

INTERSTATE SURVEY

What Do Voters Say About K-12 Education in Six States?

Polling Paper No. 1
November 29, 2010

Alabama
Arkansas
Kansas
Mississippi
New Jersey
New York

With questions on state performance, education spending, graduation rates, State NAEP rankings, charter schools, virtual schools, tax-credit scholarships, and vouchers

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Survey Project & Profile

States:	Alabama, Arkansas, Kansas, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York
Title:	Interstate Survey: What Do Voters Say About K-12 Education in Six States?
Survey Organization:	Braun Research Incorporated (BRI)
Sponsor:	The Foundation for Educational Choice
Interview Dates:	July 26 to August 1, 2010
Interview Method:	Live Telephone 80% landline and 20% cell phone per state
Avg Interview Lengths:	AL=12m; AR=11m; KS=10m; MS=11m; NJ=10m; NY=10m
Language(s):	English
Sample Frame:	Registered Voters (via Survey Sampling International)
Sampling Method:	Random Digit Dial (RDD)
Sample Sizes:	AL=601; AR=603; KS=602; MS=603; NJ=602; NY=603
Margin of Error:	± 4.0 percentage points for each state sample; ± 1.6 percentage points for the total sample
LL Response Rates:	AL=24.7%; AR=24.0%; KS=25.3%; MS=23.2%; NJ=20.9%; NY=21.2%
Cell Response Rates:	AL=20.2%; AR=19.5%; KS=20.2%; MS=18.7%; NJ=17.3%; NY=17.3%
Weighting?	Yes (Gender, Race, Age, Education Level)
Oversampling?	No

Paul DiPerna is responsible for overall polling design; question wording and ordering; this paper's analysis, charts, and writing; and any unintentional errors or misrepresentations.

The Foundation for Educational Choice

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State Profiles in K-12

	Alabama	Arkansas	Kansas	Mississippi	New Jersey	New York
Avg State Rank on NAEP ¹	45	39	13	49	3	26
High School Graduation Rate ²	63%	69%	75%	62%	83%	71%
# Regular Public School Students ³	745,668	471,976	466,716	491,591	1,362,149	2,706,122
# Charter School Students ⁴	None	6,989	4,344	371	19,271	34,683
# Private School Students ⁵	72,037	34,850	43,413	47,955	204,486	458,231
% Public School Students ⁶	91.2%	91.9%	90.7%	91.1%	85.9%	84.6%
% Charter School Students ⁶	None	1.4%	0.8%	0.1%	1.2%	1.1%
% Private School Students ⁶	8.8%	6.8%	8.4%	8.9%	12.9%	14.3%
# School Districts ³	133	245	318	152	616	728
# Regular Public Schools ³	1,639	1,151	1,447	1,089	2,615	4,717
# Charter Schools ³	None	32	35	1	68	119
# Private Schools ⁵	423	305	246	219	1,441	2,130
Virtual Schools Climate ⁷	Low	Low	Moderate	Low	Low	None
% Free and Reduced-Price Lunch ³	52%	57%	43%	68%	30%	45%
% Individualized Education Program (IEP) ³	11%	14%	14%	13%	17%	16%
% English Language Learners (ELL) ³	3%	6%	7%	1%	4%	7%
\$ Revenue Per Student ⁸	\$10,356	\$9,758	\$11,805	\$8,880	\$18,007	\$19,081
\$ Per Student Spending ⁸	\$9,197	\$8,677	\$9,883	\$7,890	\$17,620	\$16,794

State Profile Notes

1. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Average of four rankings (rounded upward to nearest single digit) based on 2009 state scale scores for 4th grade reading; 4th grade math; 8th grade reading; 8th grade math (respectively, AL: 39, 49, 43, 49 | AR: 40, 35, 40, 40 | KS: 16, 6, 19, 11 | MS: 46, 50, 50, 50 | NJ: 2, 5, 2, 5 | NY: 15, 26, 31, 31).
URL: nationsreportcard.gov/data_tools
2. Reported high school graduation rates, determined by Cumulative Promotion Index (CPI) on the Education Counts section of the Education Week website. Data for 2006-2007 school year. Editorial Projects In Education, accessed 10/12/10.
URL: www.edcounts.org/createtable
3. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD). Data for the 2008-2009 school year. Alabama does not have a charter school law. 2008 IEP data – imputed for Alabama and Mississippi because of irregularity in the states’ 2009 data.
URL: nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states
4. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD). Data for the 2008-2009 school year. Enrollment data missing for 7 New Jersey charters and 14 New York charters. Alabama does not have a charter school law.
URL: nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch
5. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Universe Survey (PSS). Data for 2007–2008 school year.
URL: nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/tables/table_2008_15.asp
6. Percentages are meant for general impression purposes only. State-level data on home-school students are generally unreliable, and this subpopulation of students could not be included in this table. Due to rounding, percentage totals may be slightly greater or less than 100%.
7. States rated as Low, Moderate, or High, based on John Watson, Butch Gemin, Jennifer Ryan, and Matthew Wicks, *Keeping Pace with K-12 Online Learning: An Annual Review of State-Level Policy and Practice*, (Evergreen Education Group, 2009), Table 1.
URL: www.kpk12.com/downloads/KeepingPace09-fullreport.pdf
8. Lei Zhou, *Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: School Year 2007–08 (Fiscal Year 2008)* (NCES 2010-326). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics (May 2010).
URL: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2010326>
Student spending data include dollars spent on instruction, instruction-related, support services, and other elementary/secondary current expenditures, but exclude expenditures on long-term debt service, facilities and construction, and other programs.

Introduction

Survey research and polling are infused in a rapidly transforming media culture, having established a prominent place in local and national news reporting. On any given day, it is a safe bet either Brian Williams, Katie Couric, or Diane Sawyer will cite results of a new political poll, an economic or healthcare survey, or some other survey finding that has been promoted by government or industry. Television news (particularly cable news) and numerous websites showcase measures of public opinion daily.¹ The quantity and reach of survey information is impressive.

Yet there have been comparatively fewer polls and surveys examining issues related to American elementary and secondary education (K-12). This is somewhat puzzling. The rarity of polling projects about K-12 education may stem from the hyper-local orientation of education politics and issues. What is a major issue in one school district or community may be a non-issue in neighboring communities. Priorities and concerns vary from one community to the next, and from one state to the next, and so issues are dominated at very local levels, with respect to either politics or media.

A small number of organizations and researchers have done exceptional work designing polls and surveys with a laser-focus on public opinion with respect to K-12 education.² The annual Phi Delta Kappa (PDK)/Gallup poll has been in operation since 1969. The sample frame is national in scope, and the reports have looked at issues mostly related to public education. In 1999, Public Agenda thoroughly examined public opinion on school choice topics, part of their long-running series of surveys on education issues. A couple of years later in 2001, Terry Moe published *Schools, Vouchers, and the American Public*,

¹ Pollster.com provides daily updates of national and state polls. It also aggregates polls on various questions, issues, and races. The Huffington Post acquired the website in 2010.

URL: www.huffingtonpost.com/news/pollster

² The two most recent, high-profile and ongoing national polls on K-12 education issues are William J. Bushaw and Shane J. Lopez, *A Time for Change: The 42nd Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools*, (Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa, 2010); William Howell, Paul E. Peterson, and Martin West, "Meeting of the Minds," *Education Next*, 11(1), (Winter 2011), pp. 2-12. Also see Steve Farkas, Jean Johnson, and Anthony Folen, *On Thin Ice*, (New York, NY: Public Agenda, 1999). For the most comprehensive scholarly work looking at the intersection of public opinion, politics, and K-12 education, see Terry Moe, *Schools, Vouchers, and the American Public*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001).

which was a ground-breaking national study examining K-12 politics and public opinion formation on school choice issues. In recent years, William Howell, Paul Peterson, and Martin West have conducted national surveys using online panels. Unlike PDK/Gallup, their approach is more scholarly by design, and they have discovered interesting findings related to the impact of framing questions, as well as cues from public leaders and academia, on public opinion.

However, the political dynamics of K-12 education have undergone an evolution over the last few decades. Generally speaking, state government is now kingmaker for matters pertaining to school revenue, appropriation, accountability, and assessment. Today many states provide the lion's share of revenue for public schools, not the local school districts.³ Because purse strings are controlled increasingly by state policymakers, fights over resource allocation and political power have migrated, to a large degree, from the school board to the statehouse.

Coinciding with this gradual and subtle shift in K-12 politics, several respected research organizations recently have tracked public opinion and education policy matters in their home states, including the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy (Indiana), the Public Policy Institute of California, and the Thomas B. Fordham Institute/FDR Group (Ohio).⁴ Even with the considerable contributions and insights provided by these organizations, there is still a dearth of knowledge about what the average voter, in most states, thinks about K-12 education in general, and school choice reforms in particular.

³ As of 2008, state governments provided more K-12 funding than local governments in 30 states. See Lei Zhou, *Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: School Year 2007–08 (Fiscal Year 2008)* (NCES 2010-326). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics (May 2010), Table 1.

