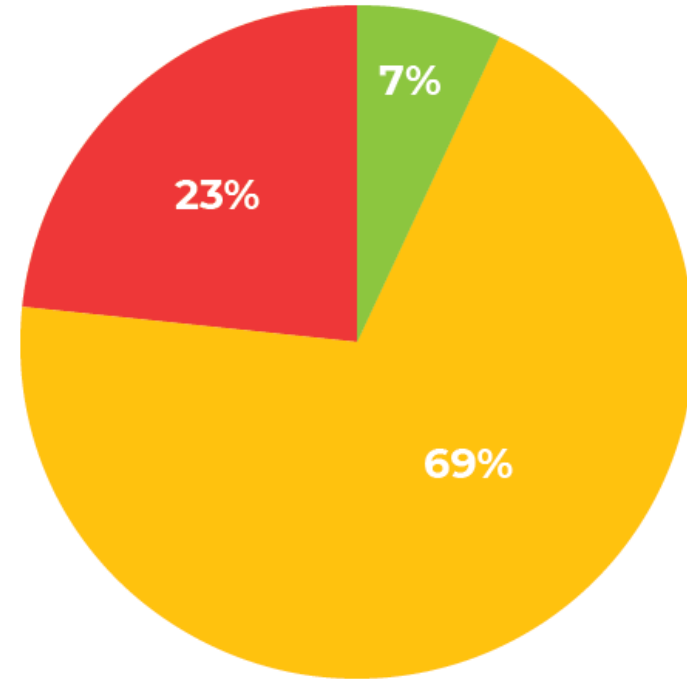
- Should be required
- Should be offered
- Should not be offered



## Comparative religion classes in the public schools

K-12 parents, 2019

- Should be required
- Should be offered
- Should not be offered



PDK poll, 2019

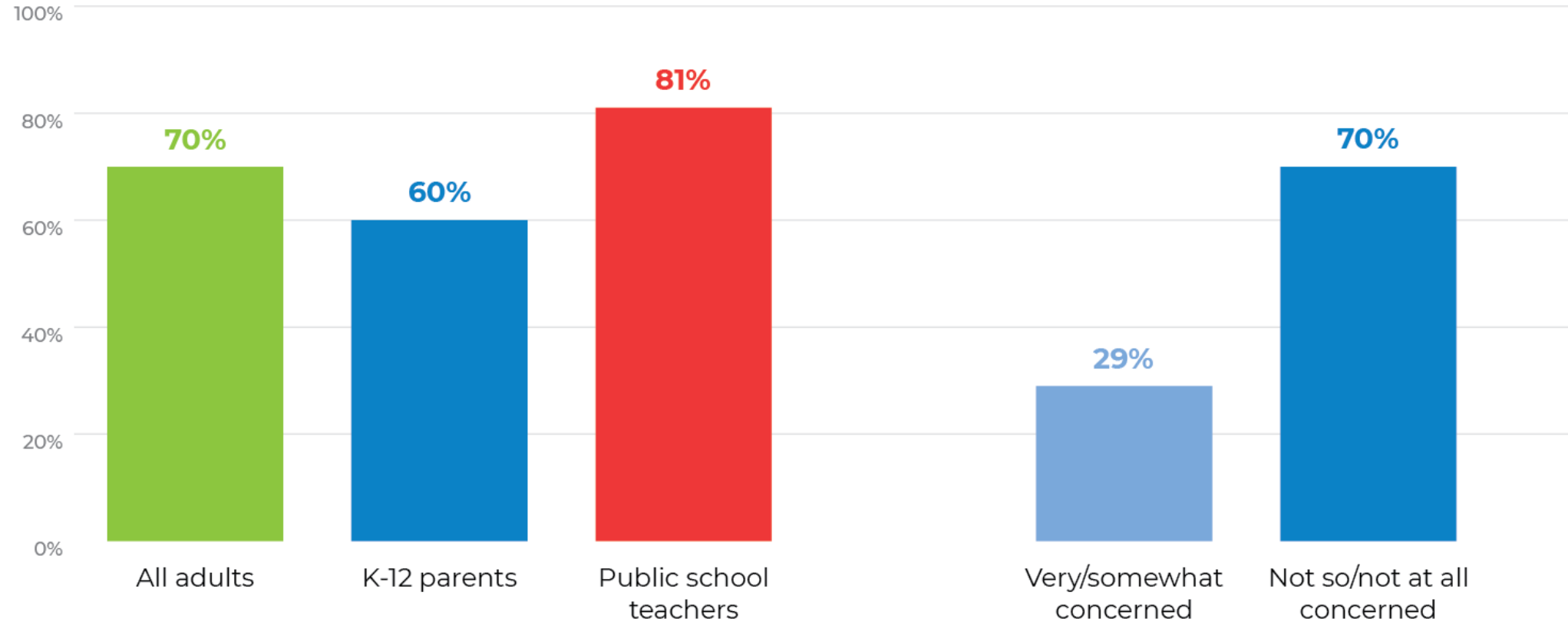
PDK poll, 2019

# Views on teaching civics in the public schools

National totals, 2019

Civics class should be required

K-12 parents concerned class might include political content they disagree with



PDK poll, 2019

Which of these would you prefer your local public schools to do –

	All	Parents	Teachers
Teach values as well as factual information	79%	78%	85%
Only teach factual information and not values	20	22	15



WHAT AMERICANS SAID

How much should schools focus on workforce preparation?



# Key points

**Just 2 in 10 parents, teachers, and all adults say preparing students for work should be the main goal of the public schools.** Majorities say schools should prepare students both for jobs *and* academically.

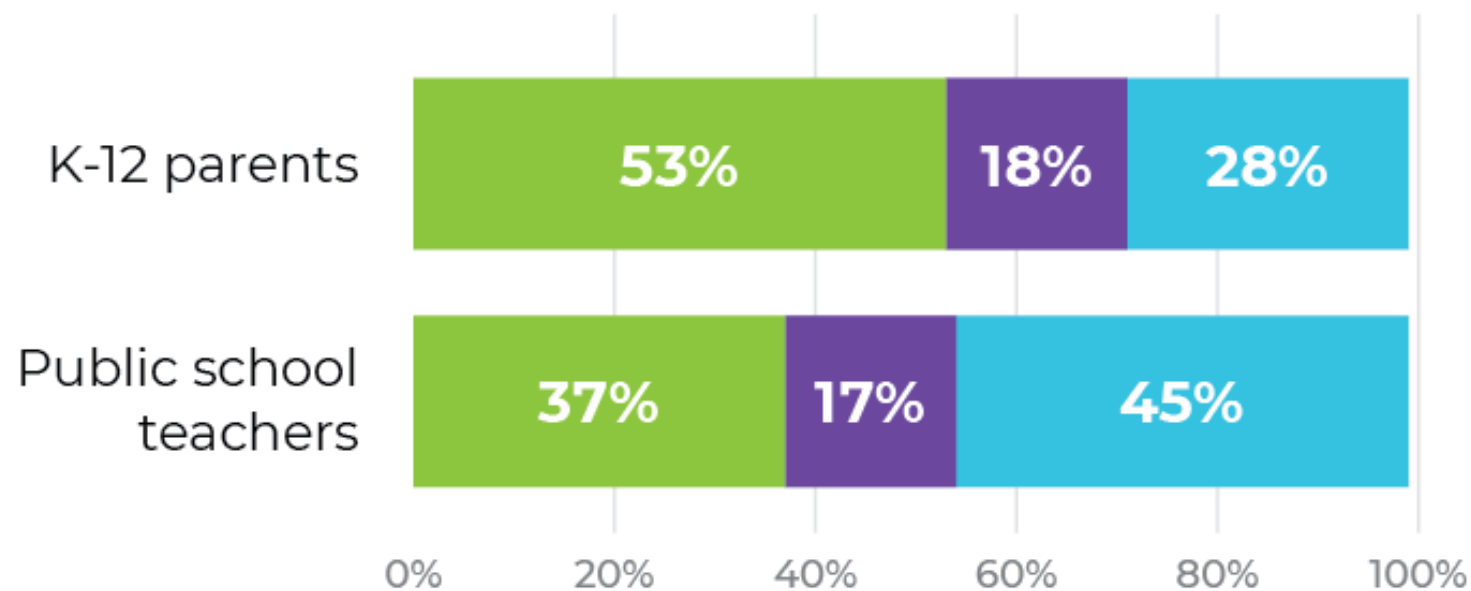
Many teachers focus on citizenship.

**45% of parents would prefer to have their child enroll in a job-skills course in high school** rather than an advanced academic class or an arts/music course.

**Computer programming** tops the list of job-skills courses that parents would prefer for their child. There are difference in some choices base on the child's gender.

## Main goal of public school education is to prepare students...

● Academically ● For work ● To be good citizens



PDK poll, 2019

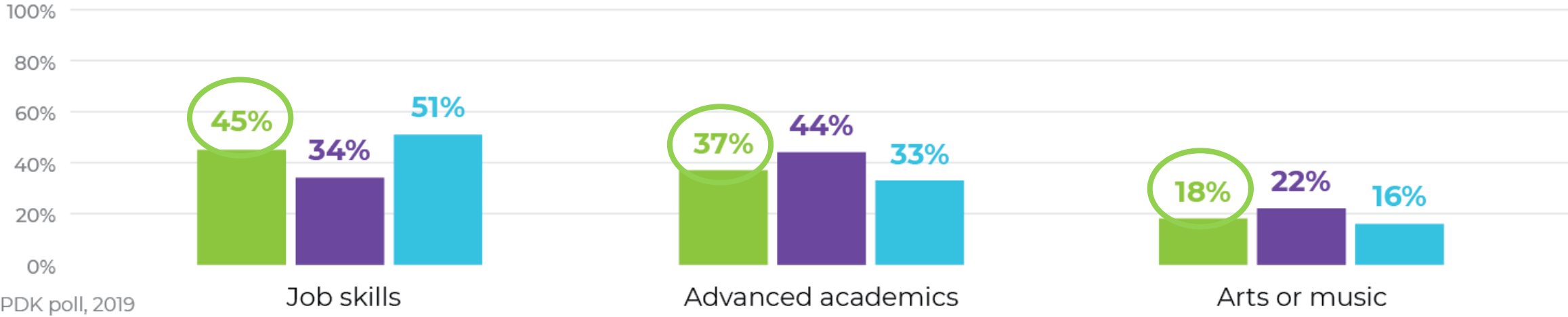
Do you think it's a good idea or a bad idea to let students who do not plan to go to college skip some required academic classes so they can take more jobs skills classes instead?

