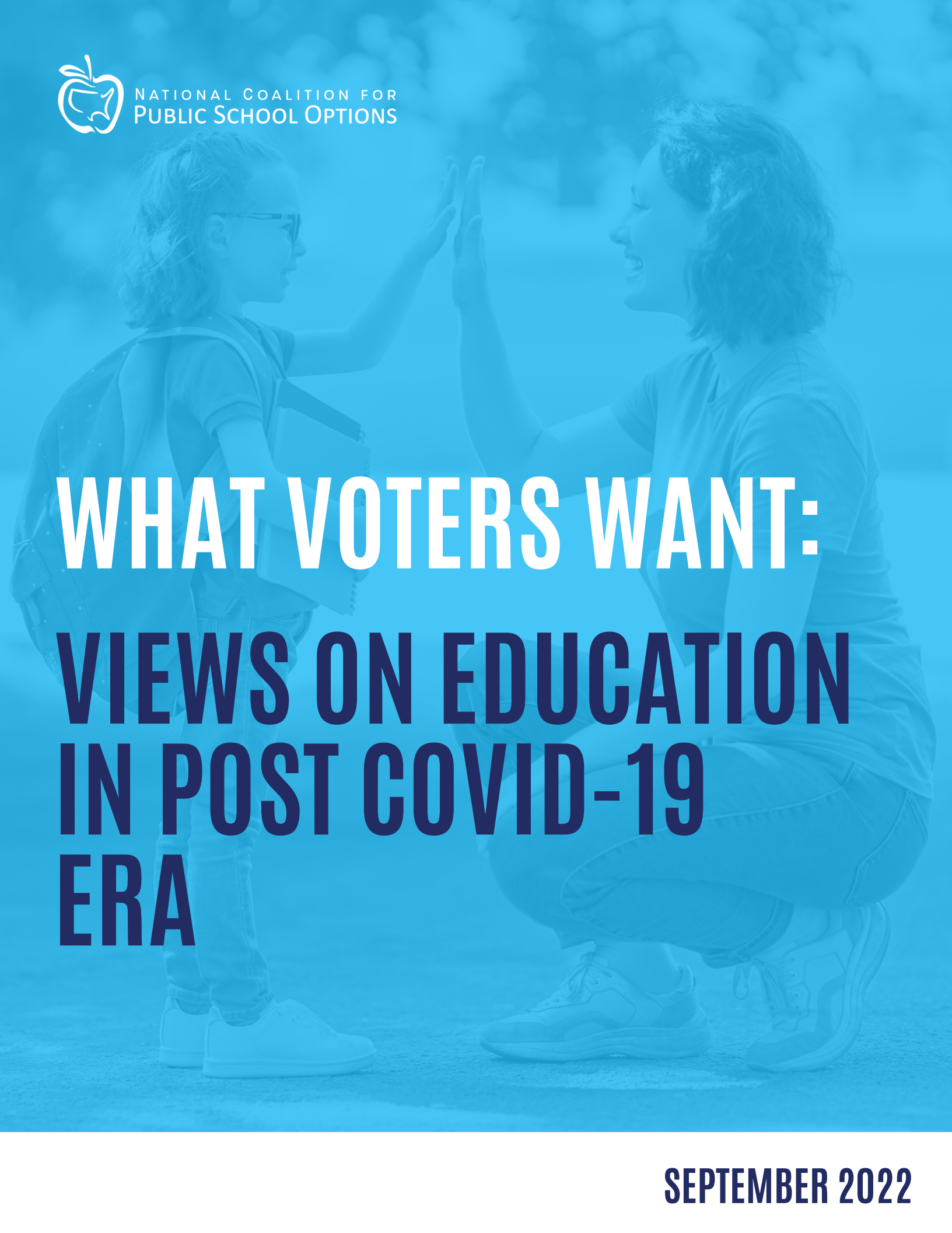




NATIONAL COALITION FOR
PUBLIC SCHOOL OPTIONS



WHAT VOTERS WANT: VIEWS ON EDUCATION IN POST COVID-19 ERA

SEPTEMBER 2022

Introduction

The pandemic caused the biggest education crisis in history, with an entire generation of students unable to go to school. Overnight, school desks and blackboards were replaced with paper packets and Zooms.