⁴ Jonathan Plucker, Terry Spradlin, Nathan Burroughs, and Stephen Hiller, *2008 Public Opinion Survey on K-12 Education in Indiana*, (Bloomington, IN: Center for Evaluation & Education Policy, Indiana University, 2009); Mark Baldassare, Dean Bonner, Sonja Petek, and Nicole Willcoxon, *PPIC Statewide Survey: Californians & Education*, (San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California, 2010); Steve Farkas and Ann Duffet, *Checked Out: Ohioans' Views on Education 2009*, (Dayton, OH: The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2009).

Overview

The core purpose of the Interstate Survey series is to survey statistically representative statewide samples and report the *levels* and *gaps* of voter opinion, knowledge, and awareness when it comes to K-12 education and school choice reforms—particularly with respect to state performance, education spending, graduation rates, achievement rankings, charter schools, virtual schools, tax-credit scholarships, and school vouchers. This is the first of a series of “polling papers” that we will release in the coming months.

In this release we compare voter responses in six states: Alabama, Arkansas, Kansas, Mississippi, New Jersey, and New York.

Why choose these states? In a sense these states comprise the open frontier for reforms in K-12 education. None has enacted school voucher or tax-credit scholarship systems. Arkansas, New Jersey, and New York have seen some growth in the charter school sector, but charter school student populations do not exceed 2 percent of the overall student populations in these states. Only New Jersey has had a consequential public debate about voucher or tax-credit scholarship programs in the last couple of years. This **project’s** six states are similar in that none has been exposed to school choice programs in action, and the charter school sectors (non-existent in Alabama) and virtual school sectors (non-existent in New York) are still in early stages of development.

State differences are equally important for project design. We believe it is important to examine states that at least showed some range of diversity on the political spectrum. Both New York and New Jersey tend to be more liberal in their politics. Unions have a substantial seat of power, especially when it comes to K-12 education. The other four states in our analysis tend to be more ideologically conservative. Alabama, Arkansas, Kansas, and Mississippi, are all right-to-work states, for example.⁵ Robert Erikson, Gerald Wright, and John McIver have analyzed more than 30 years of CBS/*New York*

⁵ See the map of Right to Work states on the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation website. URL: www.nrtw.org/rtws.htm

Times polls and have established ideological and partisan trends for the 50 states.⁶ The Erikson-Wright-McIver ideology and partisan scales influenced state selection for this project. If ideology and partisanship drive opinion on school choice reforms, as news media and public officials often suggest, then we should detect corresponding differences in the polling topline results and crosstabs. If there is no such pattern, then a new storyline is needed when discussing school choice reforms and issues.

The six states vary on a number of basic indicators in K-12 education (see page 4). The states are rather different when it comes to student achievement on tests and high school graduation rates. New Jersey and Kansas tend to be higher-achieving and graduate a greater proportion of high school students. New York is in the middle. Arkansas is not far behind the Empire State. Mississippi and Alabama rank near the bottom. Some of the variation in academic achievement and attainment likely corresponds with the levels of poverty and education in the home. Mississippi is the poorest state in our survey.

Considering raw **size, New York's student population** is more than four times larger than Alabama, Arkansas, Kansas, or Mississippi. New Jersey is nearly half the size of New York. Similar variations are noticeable in terms of numbers of schools and school districts. New York and New Jersey have 728 and 616 school districts, respectively. Alabama has the fewest school districts (133). Southern states tend to have more centralized control in K-12 education, having more students in relatively fewer school districts. Northeastern and Midwestern states are more likely to emphasize decentralized local control in K-12 education with a high number of school districts and relatively fewer students.⁷

The private sector plays a more active role in some states compared with others. This is particularly true in New Jersey and New York. Both states have more than 12 percent of

⁶ Robert S. Erikson, Gerald C. Wright, and John P. McIver, "Public Opinion in the States: A Quarter Century of Change and Stability," in *Public Opinion in State Politics*, ed. Jeffrey E. Cohen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), pp. 229-253, Figures 12.2 and 12.3; Robert S. Erikson, Gerald C. Wright, and John P. McIver, *Statehouse Democracy*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁷ See U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Number of public elementary and secondary education agencies, by type of agency and state or jurisdiction: 2006-07 and 2007-08," *Local Education Agency Universe Survey, 2006-07 and 2007-08*, Table 88.

students going to private schools. The other four states in the survey have less than 9 percent of their school-age students in private schools. The number of private school students in New York is almost equal to the number of public school students in Arkansas or Kansas. New Jersey has more than 200,000 students in private schools.

Per student spending also differs from state to state. Some spending differences may be explained by cost-of-living adjustments, but it cannot explain all differences. New York and New Jersey spend roughly double what is spent in Alabama, Arkansas, or Mississippi. State demographics, ideologies, political processes, and relative power of special interests are likely to be major factors.⁸ Statewide demographics and their associations with public opinion will be explored further in future polling papers.

At a very basic level, this paper reports out snapshots of how the six states compare with one another on 19 substantive questions and 13 demographic questions (see pages 20-34). The next section summarizes key findings.

This paper is presented in four sections. The first section summarizes key findings. We **call the second section “Survey Snapshots,” and this** represents the body of the paper. **The third section describes the survey’s methodology, summarizes response statistics,** and presents additional technical information on call dispositions for landline and cell phone interviews. The fourth section lays out the questionnaire and question-by-question results (topline data), essentially allowing the reader to follow the actual interview as it was conducted in terms of question wording and ordering. This paper sets out to provide fundamental analysis, going light on editorial commentary, and letting the charts and numbers communicate the major findings.

⁸ A good overview of politics in K-12 education can be found in Michael W. Kirst and Frederick M. Wirt, *The Political Dynamics of American Education, 4th Edition*, (Berkeley, CA: McCutchan Publishing Corp., 2009).

Key Findings

- ▶ **On average, registered voters in the six states are more likely to think that K-12 education is on the “wrong track” (48%) compared to the “right direction” (41%).**

See Question 1

Kansans are the exception. They are more likely to say K-12 education is heading in the “right direction” (49%) rather than on the “wrong track” (38%). However, majorities in Alabama (53%), New York (53%), and Mississippi (52%) say K-12 education is on the “wrong track” in their states. The right direction-wrong track gaps are particularly large in a negative way for Alabama (-18 points) and New York (-17 points); Kansas shows a sizable positive gap (+11 points).

- ▶ **Voters on average (as well as within the states) split in their opinion when it comes to describing the public school systems as “fair” or “poor” (50%) versus “good” or “excellent” (48%).**

See Question 3

Three states – Alabama, New York, and Mississippi – are much more likely to say the state’s public school system is “poor” rather than “excellent.” Roughly twice the number of voters in these states would call their system “poor” compared with Kansas and New Jersey. By contrast, Kansas is much more positive—63 percent of Kansas voters say the state’s public school system is “good” or “excellent.” About half of New Jersey voters (52%) say the same about their public schools.

▶ **States vary on their views about school funding.**

See Question 4

Two states – Arkansas and New Jersey – are more content with perceived funding levels, but Alabama and Mississippi would like to see more funding go to public schools. Nearly two out of three Alabama voters (65%) say public school funding is “too low”; 56 percent of Mississippi voters say the same. However, a majority of New Jersey voters (56%) believe funding is either “about right” or “too high.” New Jersey is among a small number of states in the country that spend more than \$15,000 per student; Alabama and Mississippi are among the lowest spending states.

▶ **Generally speaking, voters have no idea how much is spent in the public schools.**

See Question 5

Of those who volunteered a spending figure, no more than a quarter of voters in any state could estimate the correct spending range. Mississippi had the largest proportion of voters estimating correctly (24%). No more than 10 percent could guess the correct per student spending range in Alabama, New York, Arkansas, or Kansas. Median estimates ranged from \$2,500 in Alabama to \$8,000 in New Jersey. Alabama spends about \$9,000 per student and New Jersey spends roughly \$17,000. All estimates, volunteered or categorical, were way off the mark. This suggests policymakers should be cautious to pander to populist impulses on funding. Compared with stated responses to Question 4, better-informed voters could have very different reactions to proposals for increased education funding.

▶ **Voters evidently have a feel for their state’s high school graduation rate.**

See Question 7

Impressively, four states (Alabama, Arkansas, Kansas, and Mississippi) produced average estimates that were within the margin of error for the actual statewide graduation rate for 2007. New Jersey and New York underestimated the actual graduation rate by 11 and 8 percentage points, respectively. Kansas underestimated the rate by just one point (74%), and Arkansas overestimated by one point (70%).

Reducing the number of dropouts and improving graduation rates have been very high priorities for governors and state legislatures over the last five years. Colin and Alma Powell, with the America’s Promise Alliance, have led high-profile public awareness campaigns during this time and have helped to give the public policy issue a high profile in recent years.⁹ Local and state media reports surrounding these efforts has likely had some effect on awareness.

▶ **Though less precise than knowledge about graduation rates, voters have some sense of how their states perform on achievement tests, relative to other states.**

See Question 9

When asked, “Compared to all other states taking the same academic achievement test, do you think [your state] nationally ranks...,” pluralities in Mississippi (38%) and Alabama (30%) were able to identify the correct quintile for their state (state ranking, 41-50). Kansans (29%) demonstrated a fairly good estimate that their students ranked in the second quintile (11-20). Likewise, New Jersey voters (28%) were able to estimate that their students were at or near the first quintile (1-10). Nearly half (47%) of New Yorkers and Arkansans (48%) overstated their ranking.