	All	Parents	Teachers
Good idea	68%	65%	73%
Bad idea	31	35	27

# Which elective subject would you prefer your child take in high school?

K-12 parents, 2019

All parents College-educated No college degree



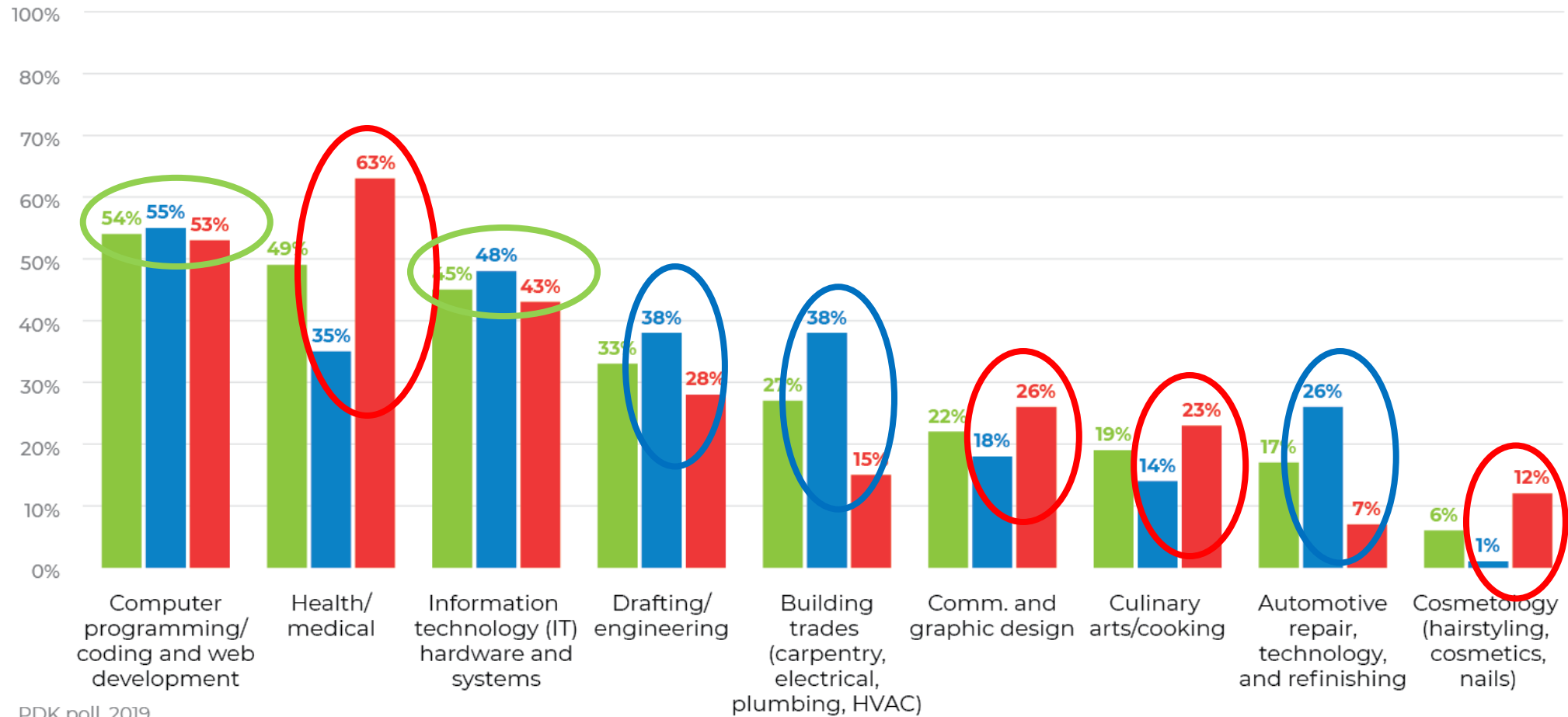
PDK poll, 2019

- *“We are doing our future generations such a disservice by pretending all students want to go to college and putting very little time and money on the other areas of life. Should they be allowed to drop some academic courses to take job skills, a huge yes.”*

# Preferred job-skills classes for your child in high school (top 3 accepted)

K-12 parents, 2019

● All parents ● Parents of boys ● Parents of girls



PDK poll, 2019

WHAT AMERICANS SAID

Are schools  
adequately funded?





# Key points

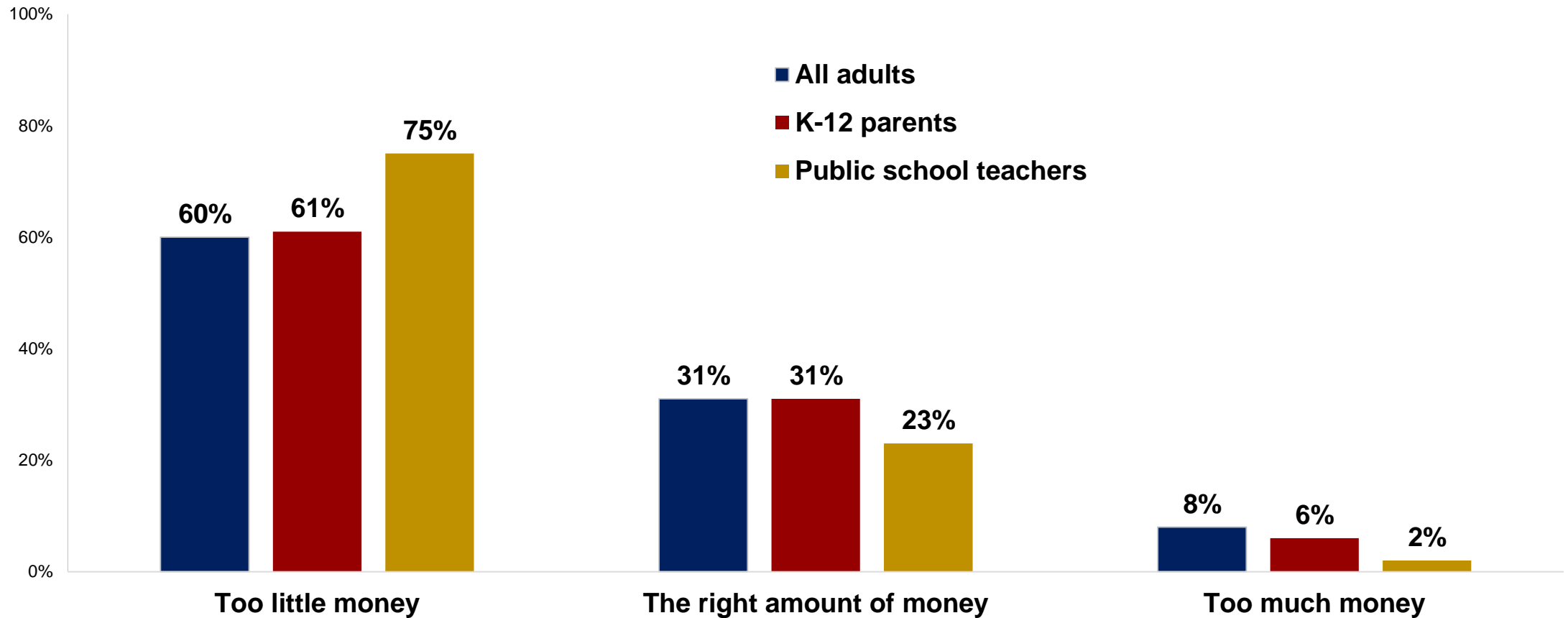
**25% of all adults say inadequate financial support is the biggest problem** facing the public schools today, the single most-cited item by a wide margin. Among teachers, more – 36% — say the same.

Two-thirds of parents and 85% of teachers are more apt to **support a political candidate who favors increased school funding.**

While **increasing taxes is unpopular**, majorities of parents, all adults, and teachers alike favor taxing lotteries, legal marijuana and sports gambling for school funding.

