

navigator*

Wednesday, August 27th

Education: A Guide for Advocates



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Key Takeaways:

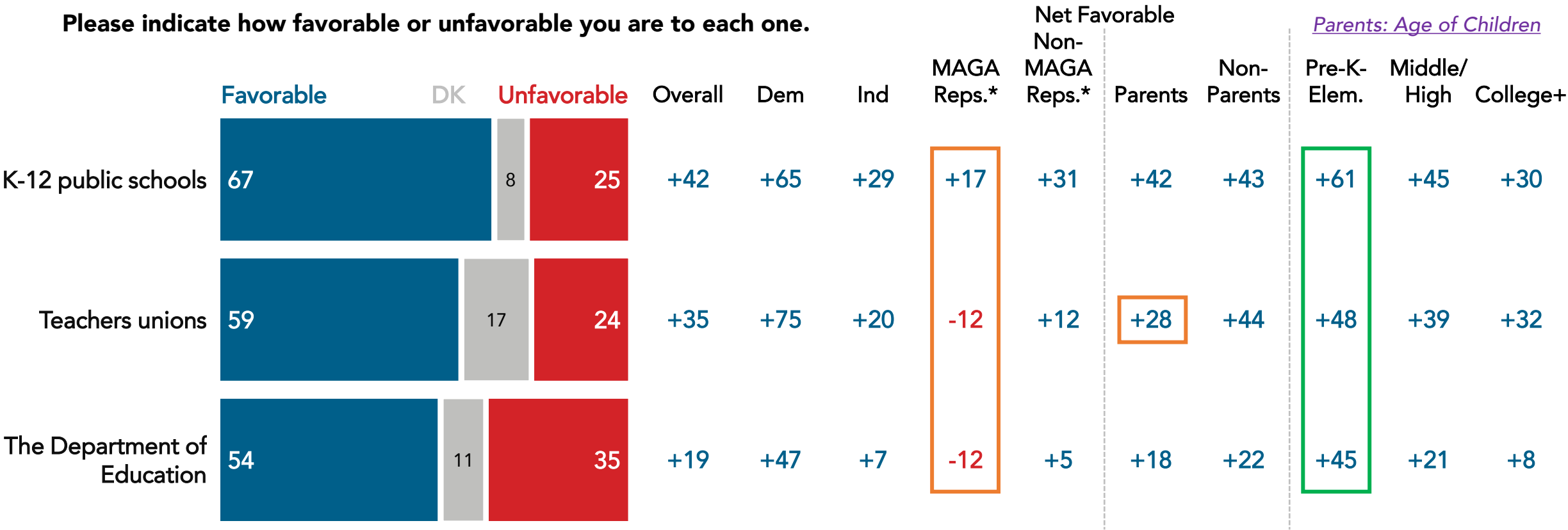
- The Democratic Party retains advantages over Trump and Republicans on a range of issues related to education.
- Americans are not optimistic about the status of education nationwide, with particular concern about the health/well-being of kids in school and the quality/content of what they're learning.
- More specifically, top concerns include school shootings, children not learning what they need to know to be successful, schools not teaching the complete history of America's past, and bullying in schools.
- The most opposed Republican education policies include defunding public education broadly, as well as taking away school lunches, threatening special education funding, and eliminating Head Start specifically.
- Acknowledging a broken education system is helpful in building the critique of Republicans' current approach to education.

Views of Parts of the Education System Differ Greatly By Party

Democrats are more favorable to K-12 public schools (net +65 favorable), teachers unions (net +75), and the Department of Education (net +47) than others, though independents and non-MAGA Republicans* are also more favorable than unfavorable toward each item.

- Views of teachers unions have improved since two years ago (net +35 favorable now, compared to net +30 in August 2023).

Please indicate how favorable or unfavorable you are to each one.



*"MAGA Republicans" are Republicans who identify as "a supporter of the MAGA movement" on a separate question, while "non-MAGA Republicans" are Republicans who do not consider themselves supporters of the MAGA movement or are not sure.
Nationwide surveys of registered voters; Each wave represents approximately 1,000 interviews taken over the prior three-five days.
Latest wave conducted August 7-August 11, 2025. For more info, visit navigatortresearch.org.

Democrats Retain a Series of Advantages Over Trump and Republicans on Education-Related Issues

The Democratic Party's greatest advantages come on public school funding (net +17 trust Democrats more) and teacher pay (net +15).

Below is a list of issues. Please indicate who you personally trust more to handle each one.

	Net Trust the Democratic Party									
	The Democratic Party	DK	Trump and the Republican Party	Overall	Dem	Ind	Rep	MAGA Reps.*	Non-MAGA Reps.*	
Public school funding	50	17	33	+17	+81	+20	-50	-70	-20	
Teacher pay	47	21	32	+15	+79	+19	-50	-64	-29	
Student loans	46	19	35	+11	+77	+10	-55	-66	-36	
Making sure public schools are able to do their jobs	47	16	37	+10	+81	+21	-65	-77	-47	
Education	48	13	39	+9	+82	+17	-66	-82	-41	
Trade and vocational education	43	21	36	+7	+73	+7	-60	-77	-37	
Improving the quality of schools	45	16	39	+6	+81	+12	-68	-84	-45	
Looking out for children	46	13	41	+5	+78	+14	-72	-84	-55	
Keeping children safe in schools	44	15	41	+3	+75	+12	-69	-80	-54	
Keeping politics out of the classroom	38	24	38	0	+63	+9	-66	-78	-48	
Making sure parents have input over what's being taught in public school classrooms	38	18	44	-6	+63	-4	-77	-89	-57	