⁹ America’s Promise Alliance (APA): www.americaspromise.org

Another interesting way to evaluate these responses is to rank-order the proportions of voters indicating the endpoints of potential responses (first and fifth quintiles). Analyzing responses this way is fascinating. It does not matter if you rank-order on the first or fifth quintile responses. The relative proportions fall almost exactly where states rank on a test sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, called the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).¹⁰

For example, more than any other state, New Jersey voters (28%) say the state is ranked in the first quintile, which is correct. The smallest proportions indicating a top ranking are in Mississippi (10%) and Alabama (11%), also relatively in the right order. Likewise, looking at those who say their state is last in the fifth quintile, voters in Mississippi (38%), Alabama (30%), and Arkansas (27%) indicated that quintile more than the other three states, exhibiting the correct rank-ordering of state achievement. Voters, at least in these six states, do have a sense for their relative performance on the NAEP assessment.

▶ **When asked for a preferred school type, voters indicated that there is a gaping disconnect between their preferred school type and actual enrollment patterns.**

See Question 11

Nearly equal numbers of voters, across all six states, said they would prefer a private school (39%) as much as a regular public school (38%). Nearly half of New Yorkers (49%) prefer a private school. Arkansas (33%) is least inclined toward private schools. **Considering Mississippi's relatively low performance** when it comes to graduation rates and scoring on the federal NAEP exam, it is somewhat surprising that the state would prefer a regular public school (43%) greater than any other type of school, as well as more than any other state in the survey. New Yorkers are least likely (29%) to prefer a public school.

¹⁰ To learn more about NAEP, visit: nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about

To a lesser degree of preference, nearly equal proportions of voters say they want to homeschool (10%) as to select a charter school (11%). Recent headlines and cable/daytime talk shows might suggest the preference for charter schools is surging. It should be noted that we conducted this survey a couple months before the public release of the film “Waiting for ‘Superman,’” **as well as NBC’s much-marketed “Education Nation” television series.** Voters in late July indicated a relatively modest interest in charter schools, and hardly any for virtual schools. New York showed the highest level of preference (14%) for charter schools.

Lack of interest for charters and virtual schools may be from low levels of information, particularly in a state like Alabama, where there are no charter schools. For example, in our survey we found only 41 percent of voters, across all states, who **were “very familiar” or “somewhat familiar” with charter schools** (see Question 13). **Only 29 percent of all voters were at least “somewhat familiar” with virtual schools** (see Question 15). Nearly one out of three voters (28%) said **that they “never heard of virtual schools.”**

Fully half of voters would choose a school that is not publicly operated, either private or homeschooling. This finding represents another substantial disconnect. The rhetoric from pundits, politicians, and mainstream media frequently emphasizes matters relating to public schools, including charter schools. The implication is that public officials and the media currently do not grasp or understand that school access and choice can be a powerful, if dormant, issue for average voters. Voters likely would welcome broadening K-12 discussions to include private schools and homeschooling. To continue to do otherwise would seem to neglect the public interest and ignore preferences.

- ▶ **One out of four voters in our survey prioritizes “standards, curriculum” as the key attribute they are looking for in their preferred school. The second most important attribute, as suggested by 19 percent of all voters, is “structure, discipline.”**

See Question 12

School characteristics like test score performance (14%) and school/class size (13%) matter less to average voters in the survey. All of these school qualities probably matter quite a bit to voters, but the purpose of this question was to signal priority.

In 2010, the Obama Administration’s Race to the Top competition spurred the gradual state-by-state adoption of Common Core Standards.¹¹ Whether these standards are truly what the public wants is another matter, but it is evident that public officials understood standards and curriculum were important to voters in a mid-term election year. On the other hand, public officials and the media may be missing an opportunity to discuss another matter also important to voters: school structure and discipline. Arguments about class size and school test scores dominate education headlines and suck a lot of the air out of public debates on education. Yet these matters tend to be less a priority to voters, when compared with discipline in schools.

- ▶ **Voters are much more likely to favor charter schools (63%), rather than oppose such schools (21%).**

See Questions 13 and 14

Charter school support is strongest in New Jersey (70%) and New York (68%) - and relatively weaker in Alabama (58%). The largest favor-oppose gaps are also in New Jersey (+51 points) and New York (+48 points). Comparatively smaller, but still strongly positive gaps are found in Alabama and Arkansas (both +37

¹¹ To learn more about the Race to the Top Fund competition, visit: www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop

points). Across all states, those who “strongly favor” (27%) outnumber those who “strongly oppose” (9%) by a three-to-one ratio. The level of opposition is roughly just 20 percent in each state.

When properly defined, charter schools clearly resonate with voters. And there may be opportunities for growing support. Low levels of familiarity with charters (41%) on average for all six states, probably dampen voter support. The association between charter school familiarity and favorability is positive and moderately correlated ($r=.271$, $p < .01$).

In recent months, thanks in part to Oprah Winfrey, “Waiting for ‘Superman’” buzz, and NBC’s highly visible “Education Nation,” charter school efforts have penetrated popular media. If awareness of charter schools has grown, then it is likely that support for charter-friendly policies will grow.

► **Voters in the six states solidly oppose virtual schools, by an average favor-oppose gap of -22 percentage points.**

See Questions 15 and 16

The fiercest opposition appears in very different states, Alabama (-25 points) and New York (-24 points). At least half of voters in all states say they oppose virtual schools, and nearly 6 out of 10 New Jersey voters (58%) say they oppose the new idea. Levels of favorability range from a low of 27 percent in New Jersey to a high of 38 percent in Kansas.

Technology enthusiasts are likely to have some pause when seeing the reactions to virtual schools. This kind of schooling is new and rapidly developing, and low levels of familiarity are acknowledged in the survey (see Question 15). At this point in time, virtual school entrepreneurs and advocates have their work cut out for them in order to educate the public and make the case that **virtual schools’** benefits are greater than their costs.

A kind of awakening may be possible in the future. Very low levels of familiarity with virtual schools (29% on average for all six states; see Question 15) suggest that there may be room for expanding support in the future. The association between virtual school familiarity and favorability is positive and moderately correlated ($r=.259, p < .01$).

It is worth future study to explore to what extent voters value the social benefits of more traditional schooling and gauge if the perception exists that virtual schools lack desired social benefits and qualities. This may be driving some of the negative reaction.

- ▶ **When asked about tax-credit scholarships, 64 percent of voters say they favor such a system, compared to 24 percent who say they oppose.**

See Question 17

In New York, seven out of ten voters favor this brand of school choice system. New Jersey shows a nearly identical level of support (69%). The lowest level, still more than half of voters, is found in Kansas (56%). Favor-oppose gaps across the six states are all positive and yawning, ranging from a high of +48 percentage points (New York) to a low of +27 percentage points (Kansas).

The high level in New York may be from greater understanding of how such a policy might work. **The Children’s Scholarship Fund**, providing private school scholarships since 1998, has its national headquarters in New York City.

On the other end of the spectrum, there may be relatively less robust support for favoring such a system in Kansas because the public schools are performing better there than most other states, and the voters actually know it.

Like opinion on charter schools, on average across the states, those who are **“strongly favorable” (30%) toward tax-credit scholarships** outnumber those who **“strongly oppose” (12%)** the policy by a ratio of nearly three-to-one.

None of the six states in our survey currently has public policies supporting tax-credit scholarships.

► **There is decidedly strong, and varying, support for school vouchers across all six states.**

See Questions 18 and 19

Voters in Mississippi overwhelmingly support school vouchers: 74 percent favor versus 20 percent who oppose (+54 percentage point favor-oppose gap). Nearly seven out of ten voters in New Jersey, two out of three voters in New York, and about six out of ten voters in Alabama and Arkansas support school vouchers. The smallest favor-oppose gap is +21 percentage points in Kansas, where 57 percent favor and 36 percent oppose vouchers.

In contrast to questions on charter schools and tax-credit scholarships, there is more intensity on school vouchers (responses indicating **“strongly” favor or oppose**). Of the three types of school choice policies, school vouchers garnered, on average, the highest levels of strong support (38%) and strong opposition (16%). **In any event, those who “strongly favor” school vouchers more than double the number who state strong opposition.**

Low levels of familiarity with school vouchers (41% on average for all six states; see Question 18) suggest there still may be some room for expanding support. The association between voucher familiarity and favorability is positive and modestly correlated ($r=.199$, $p < .01$).