# The Public Schools in Your Community Have...

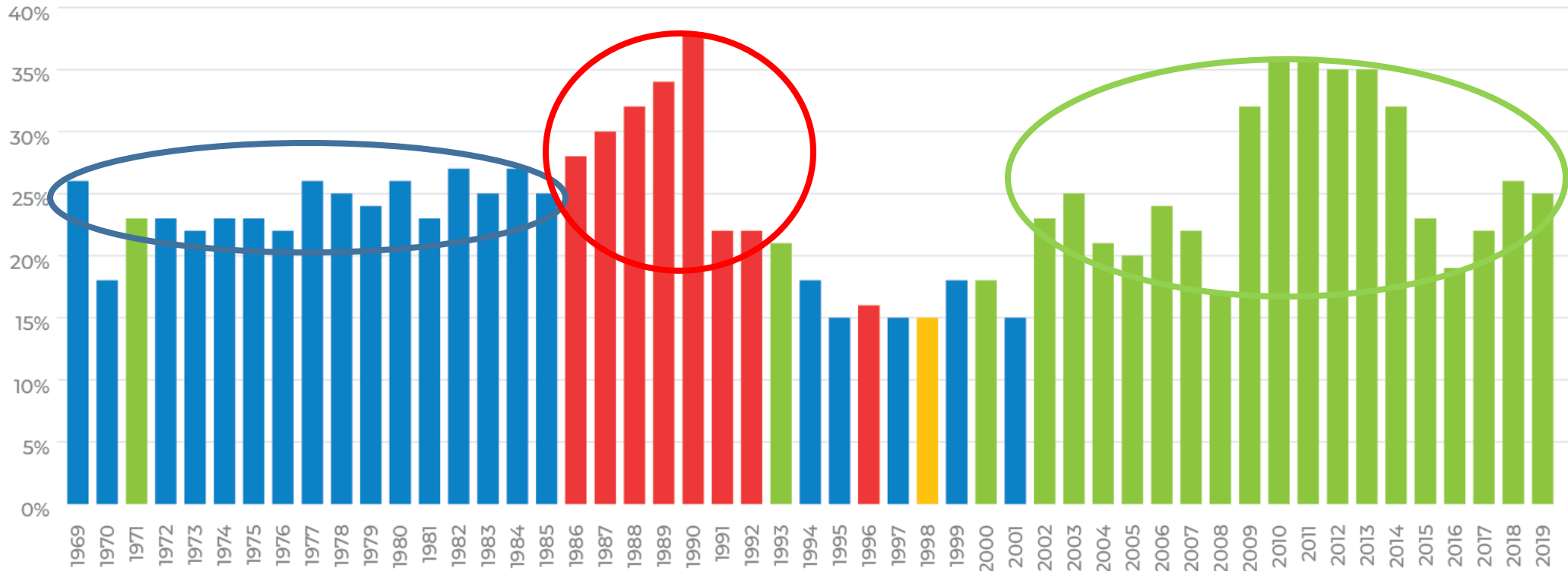
2019 PDK poll



# Biggest problem facing public schools

National totals, 1969-2019

● Lack of discipline   ● Lack of financial support   ● Use of drugs   ● Fighting/gangs/violence



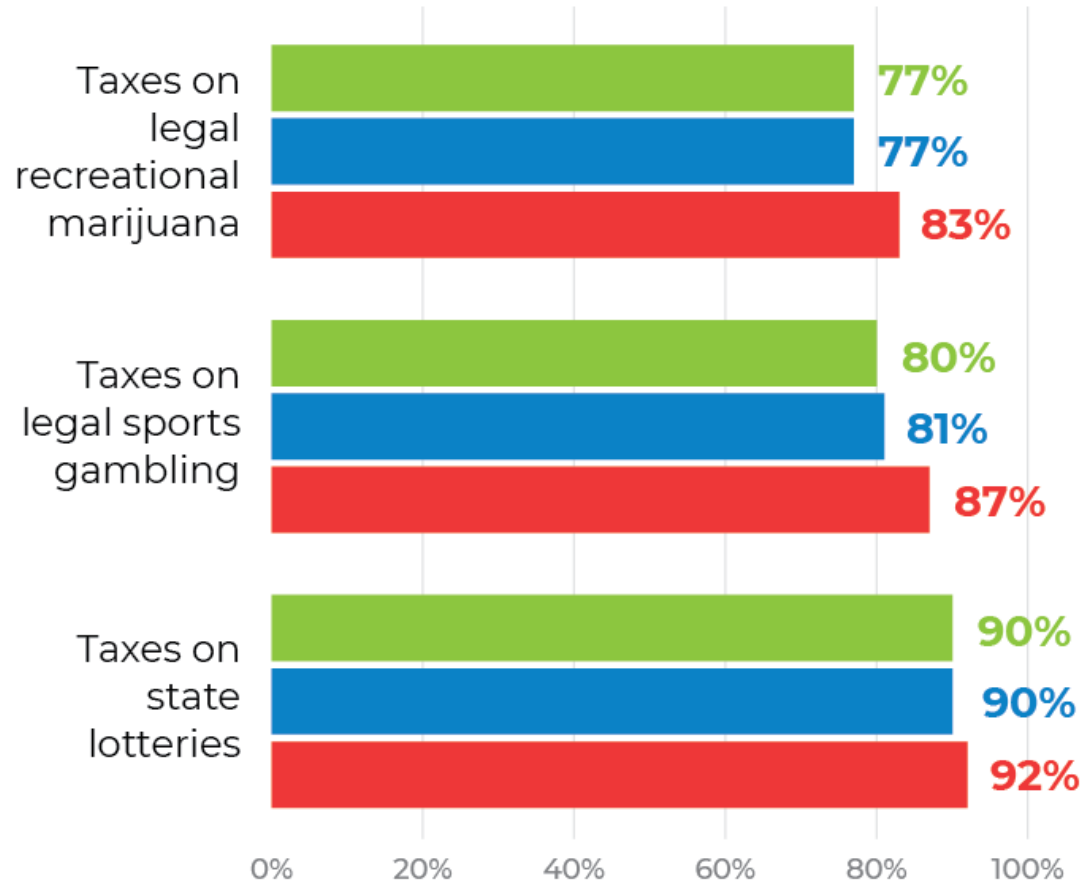
Gallup produced the PDK polls from 1969 to 2015. Langer Research Associates has produced the PDK poll since 2016, including the 2019 poll.

# “Sin” taxes to support education

National totals, 2019

% who support using tax revenues from these sources to support public schools

● All adults ● Parents ● Teachers

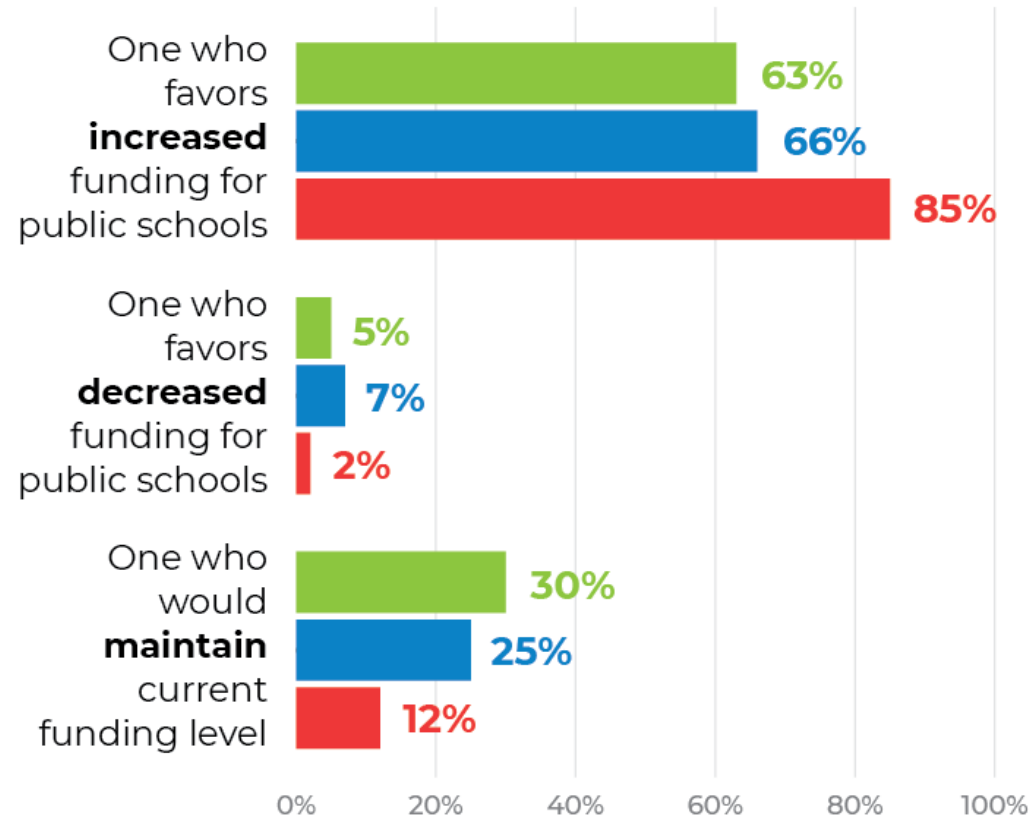


# Political candidates' support for school funding

National totals, 2019

Which kind of candidate for political office are you most likely to support?

● All adults ● Parents ● Teachers



PDK poll, 2019

WHAT AMERICANS SAID

# How should public schools handle discipline?



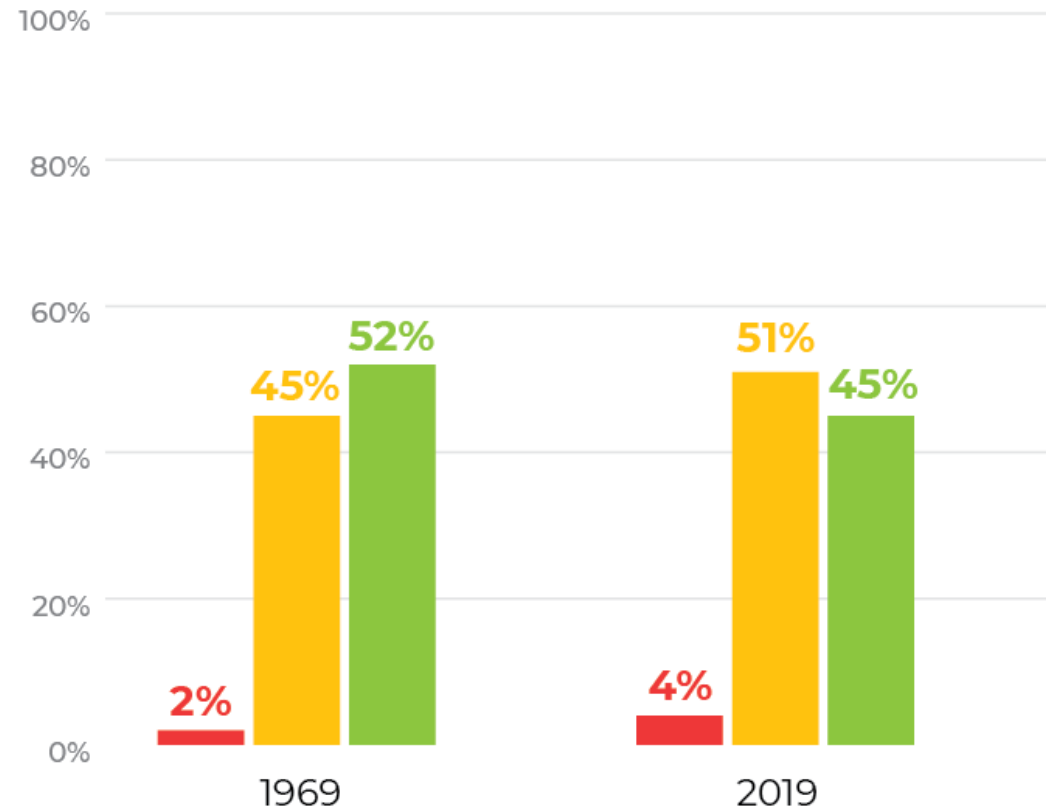
## Key points

- Parents and teachers agree that **discipline in school is not strict enough.**
- Parents, all adults, and teachers **support the concept of zero tolerance** but pull back when presented with a practical application of the policy.
- **Just 14% of parents have “a lot” of trust in their child’s school** to handle discipline.
- Two-thirds or more of parents, all adults, and teachers say **mediation/counseling are more effective** ways to deal with discipline than detention/suspension.