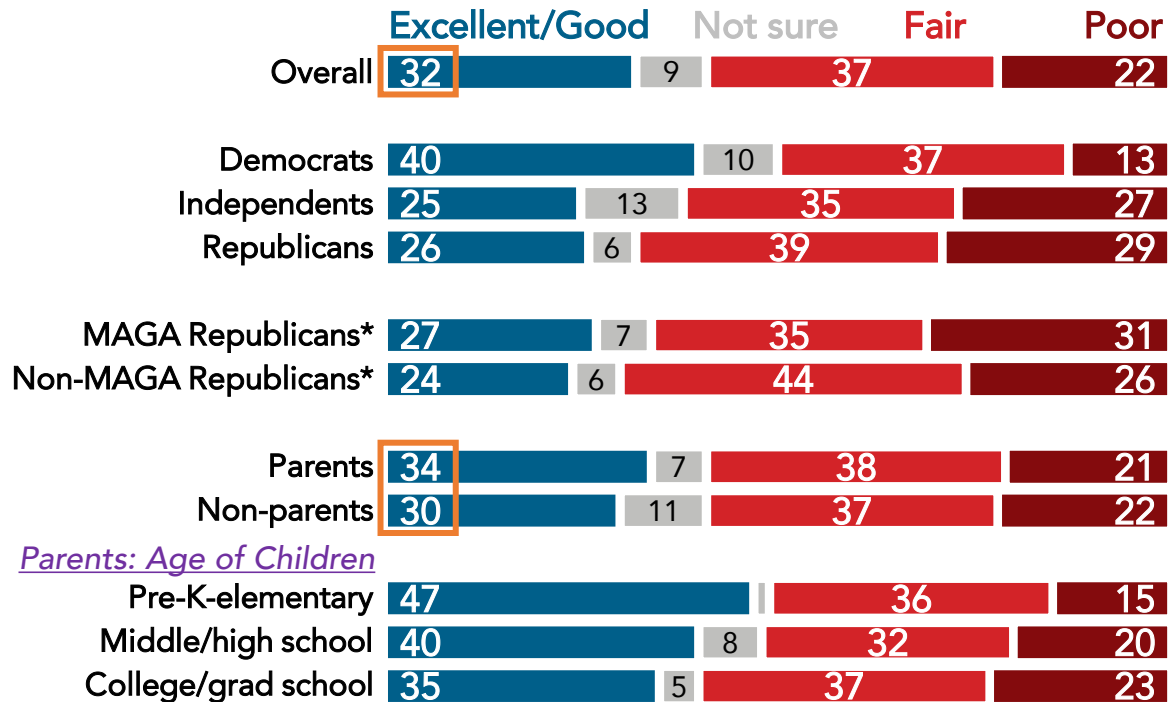
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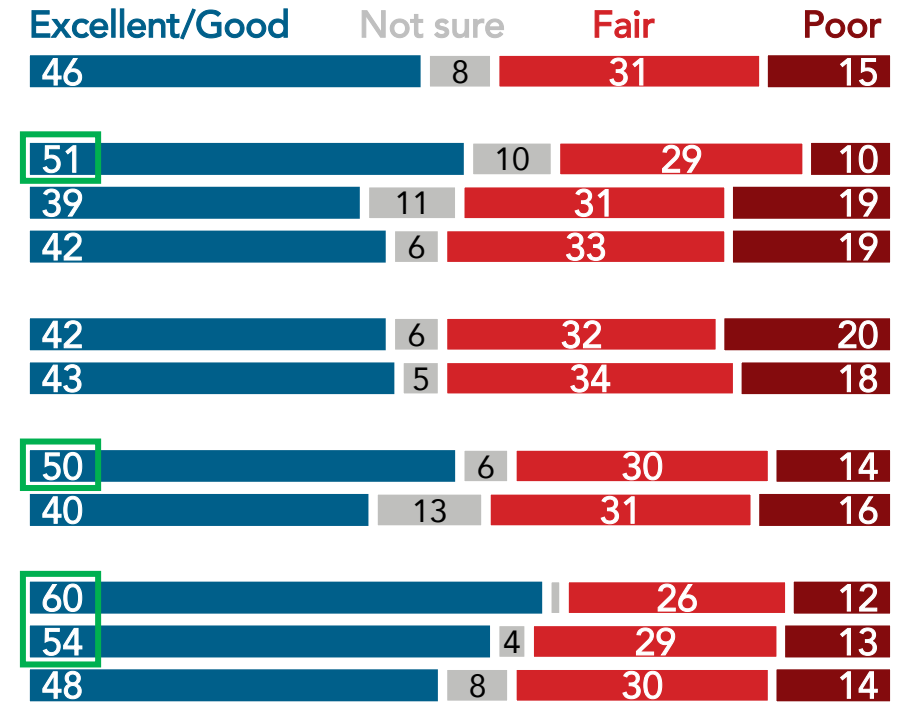
Americans Are More Optimistic About Public Schools in Their Community Than Nationally, But Even Then Views Are Mixed

Slim majorities of Democrats (51% “excellent” or “good”) and parents of children in pre-K or elementary school (60%) and middle/high school (54%) say public schools in their local area are doing an “excellent” or “good” job on behalf of kids.

In general, how would you rate the job that K-12 public schools **nationally** are doing on behalf of America’s kids?



In general, how would you rate the job that K-12 public schools **in your local area** are doing on behalf of kids?



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Schools Are Best at Being Accessible for All Regardless of Income and Supporting Students

Below is a list of things some people say American K-12 public schools are doing well. Please select all that you think K-12 public schools are doing well.