Now, more than two years later, we're still uncovering the effects the pandemic has had on our children through learning losses, mental health struggles, and behavioral issues.

Parents felt powerless as they watched their children receive a less-than-stellar education. Many parents took the initiative to find something better. Private schools, charter schools and full-time online schools saw enrollments spike, as many traditional public schools struggled to deliver an adequate education.

Now, two years later, the dust is starting to settle and a clearer picture of America's education system is emerging. Charter schools continue to see historic enrollment growth and parents feel more empowered than ever to take charge of their child's education.

Some policymakers have capitalized on parents' anger and frustration about pandemic schooling, fueling cable news debates around policies related to Critical Race Theory (CRT) and mask mandates. But, is this what parents care about? Or, are policymakers failing to see the forest by focusing only on the trees?

We were curious about these questions and more. That's why we commissioned this national study by WPA Intelligence. The study examined voters' educational choices, satisfaction with their own child's education and available schooling options.

The results were truly telling.

A majority of respondents (71%) send their children to their local district public school. When asked about the direction their local public schools are headed, majority (61%) said they are headed in the wrong direction. This sentiment cut across partisan lines, but was highest among men (79% Democratic men, 76% Republican men and 67% Independent men vs. 38% Democratic women, 49% Republican women and 64% Independent women).

At the same time, respondents are largely satisfied with their own child's education, and that is especially true for families of students in non-public schools (82% satisfied). This number dropped fairly significantly for parents of students in public schools (67%). It's also noteworthy to point out the difference between parents that are very satisfied with their child's education—70% of non-public school parents vs. 34% of public school parents.

The most important thing we learned was parents are ready to take this sentiment to the ballot box. By a 54-13 margin, voters say they would be more likely to support a candidate who supports education freedom with expanded options and money following the student. This majority view is consistent with all voters except Democrat men (36-24 margin).

What parents look for when choosing a school also varied according to political ideology, with curriculum ranking highest for Republican men, teacher quality highest for Democrat men. Across the board, 81% of respondents said curriculum aligned with their family's values and beliefs is important, with 55% reporting this as very important. State test scores and extracurricular activities rated lowest for all subgroups.

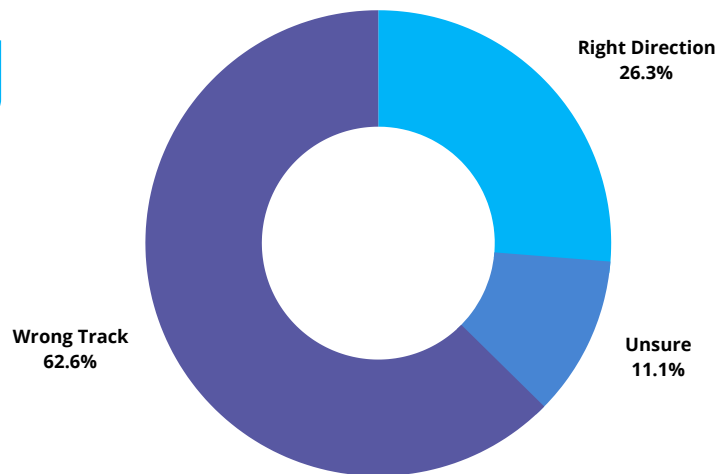
**Majority of parents
want candidates
who support
educational
freedom.**

The data overall reveals a telling picture about the state of education in America—parents of every partisan stripe want and value educational choice. This is especially true for younger Millennial and Gen-Z voters, many of which are starting to make educational decisions. If the impact these generations have had on other industries is any indication, could a consumer choice-style education system where parents have greater freedom to “shop” for the best school for their child be in our future?

Parents think public schools are on the wrong track

Majority of parents (62%) believe local public schools are headed in the wrong direction

This sentiment cuts across party lines, school type, racial ethnicity and location. More than one-third of parents (36%) say that while they believe public schools are on the wrong track, they are satisfied with their own student's school.