# Views on school discipline

K-12 parents, 1969 and 2019

● Too strict ● Not strict enough ● About right

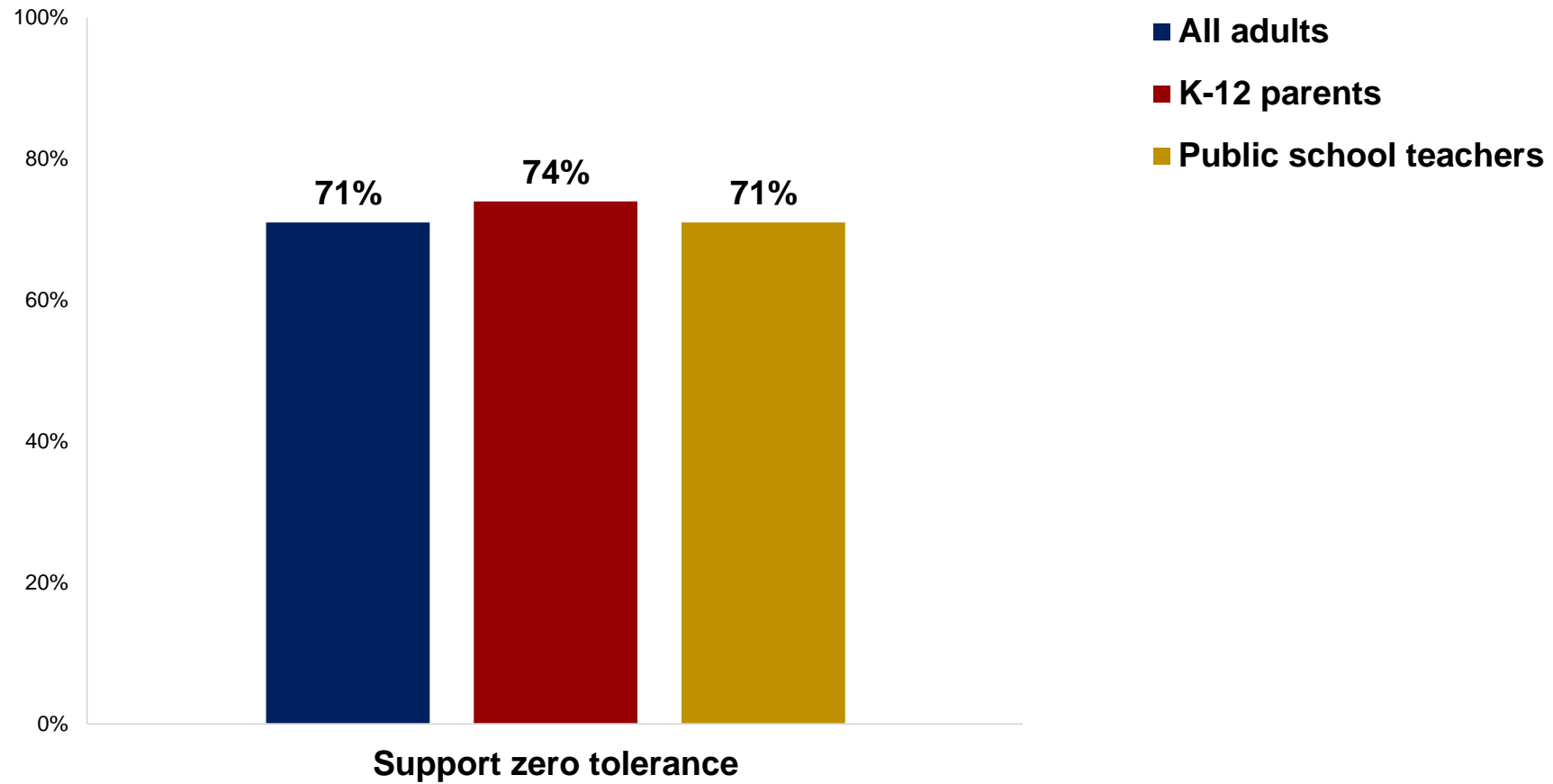


PDK poll, 2019



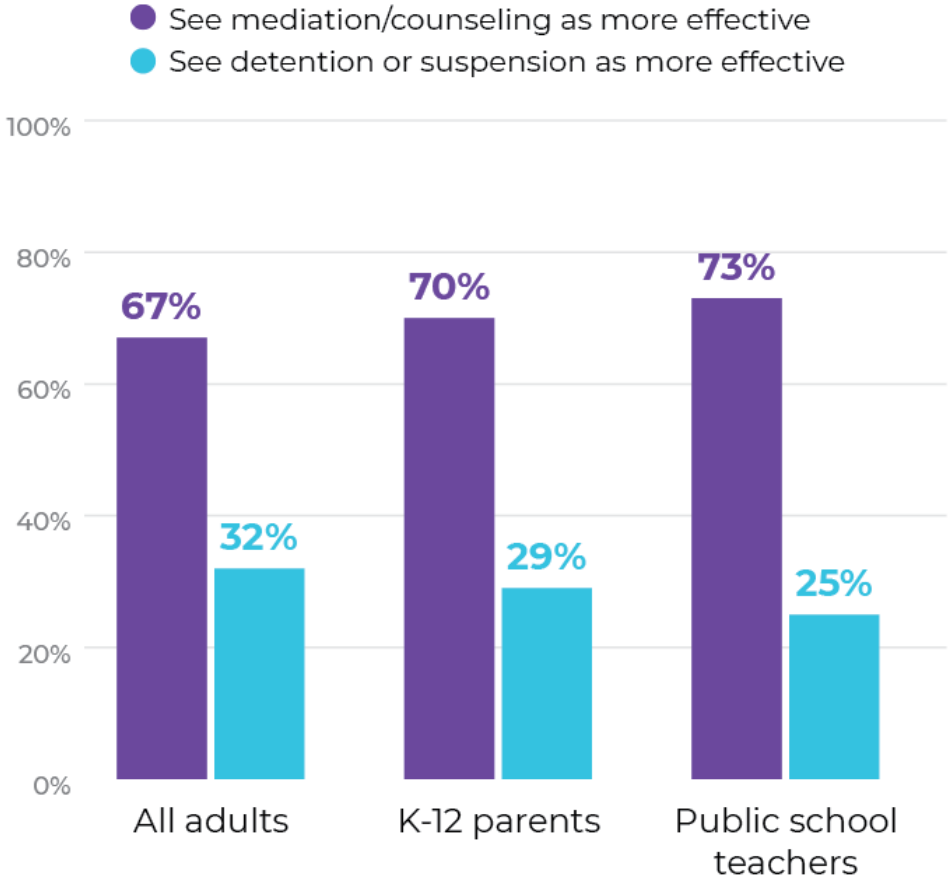
# Zero Tolerance... or Not?