	% doing well	Dem	Ind	Rep	MAGA Reps.*	Non- MAGA Reps.*	Parents	Non- Parents	<i>Parents: Age of Children</i>		
									Pre-K- Elem.	Middle/ High	Coll.+
Being accessible to all students and families, regardless of their income	51%	60	43	43	41	46	51	51	57	44	47
Supporting students and working hard to help them succeed	41	49	34	34	32	37	42	39	49	43	43
Making sure students are prepared for higher education	34	43	29	26	27	26	35	33	42	40	29
Preparing students for the jobs of the future	30	36	26	26	26	26	30	31	31	33	36
Increasing family and community engagement	28	36	24	22	22	22	28	29	36	25	29
Serving as community centers	26	34	19	20	20	19	24	29	30	28	30

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The Health and Well-Being of Kids and the Content/Quality of What They're Learning Are Biggest Concerns on Education

Below is a list of concerns Americans may have about K-12 public schools. Please indicate which two you are most concerned about.

	% top two most concerned	<u>Parents: Age of Children</u>									
		Dem	Ind	Rep	MAGA Reps.*	Non-MAGA Reps.*	Parents	Non-Parents	Pre-K- Elem.	Middle/ High	Coll.+
The health, safety, and well-being of kids in school	46%	52	46	40	37	44	49	42	52	44	42
The quality and content of what kids are learning	45	35	44	55	59	48	46	44	41	40	40
The resources and funding that we are providing our schools	28	41	25	17	15	19	29	28	32	28	25
The ability of students to succeed	23	21	23	25	24	27	23	23	26	29	23
The way teachers are being treated	21	27	18	16	14	19	19	24	22	23	22
The way we're running our schools	18	10	20	26	31	18	18	18	10	17	19

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School Shootings, Children Being Unprepared, Schools Not Teaching Full U.S. History Among Greatest Concerns

Below is a list of concerns some people have about American K-12 public schools. Please indicate how concerning you find each one on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means you do not find it concerning at all and 5 means you find it extremely concerning. [Top 10 of 20]

	% 5 – extremely		% 4		% Extremely Concerning (5)					Non-MAGA		Non-Parents	
/ Split sample					Dem	Ind	Rep	MAGA Reps.*	Non-MAGA Reps.*	Parents	Non-Parents		
The persistent threat of violence and shootings at school	59		20		66	52	53	52	55	61	57		
Children not learning the material they need to know to be successful in the future	56		25		51	58	59	58	61	59	52		
***Schools not teaching the complete, honest history of America's past	55		20		60	55	49	51	46	59	50		
Bullying and harassment at school	54		23		56	51	52	52	52	56	51		
Students not being taught practical skills to prepare them for good-paying jobs	51		26		45	50	58	58	59	56	46		
***Schools banning books because of their political content or discussions of race, gender, and sexuality	50		16		68	44	32	28	38	50	49		
Lack of funding for public schools	49		21		65	45	33	29	40	49	49		
Mental health issues in students	48		26		53	45	43	45	41	49	46		
**Teachers imposing their political ideology in the classroom	46		17		33	38	61	61	61	49	41		
Students being allowed to compete on sports teams that don't match the sex they were born with	45		14		26	41	66	71	58	52	37		

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Americans Are Less Concerned About Helicopter Parents, Pandemic Learning Loss, High Pressure in Schools

Below is a list of concerns some people have about American K-12 public schools. Please indicate how concerning you find each one on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means you do not find it concerning at all and 5 means you find it extremely concerning. [Bottom 10 of 20]

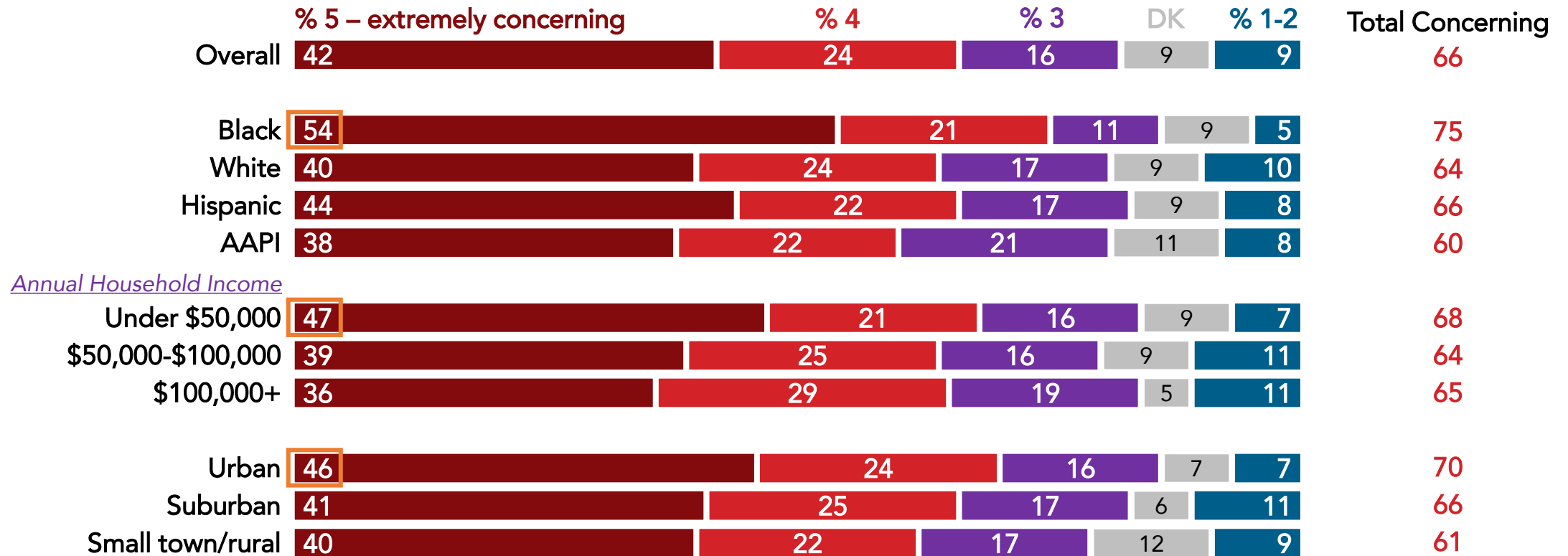
	% 5 – extremely		% 4		% Extremely Concerning (5)			MAGA	Non-		
/ Split sample					Dem	Ind	Rep	Reps.*	MAGA	Parents	Non-
									Reps.*		Parents
Teachers not getting paid enough for the job they do	44		25		56	44	31	27	38	42	45
Children being distracted by cell phones and other technology in schools	42		26		40	41	45	44	47	45	39
Unequal funding for public schools based on neighborhood	42		24		54	39	31	29	34	43	41
Teacher burnout and shortages	42		27		52	39	32	28	37	42	42
**Students being exposed to inappropriate or pornographic content in school libraries	40		13		30	37	52	56	47	45	34
Parents not having a say in what their kids are learning	39		18		24	42	53	55	50	43	34
Unhealthy foods in American public schools	31		23		29	33	31	32	30	33	27
**Kids facing too much pressure in schools and being unable to have fun growing up	30		26		33	26	28	29	27	27	34
Lingering effects from pandemic learning loss that continue to set kids back	30		27		31	25	29	31	27	31	28
***Students being too closely monitored by schools and parents and not learning to be independent	23		20		22	27	24	25	22	27	20