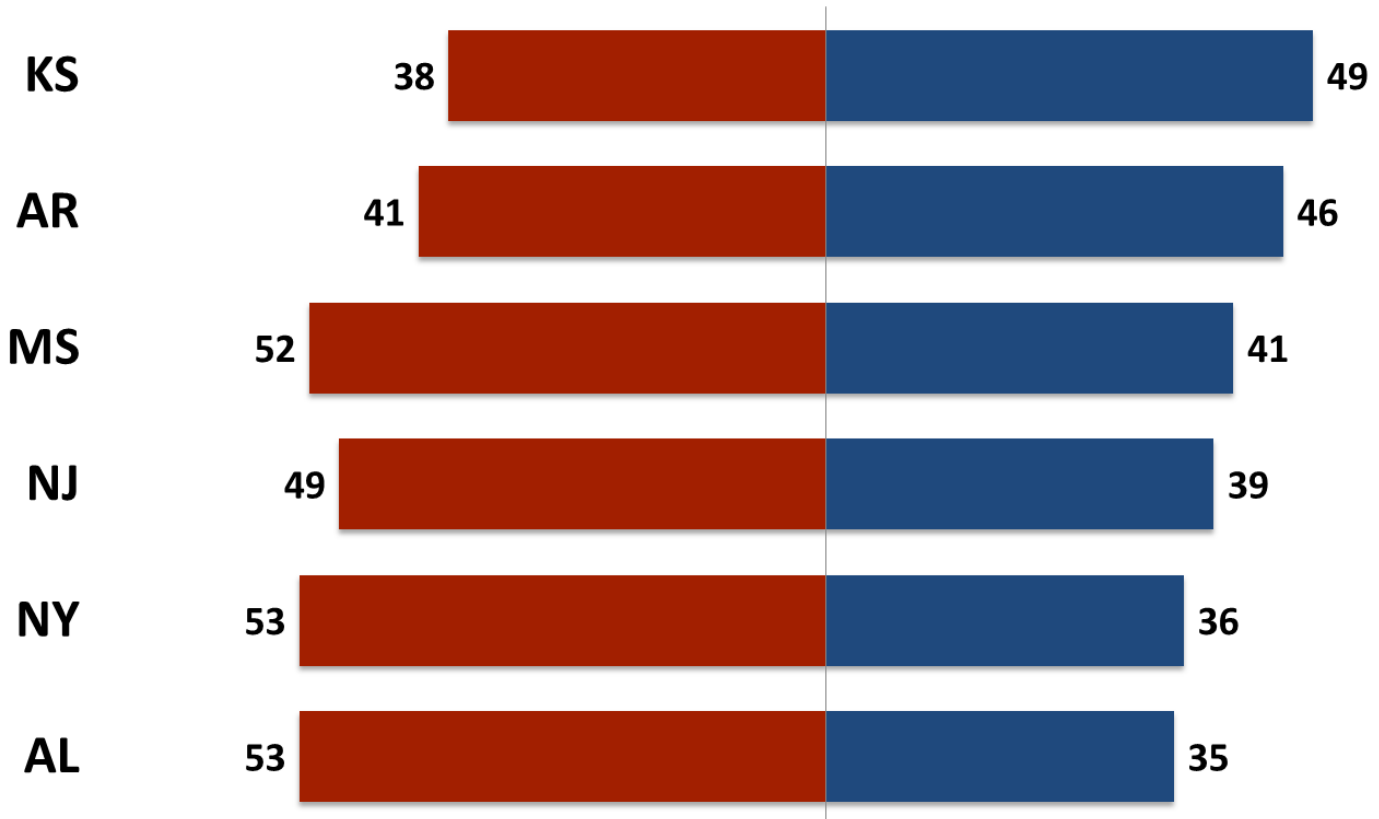
None of the six states surveyed has enacted a school voucher system.



Survey Snapshots

Q1. Do you feel things in K-12 Education in [STATE NAME] are generally going in the right direction, or do you feel things have generally gotten off on the wrong track?

Wrong Track Right Direction



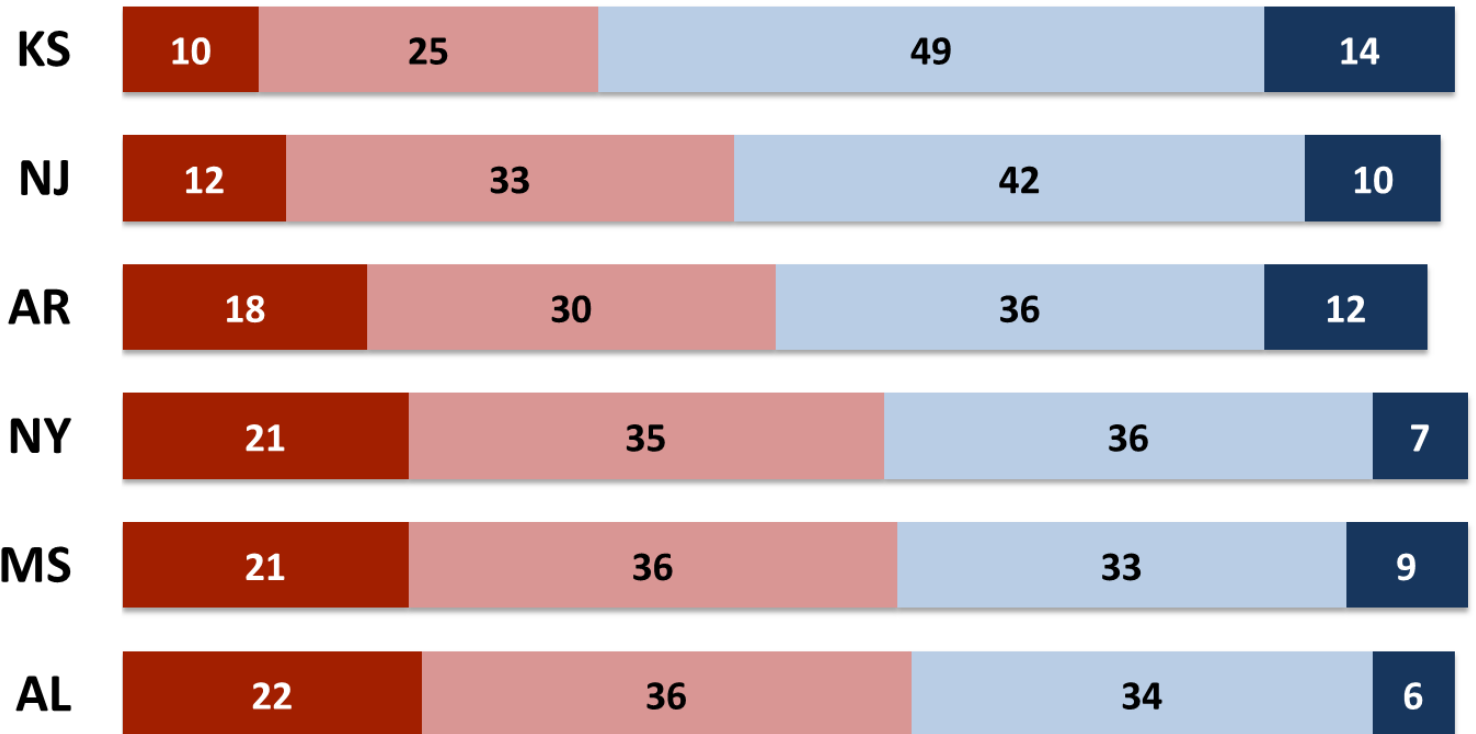
Q2. What one word best describes your impression of [STATE NAME]’s public school system? Just the one word that best describes [STATE NAME]’s education system.

Specific impressions offered by 10 or more respondents per state. Numbers represent counts (n), not percentages.

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY
Good	83	Good 80	Good 102	Good 78	Good 99	Good 68
Poor	48	Fair 33	Excellent 29	Poor 28	Fair 23	Fair 26
Fair	28	Poor 28	Fair 21	Fair 27	Excellent 22	Improving 20
Lacking	20	OK 18	OK 17	Improving 25	Improving 19	Poor 20
OK	20	Improving 17	Poor 16	OK 16	Poor 19	OK 14
Mediocre	17	Adequate 14	Adequate 15	Great 15	OK 17	Lacking 13
Average	15	Dead 13	Improving 15	Adequate 14	Adequate 14	Bad 11
Improving	15	Average 11	Mediocre 14	Bad 14	Bad 14	Mediocre 11
Bad	12	Mediocre 11	Great 13	Lacking 13	Under-Funded 12	-
Adequate	11	-	Lacking 12	Mediocre 13	Expensive 11	-
Behind	11	-	Bad 10	Inadequate 11	Lacking 11	-
Under-Funded	11	-	-	Excellent 10	Average 10	-
-	-	-	-	-	Terrible 10	-