2019 PDK poll



# Mediation vs. detention or suspension

National totals, 2019

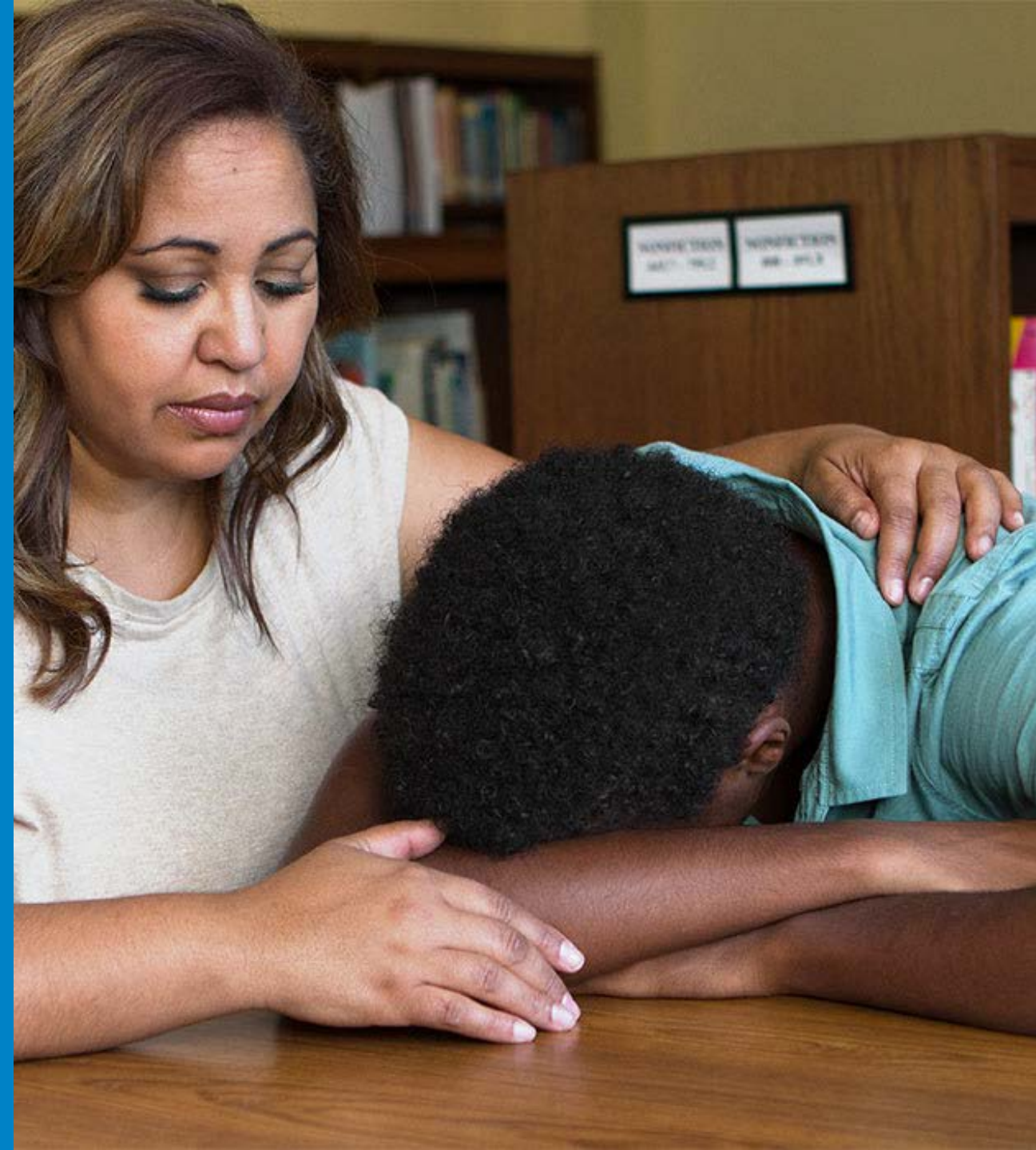


PDK poll, 2019

- *“I would like to add some sort of mental health support services and community service offered to those students as they are suspended... there needs to be a plan to integrate students back into school.”*

WHAT AMERICANS SAID

How do you rate  
school problems &  
pressures?



# Key points

50% of teachers see pressure to do well on tests as a **big problem**, compared with 29 percent of parents.

Teachers are slightly more likely than parents to perceive pressure to conform as a problem.

Parents and teachers rate racism, religious bias, and bias toward gay, lesbian, and/or transgender students as **relatively small problems**.

Only 16% of parents named **safety and security** as a **big problem** at their child's school.

- *“Keeping the school as secure as possible against intruders is important, but, for me, this is overblown. Of course, I want my kids to be safe, but I think some people are too worried about this.”*

WHAT AMERICANS SAID

How would you  
grade the public  
schools?



# Key points

Parents and teachers generally give high grades to their local schools, lower grades to the schools nationally.

60% of parents and 59% of teachers give their local schools an A or B.

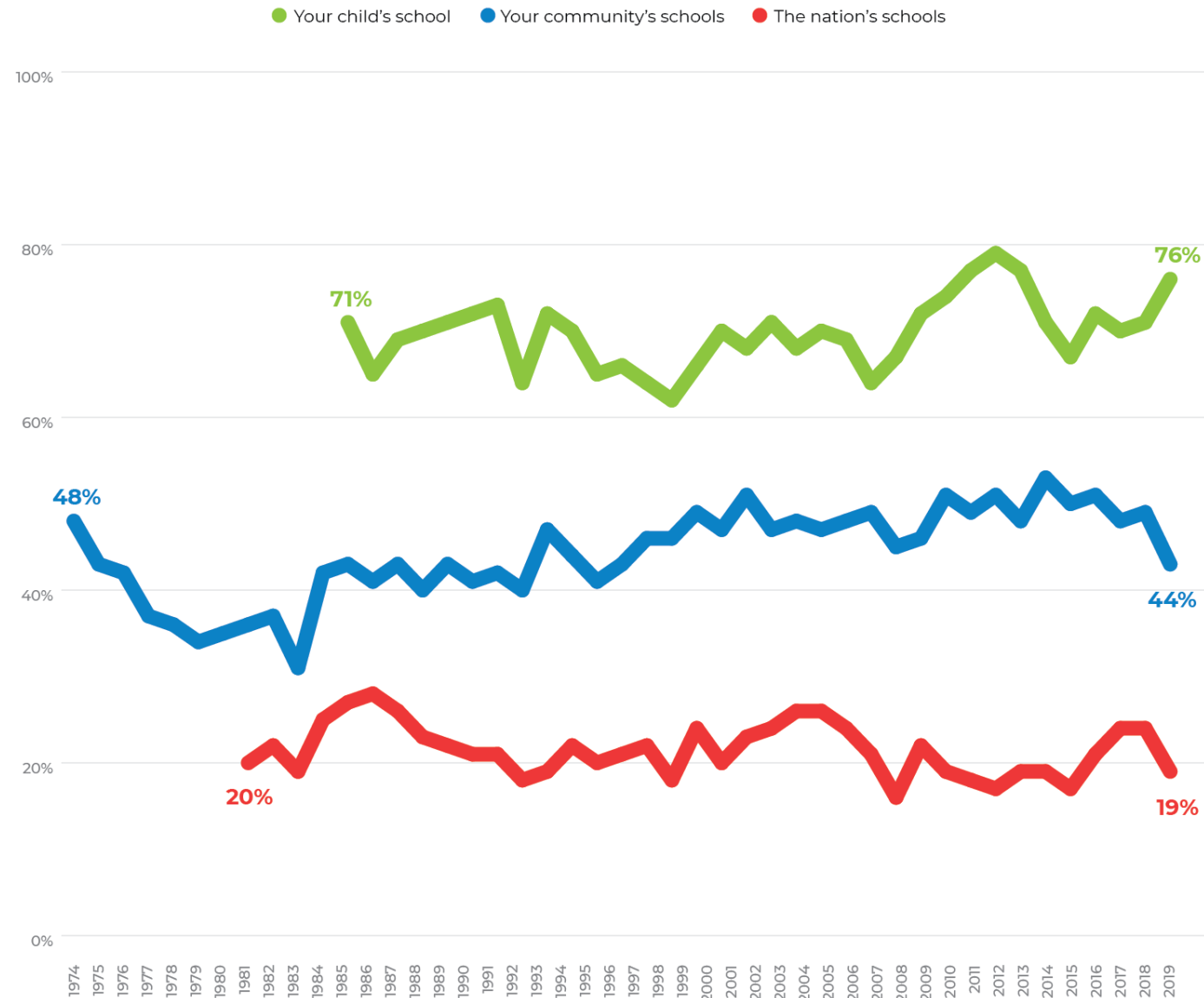
70% of teachers give an A or B to the school where they work.

Among parents, Asian Americans, the more affluent, and those who are college educated give higher grades to their local schools.



# % A or B grades

National totals, 1974-2019



# Parents grade the local public schools

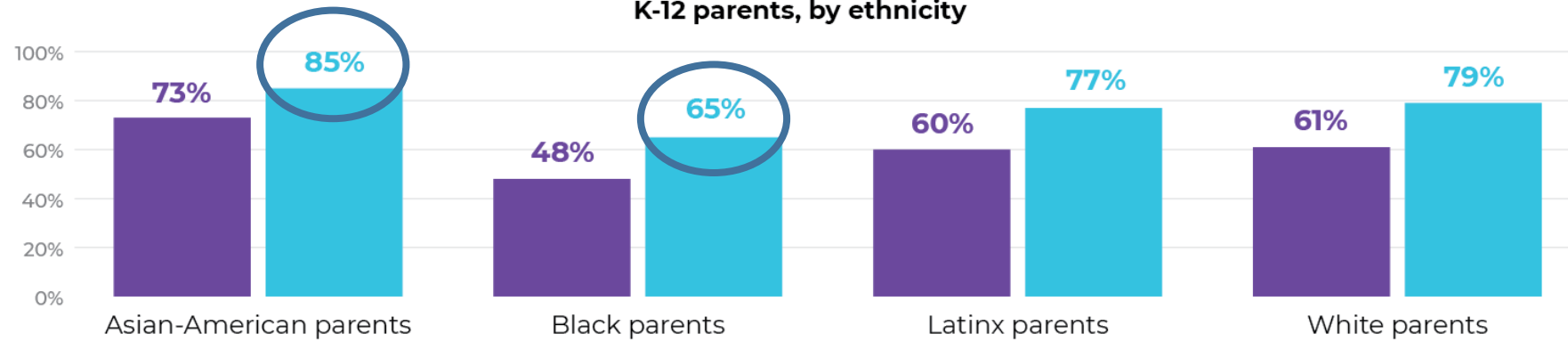
K-12 parents, 2019

● % grade for local schools ● % grade for oldest child's school

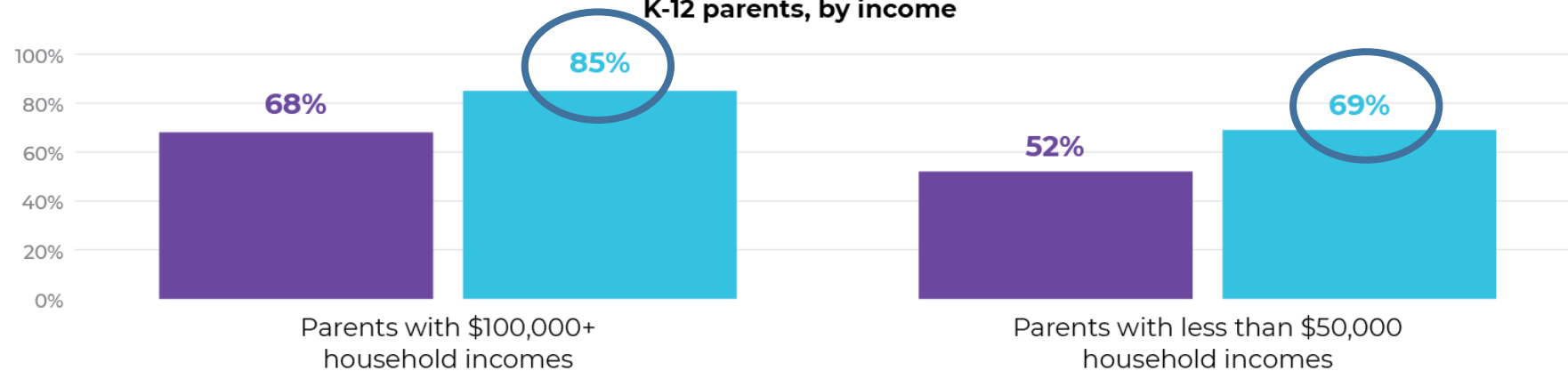
## All K-12 parents

**60% of all K-12 parents give their local schools an A or B grade and 76% give an A or B grade to the school attended by their oldest child.**