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Education Inequity Concerns Differ By Race, Income, Geography

Black Americans (54% extremely concerned, 75% total concerned), Americans in urban communities (46%, 70%), and those making under \$50,000 a year (47%, 68%) are among the most concerned about unequal funding for public schools based on neighborhood.

Please indicate how concerning you find each one on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means you do not find it concerning at all and 5 means you find it extremely concerning. Please indicate how concerning you find: Unequal funding for public schools based on neighborhood.

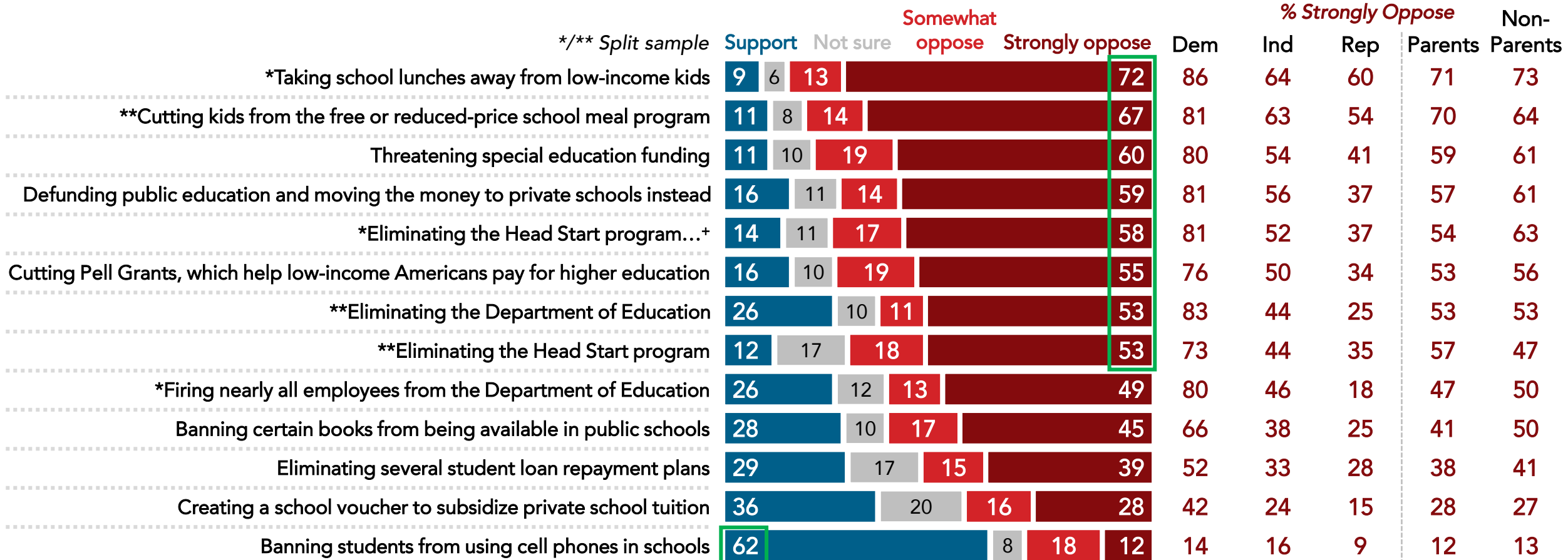


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Defunding Public Education Broadly (and Meals, Special Education, & Head Start Specifically) Least Popular GOP Policies

Below is a list of education policies that have been recently proposed or enacted. Please indicate whether you support or oppose each one.