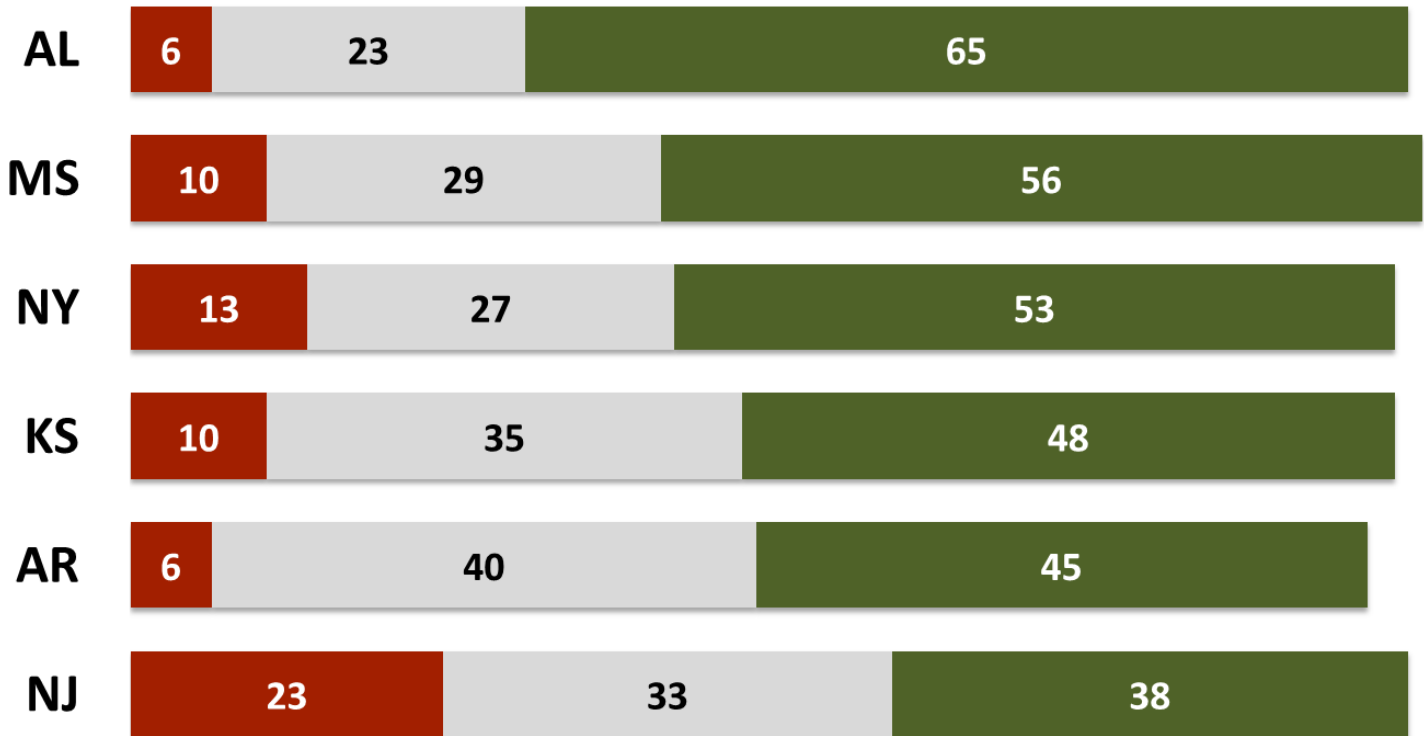
Q3. How would you rate [STATE NAME]'s public school system?

■ Poor ■ Fair ■ Good ■ Excellent



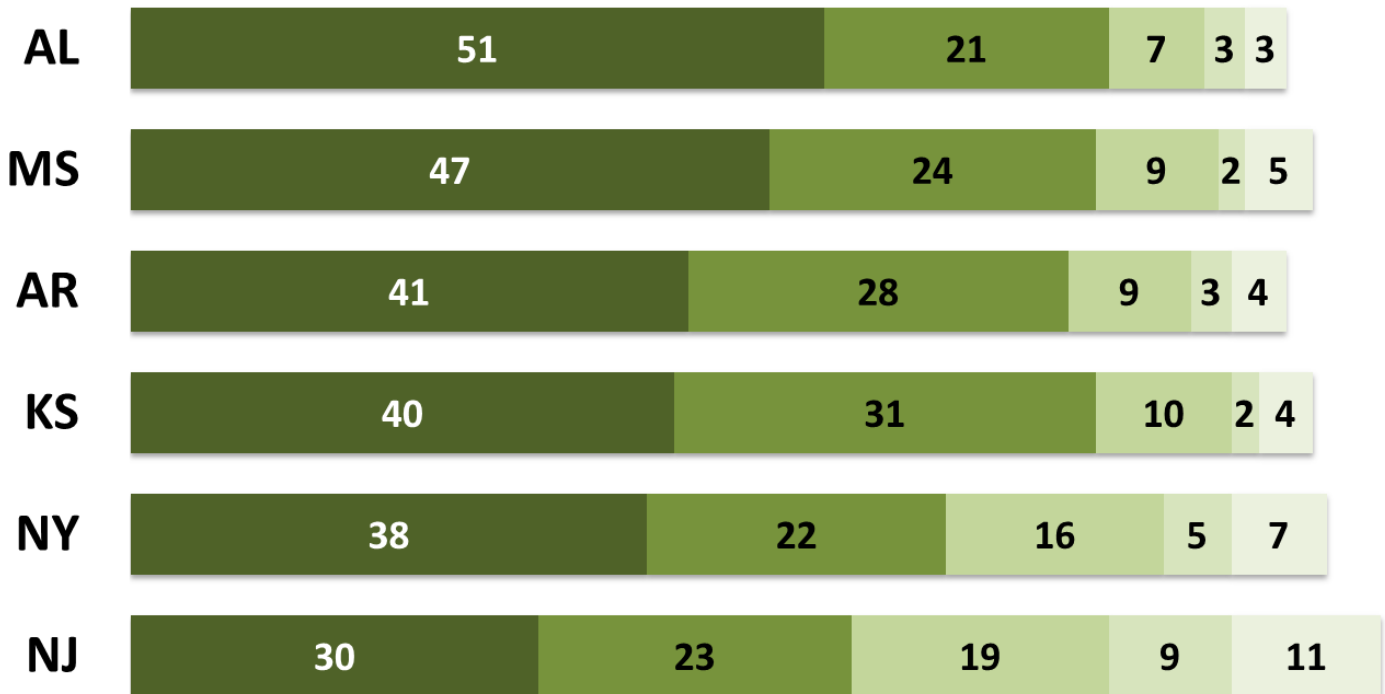
Q4. Do you believe that public school funding in [STATE NAME] is at a level that is:

■ Too High ■ About Right ■ Too Low



Q5. How much do you think is currently spent on each student in [STATE NAME]'s public schools? Your estimate (to the nearest thousand dollars) will represent the combined expenditures of local, state, and federal governments.

- Less Than \$4,000
- \$4,001 - \$8,000
- \$8,001 - \$12,000
- \$12,001 - \$16,000
- Over \$16,000



Q5. How much do you think is currently spent on each student in [STATE NAME]'s public schools? Your estimate (to the nearest thousand dollars) will represent the combined expenditures of local, state, and federal governments.

	% Saying Spending "Too Low"	2008 Per Student Spending	% Saying Correct Range	Median Estimate
AL	65	\$9,197	7	\$2,500
MS	56	\$7,890	24	\$3,000
NY	53	\$16,794	7	\$5,000
KS	48	\$9,883	10	\$4,000
AR	45	\$8,677	9	\$4,000
NJ	38	\$17,620	11	\$8,000

Notes: The 2008 per student spending data include dollars spent on instruction, instruction-related, support services, and other elementary/secondary current expenditures, but exclude expenditures on long-term debt service, facilities and construction, and other programs. See Lei Zhou, *Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: School Year 2007–08 (Fiscal Year 2008)* (NCES 2010-326). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics (May 2010). The median estimate is calculated using data obtained from voters who gave an initial open response before an offer of dollar ranges. See Lei Zhou, *Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: School Year 2007–08 (Fiscal Year 2008)* (NCES 2010-326). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics (May 2010).

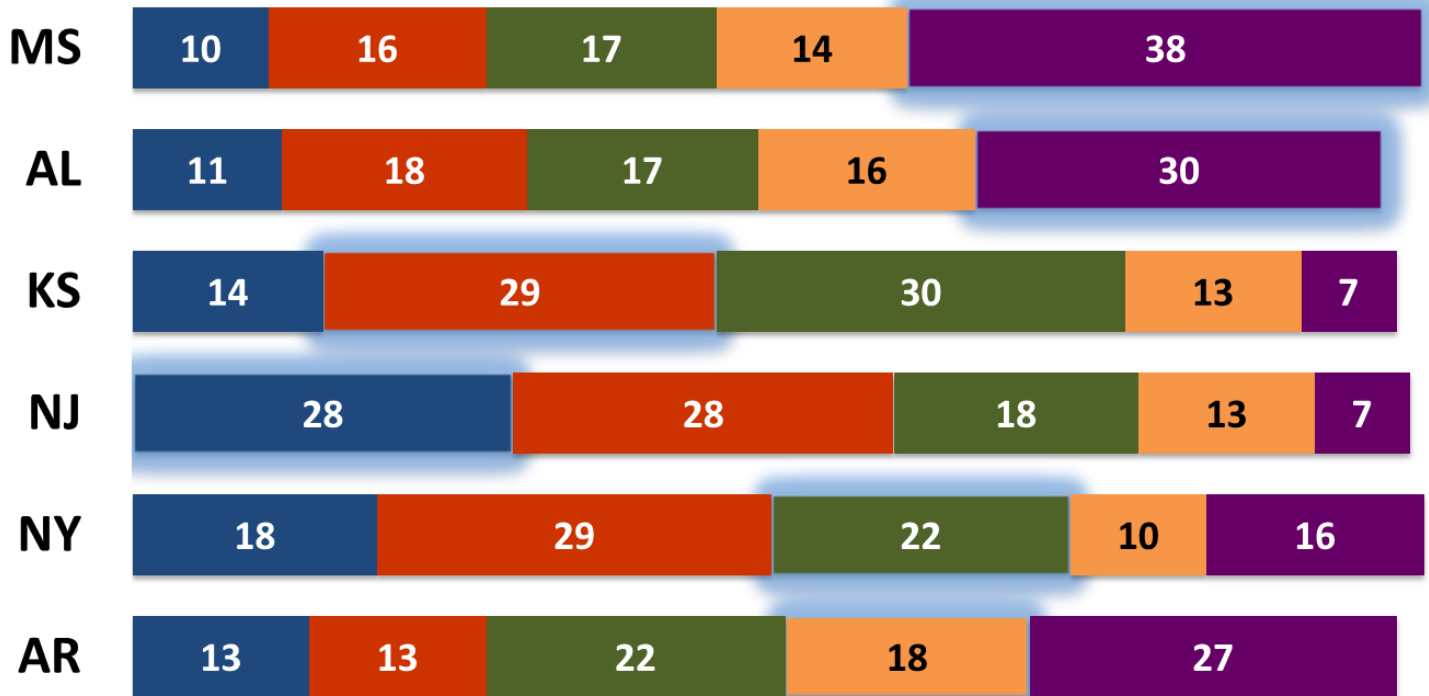
Q7. What is your best estimate for [STATE NAME]'s high school graduation rate, from 0 to 100%? For this survey, the graduation rate is defined as the percentage of high school students who advance from freshman year to receiving a high school diploma within four years.