## K-12 parents, by ethnicity



## K-12 parents, by income



- *“Whenever I've needed to go to the school or make contact with the school, it's always been friendly. Would I recommend our elementary school to another? Yes, I would because the teachers and staff put the children first.”*

More at [pdkpoll.org](http://pdkpoll.org)



# Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

## The Spring 2019 Digital Promise LVP Survey



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SURVEY RESEARCH DESIGN • MANAGEMENT • ANALYSIS

 **Digital Promise**  
Accelerating Innovation in Education

# Methodology

The Digital Promise survey was conducted April 5-16, 2019, among a random national sample of **1,389 adults...**

...including **550** public school parents...

...and an additional random national sample of **516** public school teachers.

# 2019 Digital Promise poll: Research Questions



*How do the public, parents and teachers view...*



Student potential



Learner variability



Tailored vs. whole group instruction



Educational technology



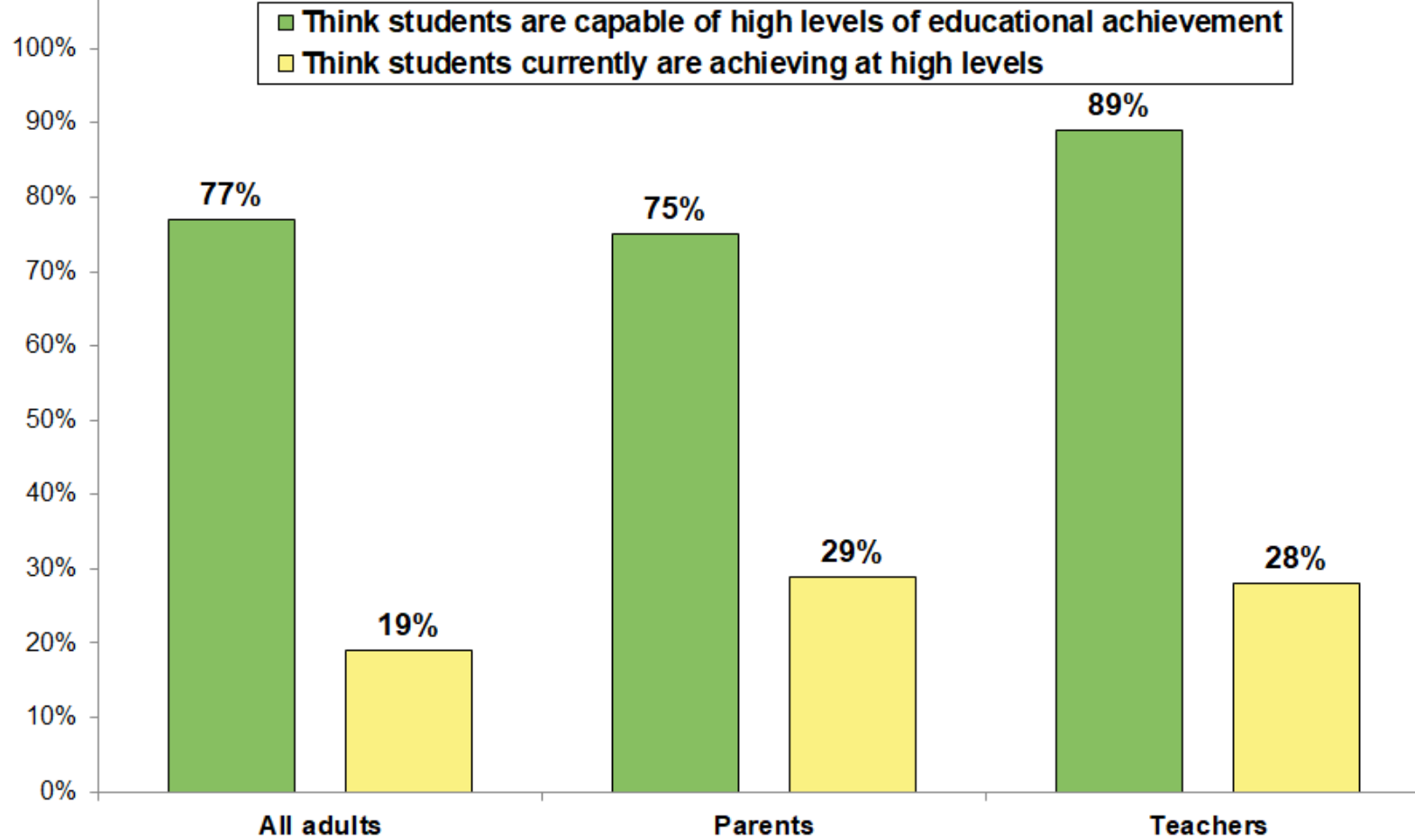
# Student Potential

- 77 percent of adults say nearly all or most students are capable of high levels of educational achievement given the right environment and support
- Only 19 percent think students reach those levels of achievement today.



# Can Students Achieve at High Levels?

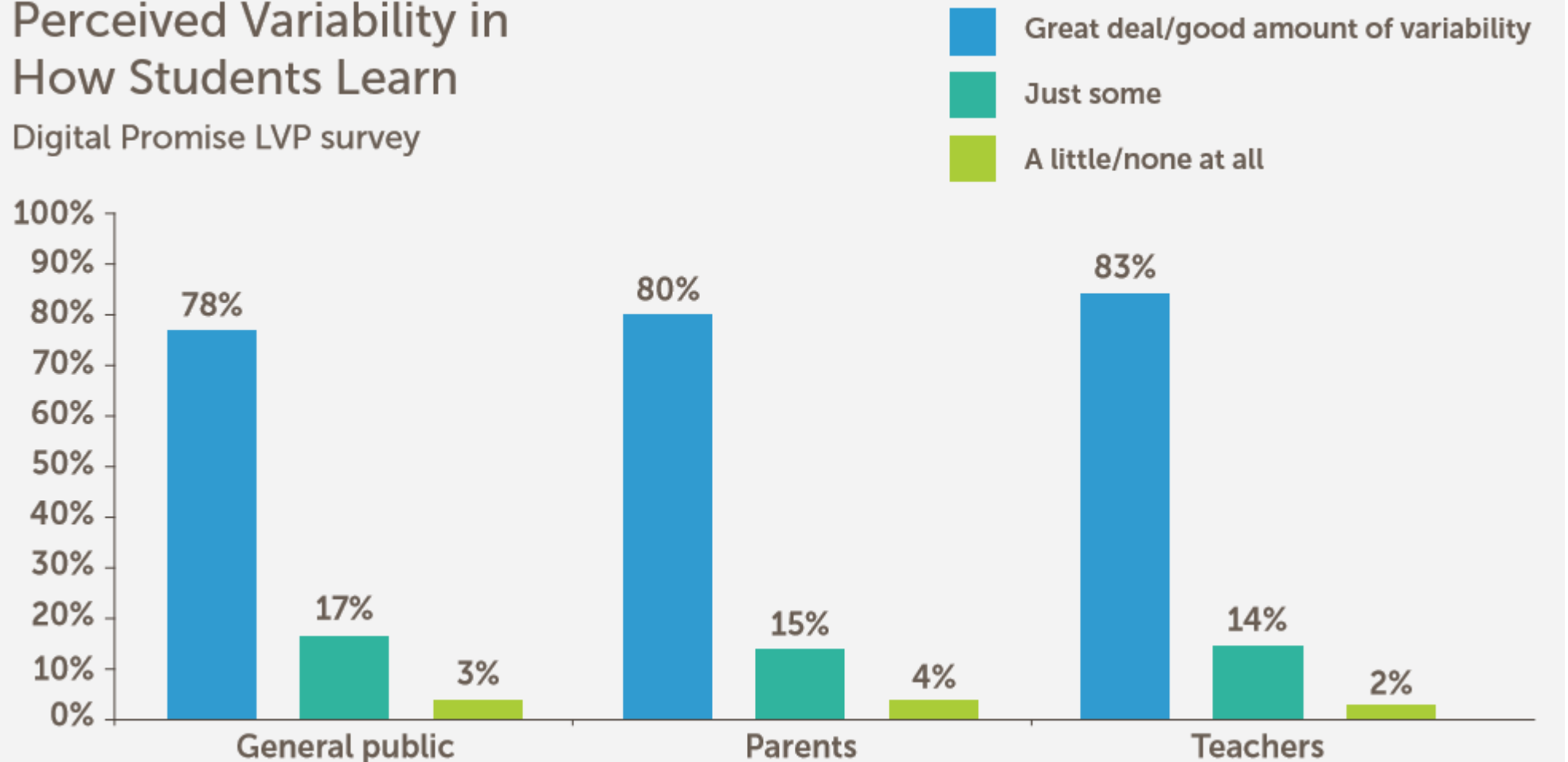
Digital Promise LVP survey



# Learner Variability

## Perceived Variability in How Students Learn

Digital Promise LVP survey



# Schools and Learner Variability

Digital Promise LVP survey

35%

General public

42%

Parents

53%

Teachers

Think their community's schools do an  
excellent or good job supporting  
learner variability

# Developing Learning Potential



Nine in 10 across groups say it's more important for schools to help students reach their full potential as learners than to help them get good grades on tests.