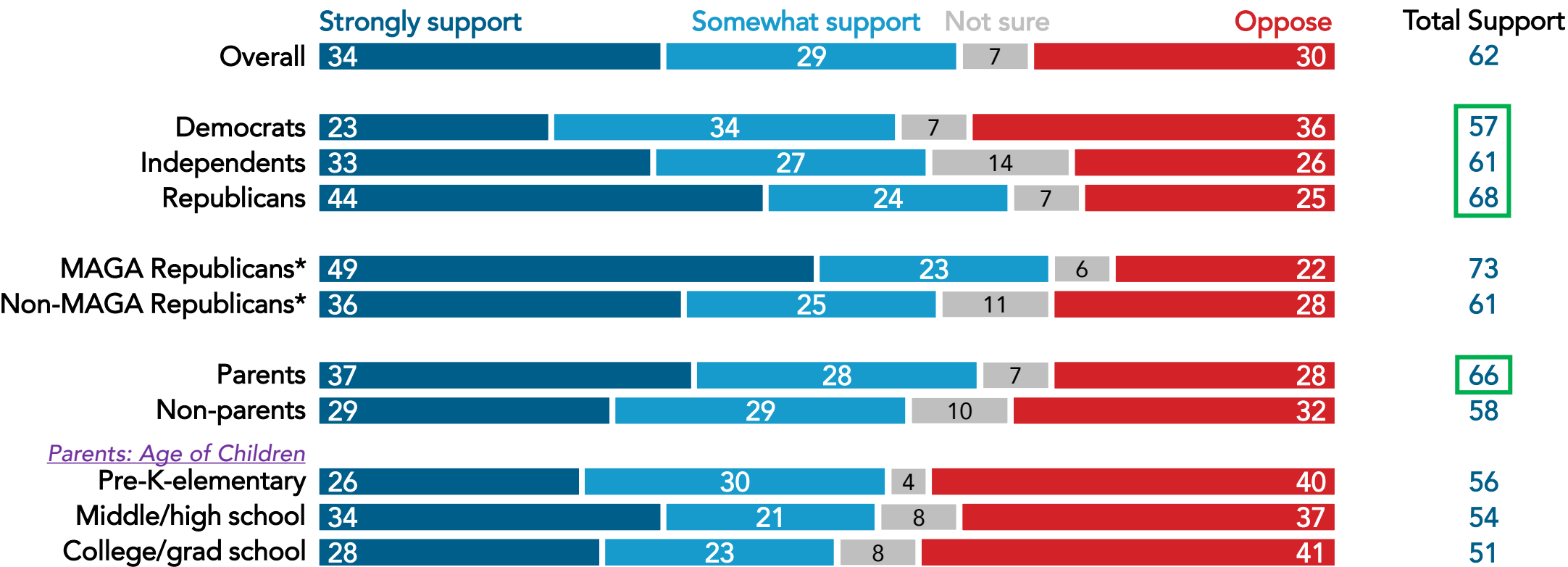


*Full question text included: "...ending preschool education programs for the children of low-income families."
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More Than Three in Five Support Banning Students From Using Cell Phones in Schools, Including Bipartisan Majorities

After moves by governors in states like New York to ban students from using cell phones in schools, majorities across party lines (ranging from 57% of Democrats to 68% of Republicans) and two in three parents (66%) say they support the policy.

Please indicate whether you support or oppose: Banning students from using cell phones in schools.

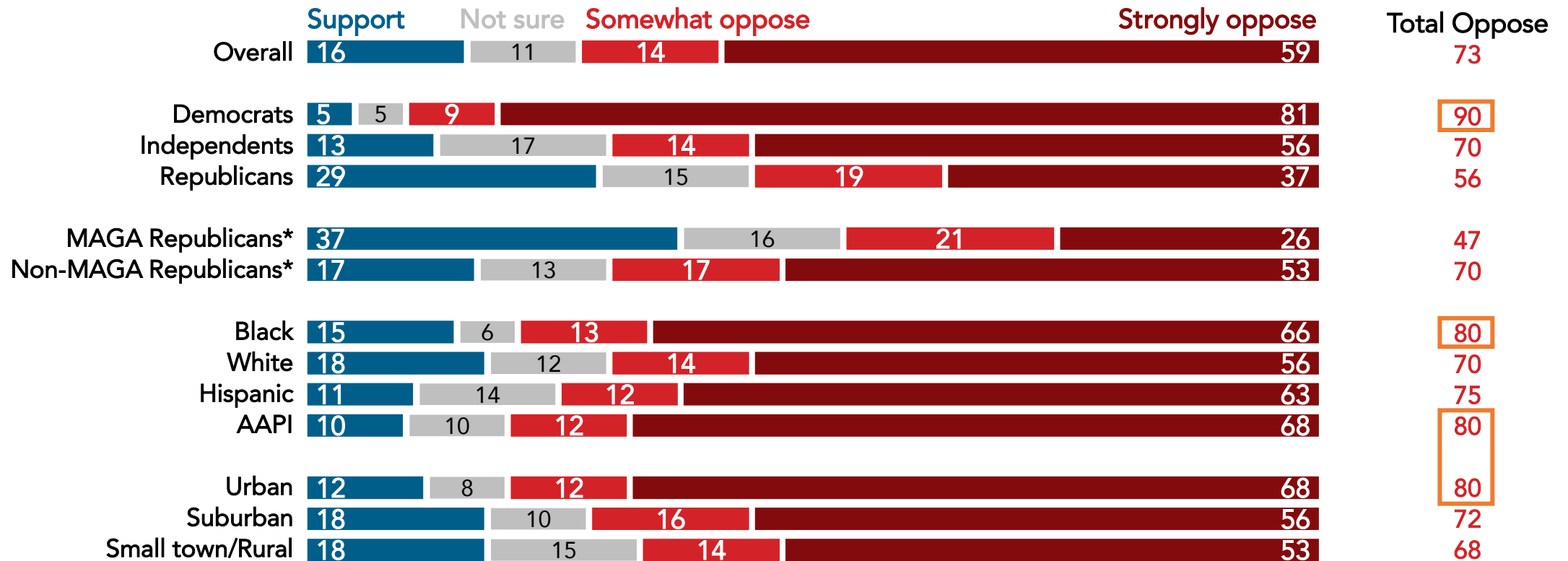


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Defunding Public Education Is an Even Greater Concern for Americans of Color and Families in Urban Communities

Democrats (90% oppose), Black Americans (80%), AAPI Americans (80%), and Americans in urban communities (80%) most oppose defunding public education and moving the money to private schools instead.