	2007 Statewide % Graduation Rate	Average Estimate %	Median Estimate %
NJ	83	72	75
KS	75	74	75
NY	71	63	65
AR	69	70	75
AL	63	66	70
MS	62	65	70

Notes: Reported high school graduation rates, determined by Cumulative Promotion Index (CPI) on the Education Counts section of the Education Week website. Data for 2006-2007 school year. See Editorial Projects In Education website, accessed 10/12/10. URL: www.edcounts.org/createtable

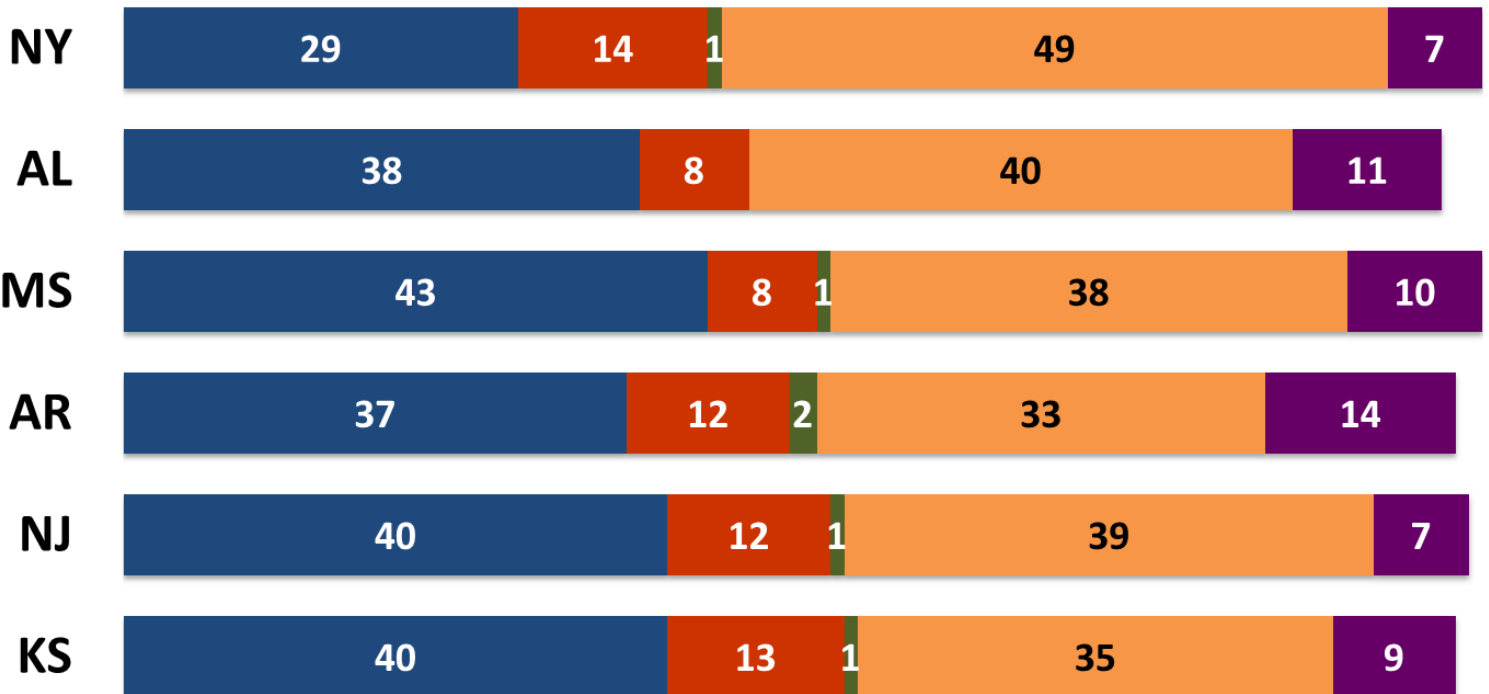
Q9. Compared to all other states taking the same academic achievement test, do you think [STATE NAME] nationally ranks...

- Within The Top 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50



Q11. If it were your decision and you could select any type of school, what type of school would you select in order to obtain the best education for your child?

- Regular Public School
- Charter School
- Virtual School
- Private School
- Homeschooling



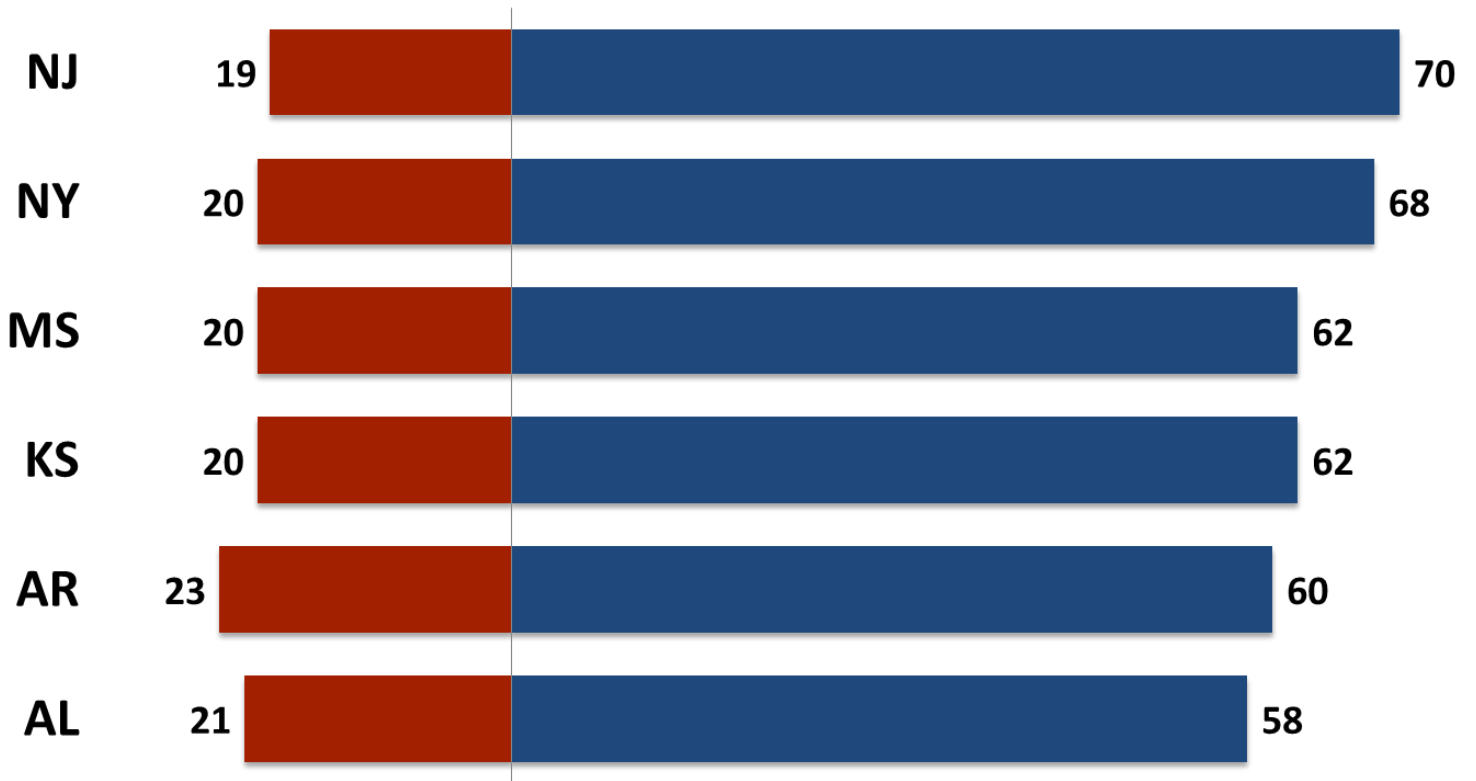
Q12. What is the most important school attribute (or characteristic) to be the main reason you would select a [INSERT SCHOOL TYPE FROM QUESTION Q11]?