Sixty-four percent of all adults, 55 percent of parents and 53 percent of teachers think schools instead focus on test scores.

# Tailored vs. Whole Group Instruction

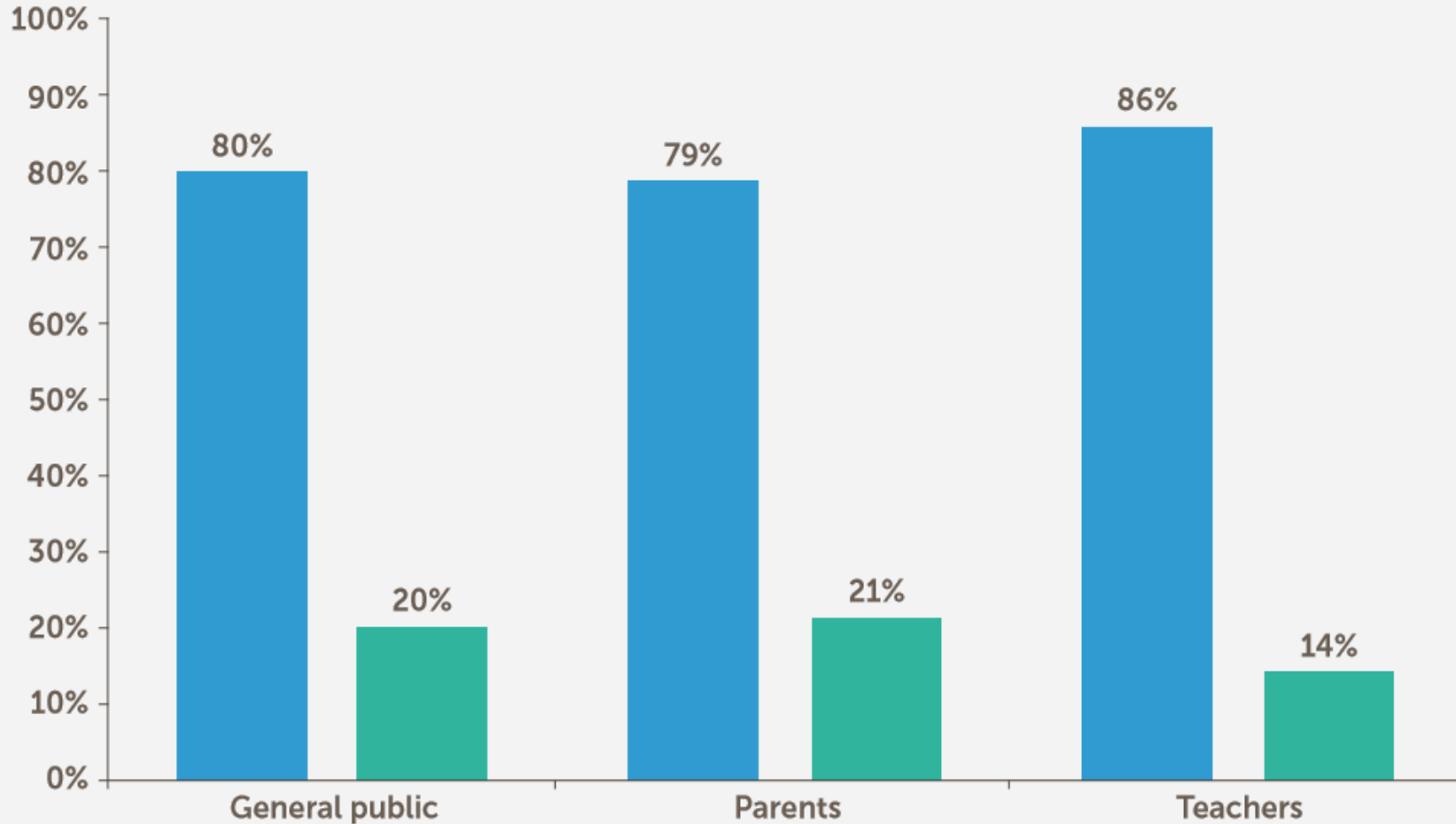
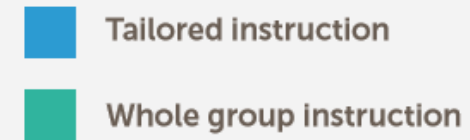
Which of these do you think is a better way for students to learn?

Whole group instruction: Students learn the same content at the same pace – keeping the whole group together and working on the same things at the same time.

Tailored instruction: Students learn different content at a different pace – instruction is adjusted for each individual based on an evaluation of how they learn.

# Better Way for Students to Learn: Tailored or Whole Group Instruction?

Digital Promise LVP survey



Widely  
preferred, not  
widely  
practiced

As far as you are aware, how common is the tailored instruction method in schools today?

	Common	Uncommon
• All adults	20%	77%
• PS parents	31%	66%
• PS teachers	39%	61%

- Support for tailored education is constrained by concerns about its cost, the effectiveness of local implementation, and the extent to which such programs would benefit all students.