Please indicate whether you support or oppose: Defunding public education and moving the money to private schools instead.



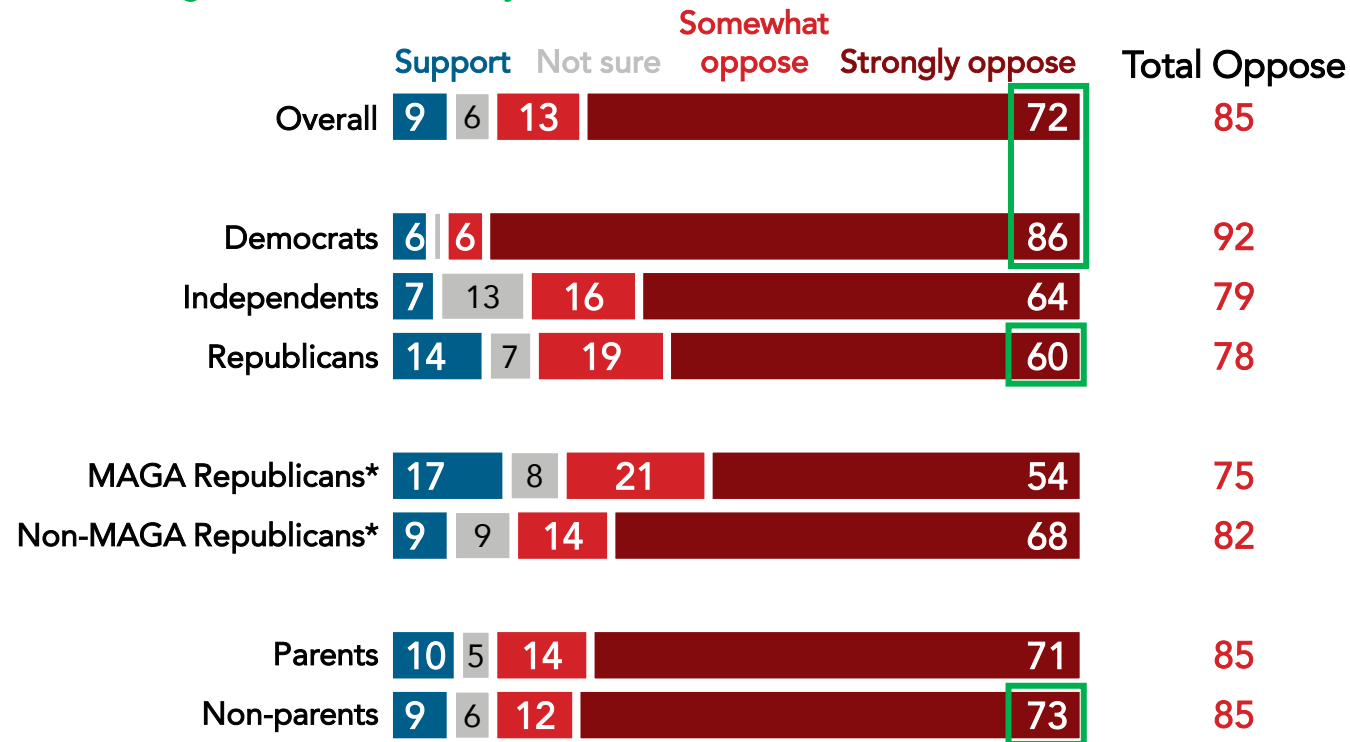
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"Taking Away School Lunches" Is More Impactful Language Than "Cuts" to Meal Programs

More Americans strongly oppose "taking school lunches away from low-income kids" (72% strongly oppose), driven by higher intensity of opposition among Democrats (86% vs. 81%), Republicans (60% vs. 54%), and non-parents (73% vs. 64%).