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY
Standards, Curriculum	25	26	27	21	30	23
Structure, Discipline	19	19	20	19	17	18
Test Scores, Performance	17	11	13	17	14	13
School Size, Class Size	12	10	13	10	13	18
Extracurricular Activities	7	8	8	9	9	8
Religious or Philosophical Mission	7	9	8	6	4	5
Location	6	5	4	8	5	6

Q14. Charter schools are public schools that have more control over their own budget, staff, and curriculum, and are exempt from many existing public school regulations. In general, do you favor or oppose charter schools?

■ Oppose

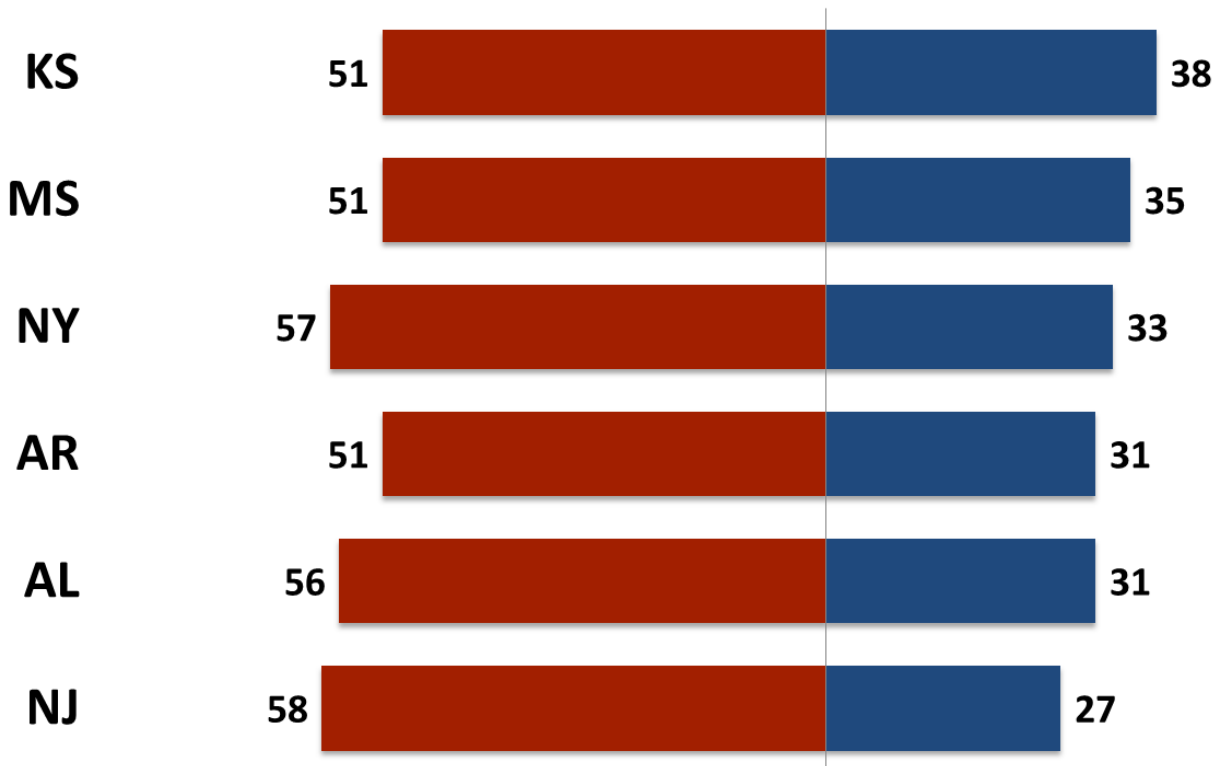
■ Favor



Q16. Virtual schools can be run publicly or privately, allowing students to work with their curriculum and teachers over the internet – in combination with, or in place of, traditional classroom learning. In general, do you favor or oppose virtual schools?

■ Oppose

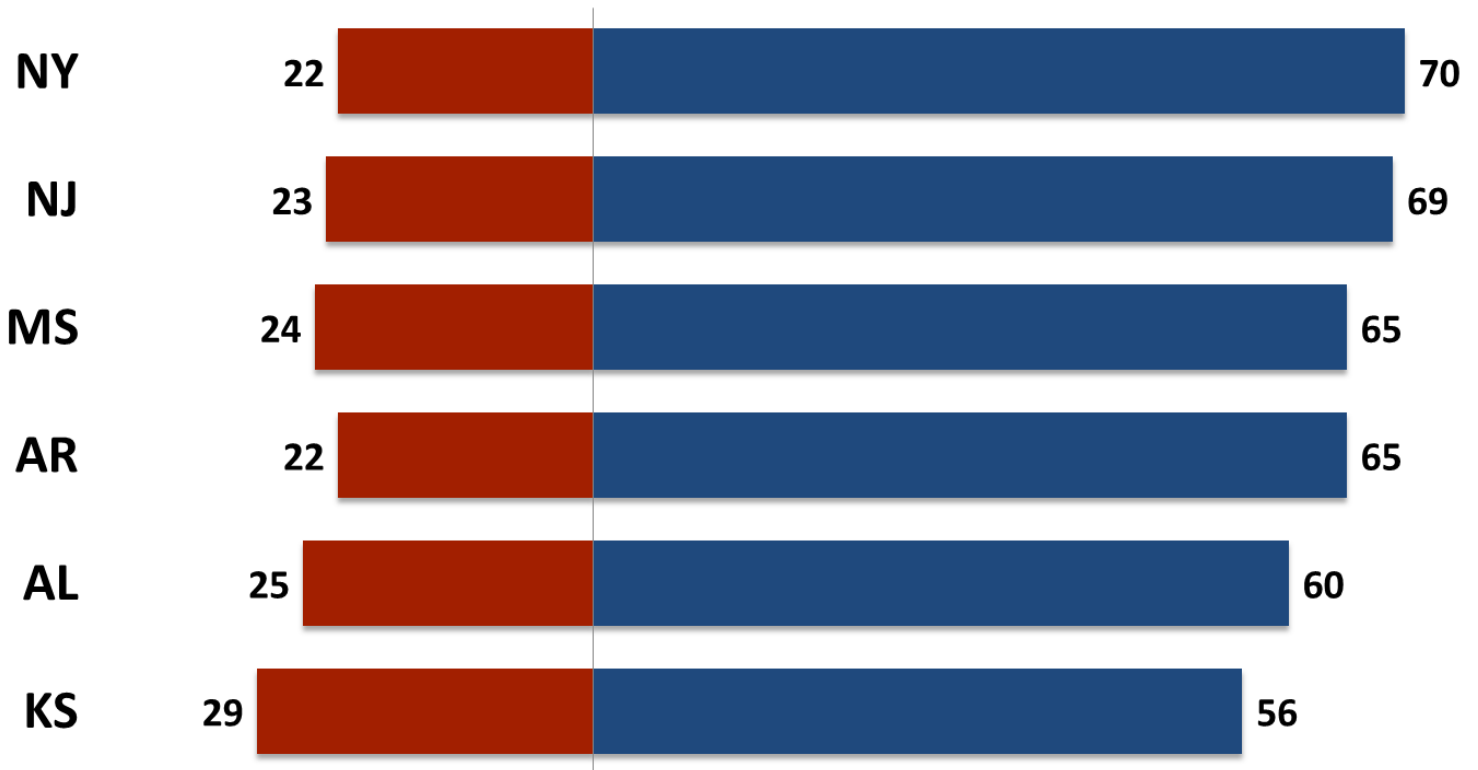
■ Favor



Q17. Some states give tax credits to individuals and businesses if they contribute money to nonprofit organizations that distribute private school scholarships. This policy supports a “tax-credit scholarship system”. In general, do you favor or oppose a tax-credit scholarship system?