# Implementing Tailored Instruction

## Perceived Major Barriers to Providing Tailored Instruction

Digital Promise LVP survey

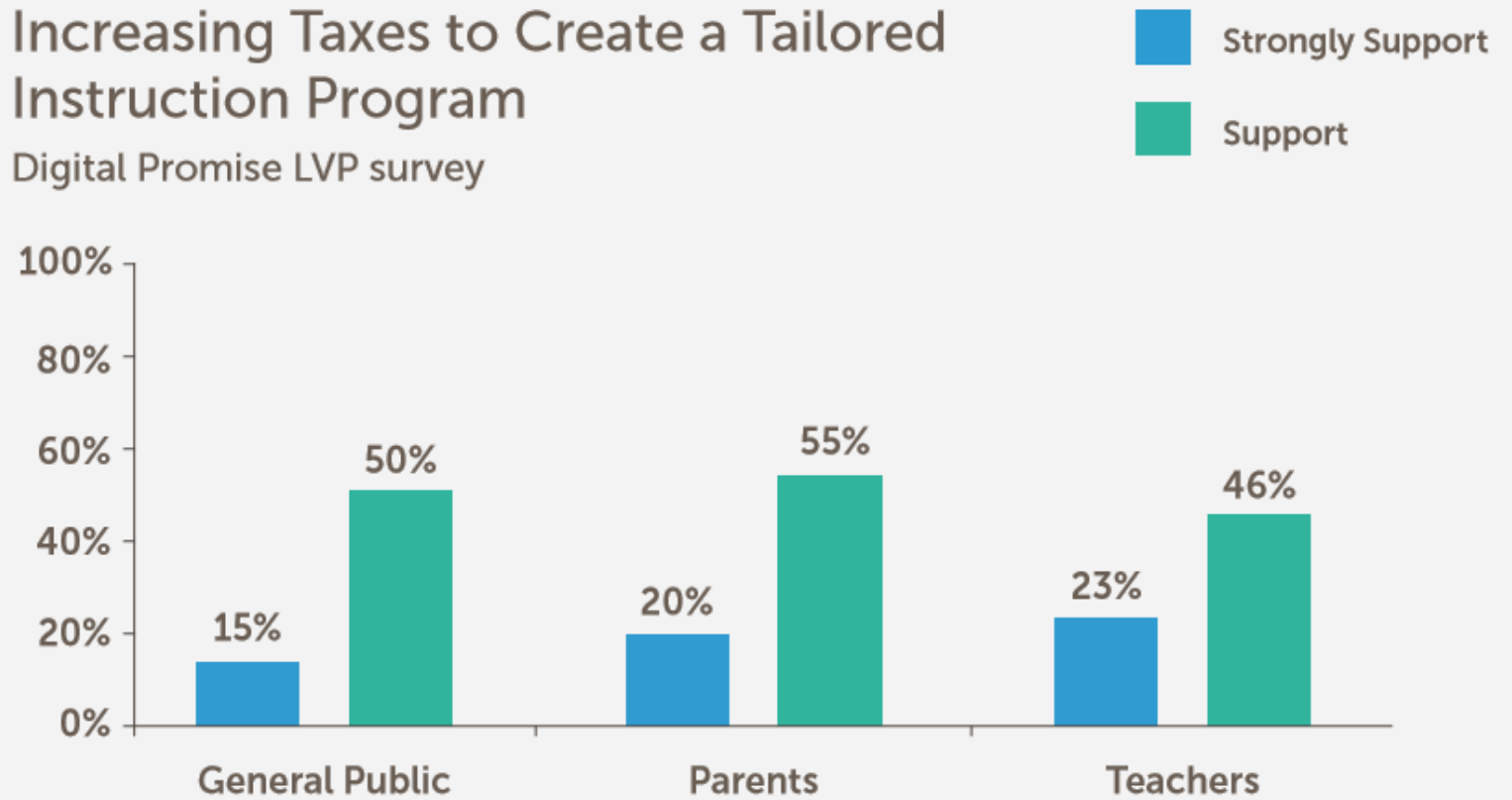
Parents  
Teachers



## Implementing Tailored Instruction

### Increasing Taxes to Create a Tailored Instruction Program

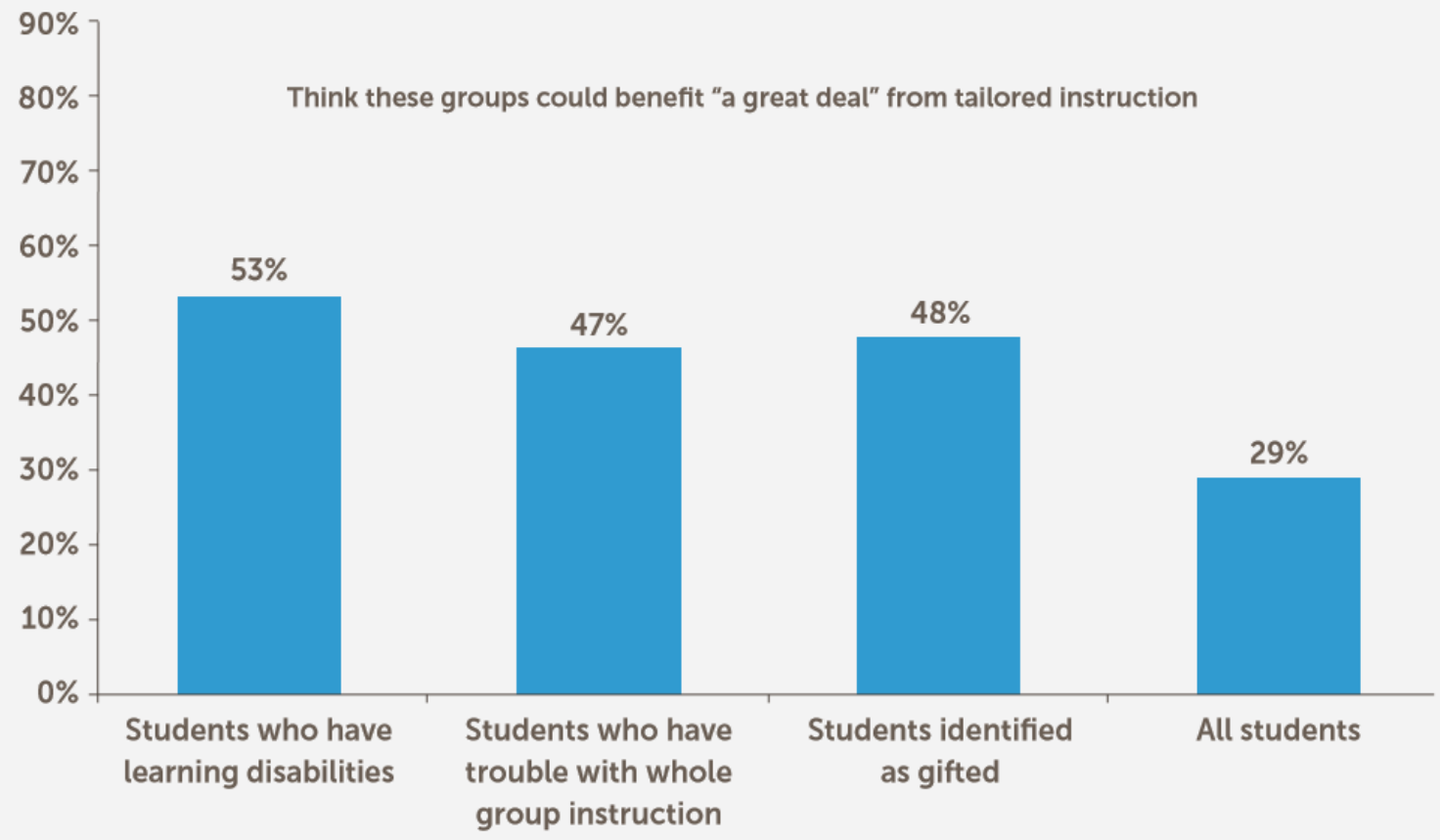
Digital Promise LVP survey



# Implementing Tailored Instruction

## Groups Seen as Benefitting from Tailored Instruction

Among general public  
Digital Promise LVP survey



# Who Benefits From Tailored Instruction?

In modeling, seeing all students as beneficiaries of tailored instruction is positively influenced by:

- Recognition of learner variability
- Belief in student capabilities
- Being black or Hispanic
- Identifying as a Democrat



# Educational Technology

Thirty-five percent of teachers report using educational technology every day in their classrooms; an additional 23 percent use it most days. Just two percent don't use it at all.

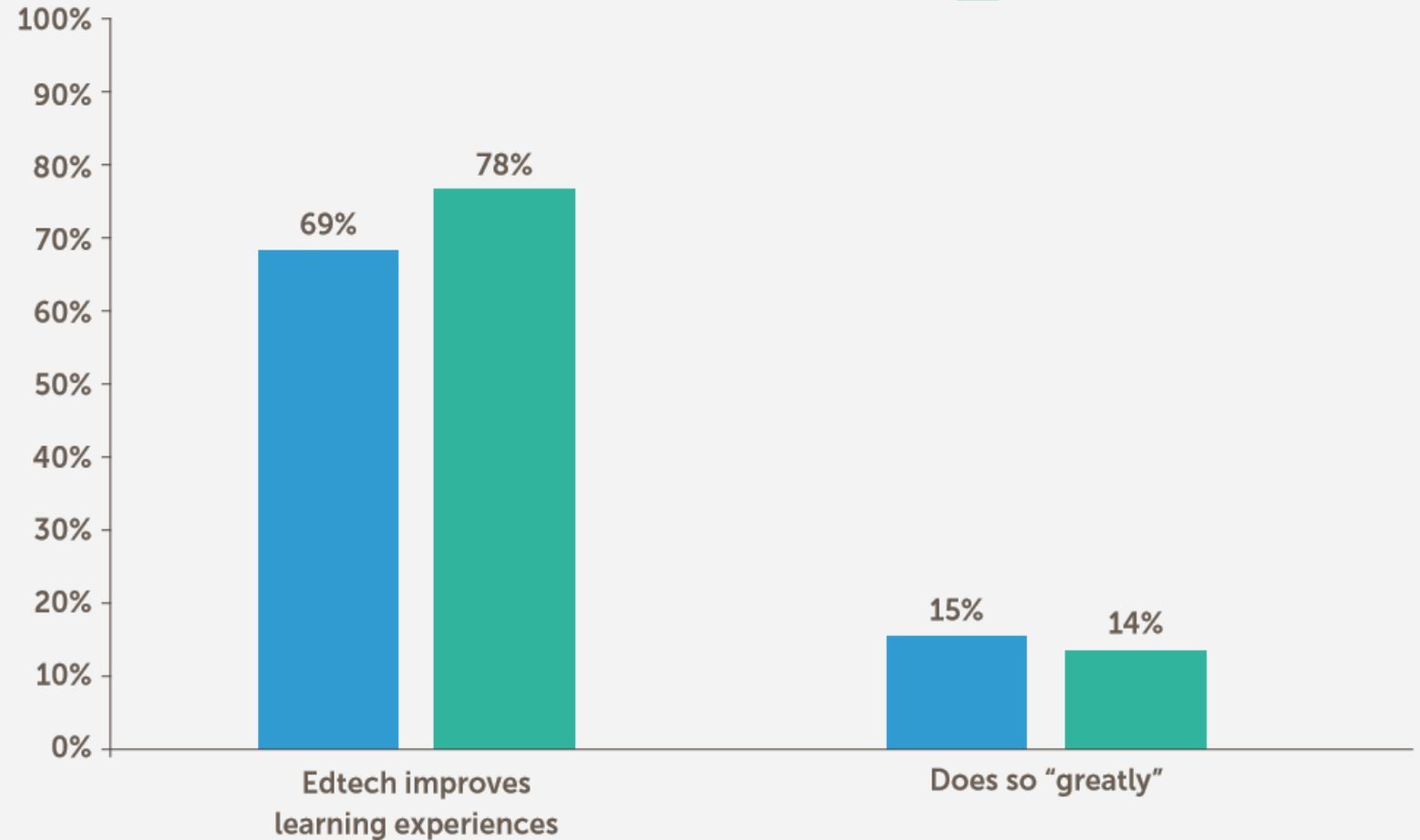
#### The survey says:

- 42% of teachers with a post-graduate degree say they use edtech every day, compared with 26% of those with only a bachelor's degree.
- K-8 teachers use edtech most frequently; 39% say they use it every day, compared with 23% of high school teachers.

# Perceived benefits of Ed Tech

## Edtech Learning Experiences

Digital Promise LVP survey



# Perceived Benefits of Ed Tech

- Ed Tech is seen as most helpful in knowledge acquisition, least so in fostering collaboration.

Does Ed Tech Use Help or Hurt Students...						
	All adults		Parents		Teachers	
	Helps	Hurts	Helps	Hurts	Helps	Hurts
<b>Find new information and ideas</b>	85%	3	85%	4	91%	6
<b>Find new learning strategies</b>	71	9	72	9	62	13
<b>Develop organizational and task management skills</b>	62	13	65	12	53	21
<b>Develop their ability to work with others</b>	36	37	40	34	33	45



# Barriers to Ed Tech

- Cost of computers
- Too much screen time
- Among teachers, just 38% feel very prepared use to ed tech resources

## Ed Tech Availability/ Digital Divide

- Access to computers in school is not always guaranteed – just 51% of teachers say they're available whenever needed.
- Six in 10 parents have educational software/apps available at home.
  - This includes 70% in \$100K+ households vs. 50% in <\$50K households

# And... Teachers' Practice

## What Teachers Rely On

Experience	96%
Instincts	90%
Teacher peers	68%
Education/ professional development	66%
Educational resources	61%
Academic research	53%
Administrators	32%

# Teachers' Practice

- Reliance on experience and instinct peaks among those with at least 10 years' experience
- Reliance on educational resources peaks (at 39 percent) among those with fewer than 10 years' experience
- Teachers who rely on academic research are more likely to
  - say they are “very comfortable” with ed tech
  - think it greatly improves students' learning experiences



# Thank you!

Gary Langer

President, Langer Research Associates

[glanger@langerresearch.com](mailto:glanger@langerresearch.com)