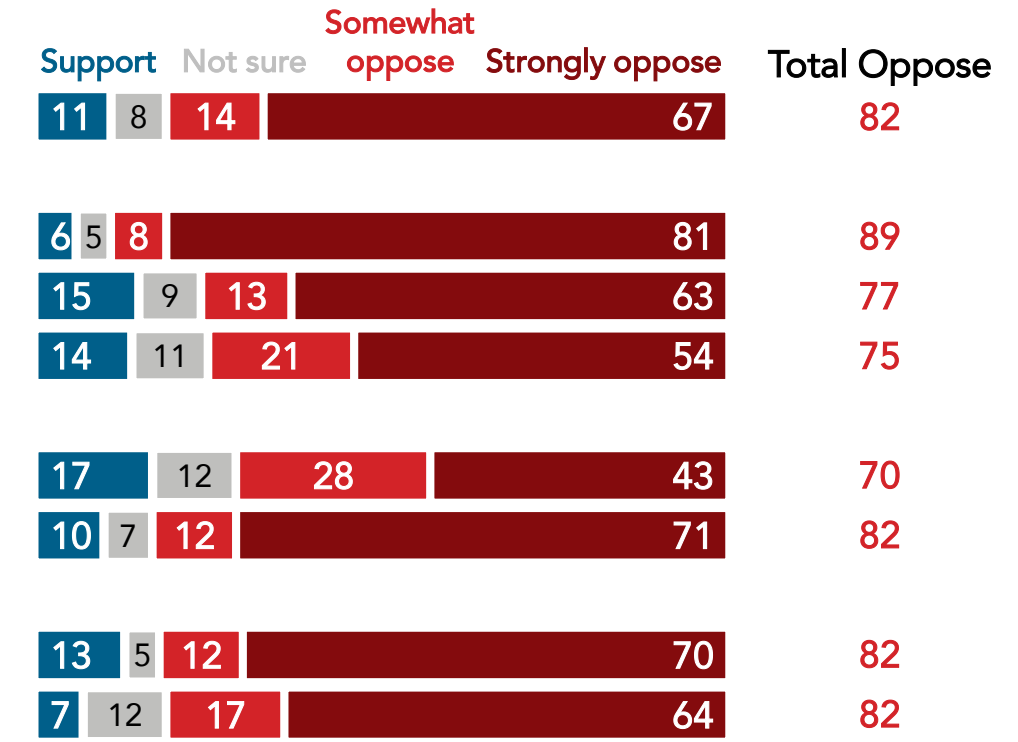
(Split Sample) Please indicate whether you support or oppose:

Taking school lunches away from low-income kids.



(Split Sample) Please indicate whether you support or oppose:

Cutting kids from the free or reduced-price school meal program.



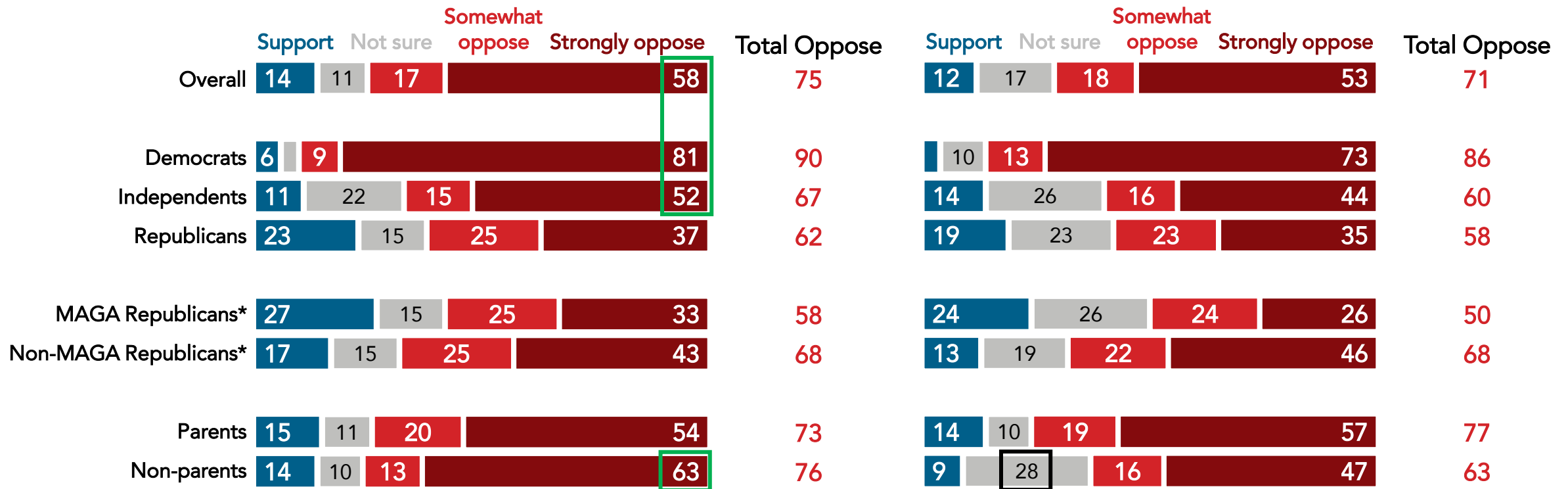
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Defining Head Start Helps Bolster Opposition to Cuts

With an explanation of what Head Start is, intensity of opposition to cuts jumps from 53% strongly oppose to 58%. This is driven in part by a significant gap among non-parents, with 47% strongly opposing without explanation (and 28% not sure) and 63% with (just 10% not sure).

(Split Sample) Please indicate whether you support or oppose:
Eliminating the Head Start program, **ending preschool education programs for the children of low-income families.**

(Split Sample) Please indicate whether you support or oppose:
Eliminating the Head Start program.



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Outcomes of Public Education Spending Cuts: Losing School Meals, Kids Falling Behind Biggest Concerns

Some have proposed cutting funding for K-12 public schools. Below is a list of potential impacts of those funding cuts. Please indicate how concerned you are about each one. [Top 8 of 15]

			% Very Concerned			MAGA Reps.*	Non- MAGA Reps.*	Parents	Non- Parents
	Very concerned	Somewhat	Dem	Ind	Rep				
Millions of children losing access to school meals	58	19	75	54	42	38	49	57	60
More kids falling behind in schools, including in reading ability and math	58	25	65	50	53	52	53	59	57
Eliminating programs for students with disabilities	55	21	70	50	41	35	50	55	55
Kids not being prepared for the workforce	53	29	55	53	50	47	55	54	50
Budget cuts disproportionately hurting lower-income students and underfunded schools	49	25	67	44	31	27	37	45	53
Taxpayer dollars being given to private schools at the expense of public schools	48	20	67	41	31	25	40	49	47
Kids who need it not having access to mental health counselors	48	28	64	44	33	31	37	48	48
K-12 public schools closing due to lack of funding	47	24	66	45	28	23	35	46	47