By Political Party

63%	66%	55%
Republican	Independent	Democrat

By School Type

59%	68%
Public School	Other School

By Location

67%	56%
Urban	Suburban/Rural

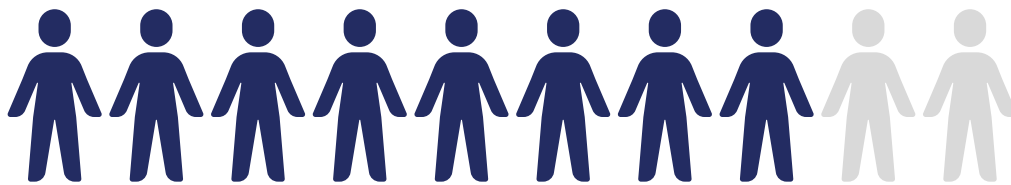
By Racial Ethnicity

62%	59%	46%
White	Hispanic	African American

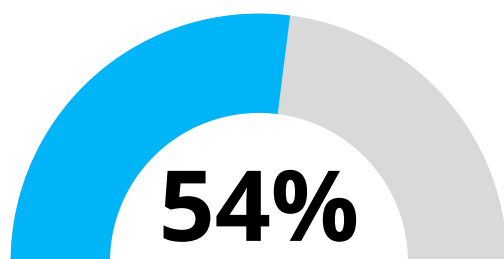
Strong support for parent choice

If you ask voters, parent choice in education is a no-brainer. This sentiment cut across party lines, ethnicities and location.

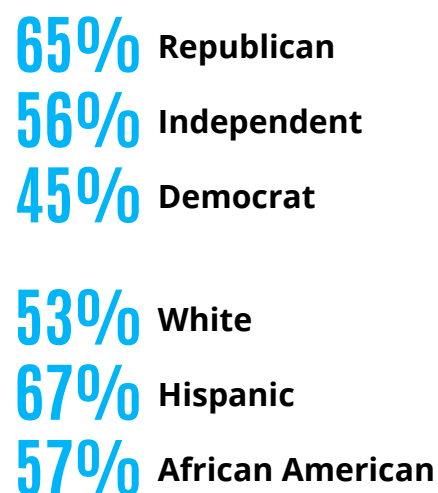
More than eight in ten voters support allowing parents to choose the best school



Parents are ready to take their support to the ballot box

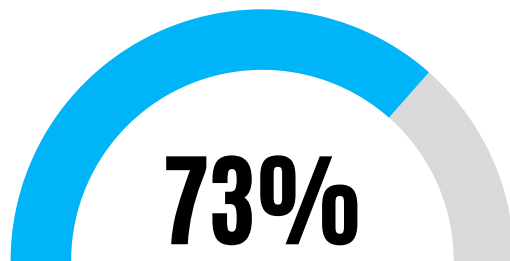


more likely to vote for a candidate that supports education freedom

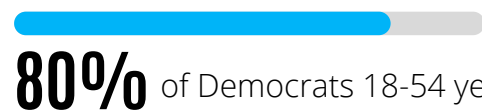


Strong support for making full-time virtual schooling available to all students

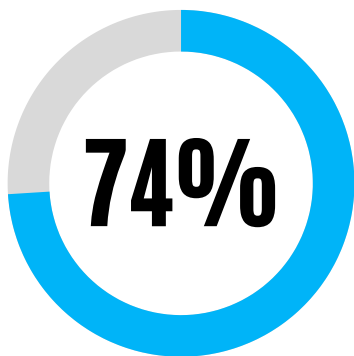
Respondents strongly favored this message: "Virtual schools allow parents to supplement their children's education with instruction that aligns with their family's beliefs and values."



agree that students should have access to full-time virtual schools.