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Outcomes of Public Education Spending Cuts: Bus Availability, Large Class Sizes Less Concerning

Some have proposed cutting funding for K-12 public schools. Below is a list of potential impacts of those funding cuts. Please indicate how concerned you are about each one. [Bottom 7 of 15]

			% Very Concerned			MAGA Reps.*	Non-MAGA Reps.*	Parents	Non-Parents
	/ Split sample	Very concerned	Somewhat	Dem	Ind	Rep			
School districts not having the resources to pay for special education teachers		46	28	61	43	33	28	39	47 45
**A worsening teacher shortage, leading to teacher burnout		46	30	63	42	29	23	38	43 49
Teachers not being paid a livable wage		46	27	61	42	31	27	36	44 48
***A worsening teacher shortage, leaving kids without teachers or with rotating substitutes		45	29	60	46	30	25	37	46 44
Larger class sizes and overcrowded classrooms		42	31	51	39	34	33	35	45 39
***Limited availability of school buses to get kids to school		39	29	52	38	27	21	34	43 35
**School buses decreasing routes		34	30	43	31	25	21	32	35 32

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Pivoting From a Broken Education System Strengthens a Hit on the Republican Education Approach

Though an argument criticizing the Republican approach on education wins out in both debates, a message that highlights that “our education system is broken” is slightly more persuasive overall (net +14 progressive statement) and among independents (net +18).

Which side do you agree with more?

Statement 1: Republicans who say we should give states back control over their own public schools, increase vocational training, and make sure parents have school choice and a say over where their kids go to school and what they are taught.

Statement 2: [STANDARD] Those who say what Republicans are doing on education isn't working: we need to make sure students get what they need to be successful, and that means making sure schools have the resources to pay teachers a fair wage and to hire enough of them to prevent overfilled classrooms, to buy up-to-date textbooks, and to invest in science and math education.

Overall

Statement 1:	39%	Net Statement 2:
Statement 2:	48%	+9

Independents

Statement 1:	38%	Net Statement 2:
Statement 2:	40%	+2

Statement 3: [ANTI-STATUS QUO] Those who say our education system is broken, but what Republicans are doing on education isn't working: we need to make sure students get what they need to be successful, and that means making sure schools have the resources to pay teachers a fair wage and to hire enough of them to prevent overfilled classrooms, to buy up-to-date textbooks, and to invest in science and math education.

Overall

Statement 1:	36%
Statement 3:	50%

Independents

Statement 1:	29%
Statement 3:	47%

Net Statement 3:
+14

Net Statement 3:
+18

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Broad Criticisms of GOP Spending Cuts Are Better Than Targeted Voucher Criticisms Against School Choice

An argument that criticizes the Republican approach broadly of “defunding public schools” wins out over a Republican school choice argument (net +4 progressive statement), while a message that narrows in on these cuts as paying “for tax breaks for kids to go to private schools” is slightly less persuasive (net -2).

Which side do you agree with more?

Statement 1: Republicans who say we need to give parents the freedom to choose where they send their kids to school so they can be successful, whether that is a public or private school, and allow them to use their tax dollars to do so.

Statement 2: [DEFUNDING, VOUCHERS] Those who say Republicans are defunding public schools which 90% of American children attend, all to pay for tax breaks for kids to go to private schools and make it even harder for public school students to get what they need to be successful – like new books and computers, high quality teachers, and safe buildings.

Statement 3: [DEFUNDING BROAD] Those who say Republicans are defunding public schools which 90% of children attend, making it even harder for students to get what they need to be successful – like new books and computers, high-quality teachers, and safe buildings.

Overall

Statement 1: 43%
Statement 2: 41%

Net Statement 2:
-2

Independents

Statement 1: 31%
Statement 2: 37%

Net Statement 2:
+6

Overall

Statement 1: 40%
Statement 3: 44%

Net Statement 3:
+4

Independents

Statement 1: 37%
Statement 3: 43%

Net Statement 3:
+6

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About Navigator

In a world where the news cycle is the length of a tweet, our leaders often lack the real-time public-sentiment analysis to shape the best approaches to talking about the issues that matter the most. Navigator is designed to act as a consistent, flexible, responsive tool to inform policy debates by conducting research and reliable guidance to inform allies, elected leaders, and the press. Navigator is a project led by pollsters from Global Strategy Group and GBAO along with an advisory committee, including: Jessica Floyd, The Hub Project; Christina Reynolds; Mike Podhorzer; Jesse Ferguson, progressive strategist; Navin Nayak; Stephanie Valencia, EquisLabs; and Melanie Newman, Planned Parenthood Action Fund.

About the Study

Global Strategy Group conducted a public opinion survey among a sample of 1,000 registered voters from August 7-August 11, 2025. 100 additional interviews were conducted among Hispanic voters. 100 additional interviews were conducted among African American voters. 77 additional interviews were conducted among Asian American and Pacific Islander voters. 100 additional interviews were conducted among independent voters. The survey was conducted online, recruiting respondents from an opt-in online panel vendor. Respondents were verified against a voter file and special care was taken to ensure the demographic composition of our sample matched that of the national registered voter population across a variety of demographic variables. The margin of error for the full sample at the 95 percent level of confidence is +/- 3.1 percentage points. The margin of error for subgroups varies and is higher.

For Press inquiries contact:

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To learn more about Navigator:

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