They also say funding should follow the student

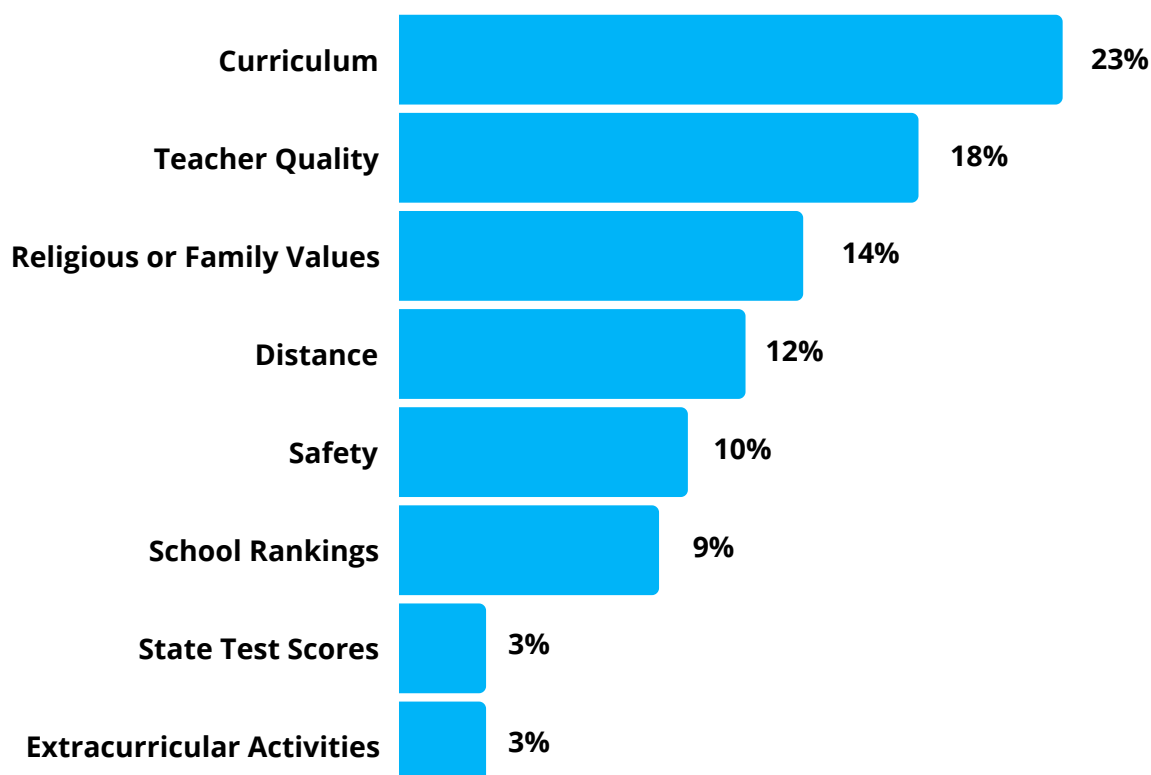


agree that funding should follow the student to the school of their parent's choice



What parents value most when choosing their child's school

Curriculum and teacher quality rank as most important for parents, with state test scores and extracurricular activities as least important.



Curriculum

✓ 28%
Republican

✗ 20%
Independent

Teacher Quality

✓ 27%
Democrat

✗ 15%
Republican

Religious/Family Values

✓ 25%
Republican

✗ 0%
Democrat

Parents and teachers trusted most to make decisions for students

The U.S. Department of Education and state elected officials were the least trusted to make educational decisions.

Teachers

Trust	Don't Trust
78%	17%

Parents

Trust	Don't Trust
78%	17%

School Boards

Trust	Don't Trust
55%	38%

Teachers Union

Trust	Don't Trust
53%	37%

US Dept. of Ed.

Trust	Don't Trust
48%	44%

State Lawmakers

Trust	Don't Trust
37%	54%

Methodology

WPA Intelligence conducted a study of registered voters nationwide on behalf of the National Coalition for Public School Options (PSO) of 850 registered voters.

WPAi selected a random sample of registered voters from the voter file using Registration Based sampling (RBS). The sample for this survey was stratified based on geography, age, gender, partisanship, and ethnicity. This methodology allows us to avoid post-survey “weighting” which can reduce the reliability of survey results.

Respondents were contacted by phone via a live telephone operator interview August 17-23, 2022. The study has a margin of error of $\pm 3.4\%$ in 95 out of 100 cases.

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