■ Oppose

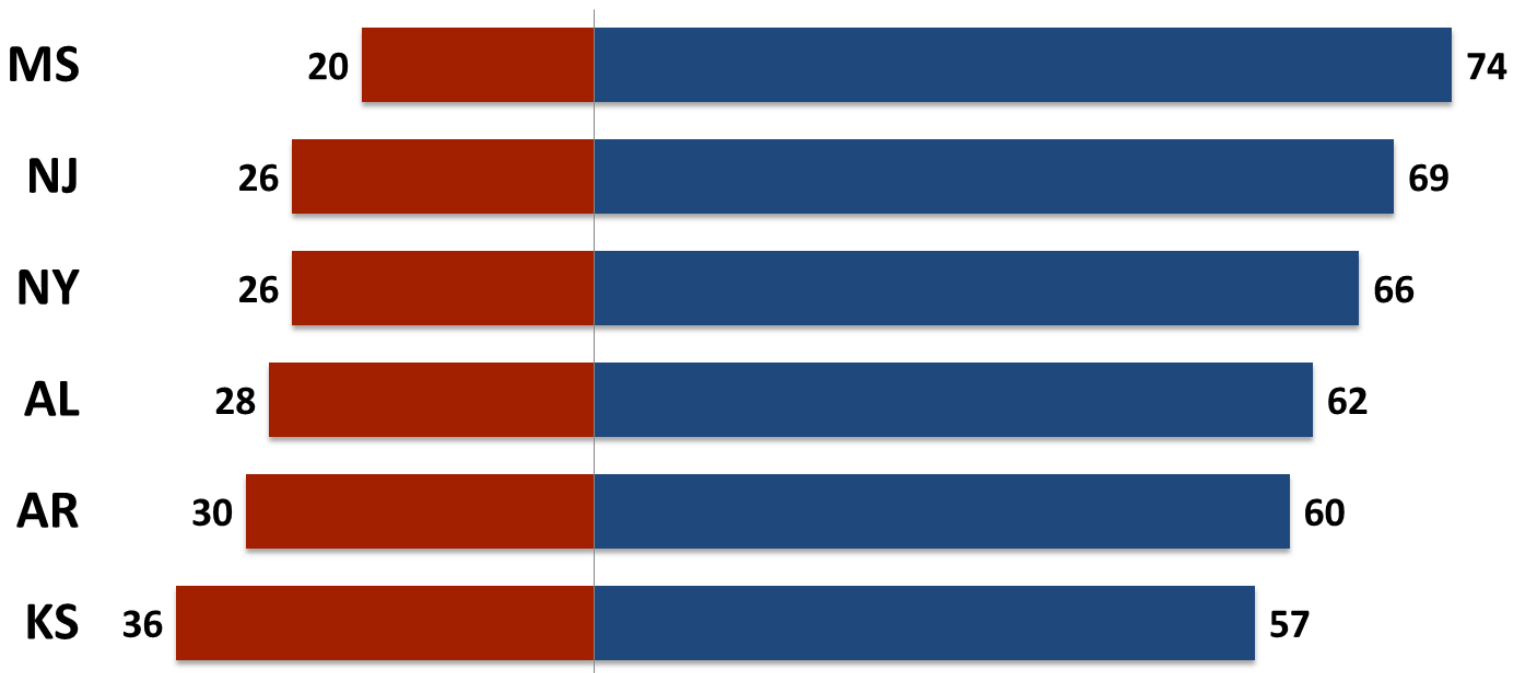
■ Favor



Q19. A school voucher system allows parents the option of sending their child to the school of their choice, whether that school is public or private, including both religious and non-religious schools. If this policy were adopted, tax dollars currently allocated to a school district would be allocated to parents in the form of a “school voucher” to pay partial or full tuition for their child’s school. In general, do you favor or oppose a school voucher system?

■ Oppose

■ Favor



Methods Summary

The “Interstate Survey” project, commissioned by The Foundation for Educational Choice and conducted by Braun Research Incorporated (BRI), interviewed more than 600 registered voters in each of six states: Alabama; Arkansas; Kansas, Mississippi; New Jersey; and New York. A total of **3,614** telephone interviews were conducted in English from July 26 to August 1, 2010, by means of both landline and cell phone. Statistical results were weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. The margin of sampling error for each state survey is ± 4.0 percentage points. Margin of error for the total sample of interviews is ± 1.6 percentage points.

BRI’s live callers conducted all phone interviews. For this entire project, a total of **30,331** calls were made in six states: Alabama; Arkansas; Kansas, Mississippi; New Jersey; and New York. Of these calls **15,140** were unusable phone numbers (disconnected, fax, busy, non-residential, or non-answers, etc.); **11,319** were usable numbers but eligibility unknown (including refusals and voicemail); **183** cell phone numbers were usable but not eligible for this survey; **267** people did not complete the survey. The six-state average response rate of the landline interviews was **23.2%**. The six-state average response rate of the cell phone interviews was **18.9%**.

Details on **each state’s sample dispositions, landline**, and cell phone response rates, and weighting are discussed in following sections.

Sample Design

A combination of landline and cellular random digit dial (RDD) samples was used to represent registered voters in the selected states who have access to either a landline or cellular telephone. Both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International, LLC (SSI) according to BRI specifications.

SSI starts with a database of all listed telephone numbers, updated on a four- to six-week rolling basis, 25 percent of the listings at a time. All active blocks—contiguous groups of 100 phone numbers for which more than one residential number is listed—are

added to this database. Blocks and exchanges that include only listed business numbers are excluded.

Numbers for the landline sample were drawn with equal probabilities from active blocks (area code + exchange + two-digit block number) that contained three or more residential directory listings. The cellular sample was not list-assisted, but was drawn through a systematic sampling from dedicated wireless 100-blocks and shared service 100-blocks with no directory-listed landline numbers.

Contact Procedures

Interviews were conducted from July 26, 2010 to August 1, 2010. As many as 8 attempts were made to contact every sampled telephone number. Sample was released for interviewing in replicates, which are representative subsamples of the larger sample. Using replicates to control the release of sample ensures that complete call procedures are followed for the entire sample. Calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chance of making contact with potential respondents. Each phone number received at least one daytime call.

The survey's margin of error is the largest 95% confidence Interval for any estimated proportion based on the total sample – the one around 50%. Each state survey's margin of error is 4%. This means that in 95 of every 100 samples drawn using the same methodology, estimated proportions based on the entire sample will be no more than 4 percentage points away from their true values in the population.

It is critical to note that the MSE is higher when considering the number of respondents for a given demographic subgroup. For example, the MSE for a subgroup of 150 respondents is ± 8.0 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, question wording, ordering, and other practical difficulties when conducting surveys may introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion research.

Call Dispositions and Response Rates

Full dispositions for all sampled landline and cell phone numbers in each of the six states are located on pages 38-43.

Weighting Procedures and Analysis

Weighting transformations for each of the six states are located on page 44.

Weighting is generally used in survey analysis to compensate for sample designs and patterns of non-response that might bias results. In this study, the sample demographics were balanced to population parameters. The sample was balanced to reflect the targeted population representation by Age, Gender, Race and Education. The weighted and unweighted results are shown below.

Weighting targets are imposed for sex, age, ethnicity, and level of education for the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Kansas, Mississippi, New Jersey, and New York. Gender and ethnicity were **based on Census Bureau figures from Table 4b of “Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2008 – Detailed Tables.”**¹²

Table 4c of the above cited report describes the age distributions, but these do not match **our questionnaire coding scheme for respondent’s age**. We calculated age distributions from date-of-birth information on file from each **state’s respective registered** voter database, as supplied by Aristotle International.

Level of education is based on voting-age population distributions as reported by the Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2008 3-year estimates. We adjusted college graduate weighting targets for each state where required based on the 2008 Census figures on registered voters (Table 5 of the above cited), noting that the percentage of college graduates is higher for registered voters compared with all adults (32.1% vs. 27.5%, respectively).

¹² U.S. Census Bureau, “Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2008 - Detailed Tables,” URL: www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2008/tables.html

Alabama Call Dispositions

<u>SUMMARY</u>			<u>DETAIL</u>		
Landline	Cell Phone		Landline	Cell Phone	
6,000	3,600	Total	1,039	562	Disconnected
3,514	1,330	Released	160	8	Fax
2,486	2,270	Unreleased	217	11	Government/Business
1,941	704	Usable	-	2	Non Cell Phone
1,573	626	Unusable	9	-	Non Landline
1,941	595	Qualified	1,425	583	Unusable
55.2%	53.0%	Est. Usability	480	76	No Answer
100.0%	83.3%	Est. Eligibility	29	15	Busy
24.7%	20.2%	Est. Response	509	91	Usability Unknown
			301	120	Complete
			30	20	Break-Off
			331	140	Usable/Eligible
			418	249	Refused
			15	7	Language Barrier
			508	120	Voice Mail
			259	81	Call Back-Retired
			48	29	Strong Refusal
			1	2	Privacy Manager
			1,249	488	Usable/Eligible Unknown
			-	23	Under 18
			-	1	Not Resident of State
			-	4	Other Unknown
			-	28	Usable/Ineligible
			24.7%	20.2%	Response Rate

Arkansas Call Dispositions

<u>SUMMARY</u>			<u>DETAIL</u>		
Landline	Cell Phone		Landline	Cell Phone	
6,000	3,600	Total	1,089	497	Disconnected
3,608	1,286	Released	122	10	Fax
2,392	2,314	Unreleased	178	7	Government/Business
2,001	727	Usable	-	1	Non Cell Phone
1,607	559	Unusable	3	-	Non Landline
2,001	615	Qualified	1,392	515	Unusable
55.5%	56.5%	Est. Usability	427	90	No Answer
100.0%	83.2%	Est. Eligibility	55	11	Busy
24.0%	19.5%	Est. Response	482	101	Usability Unknown
			480	120	Complete
			21	14	Break-Off
			501	134	Usable/Eligible
			404	284	Refused
			20	12	Language Barrier
			461	114	Voice Mail
			315	64	Call Back-Retired
			29	31	Strong Refusal
			4	4	Privacy Manager
			1,233	509	Usable/Eligible Unknown
			-	22	Under 18
			-	4	Not Resident of State
			-	1	Other Unknown
			-	27	Usable/Ineligible
			24.0%	19.5%	Response Rate

Kansas Call Dispositions

<u>SUMMARY</u>			<u>DETAIL</u>		
Landline	Cell Phone		Landline	Cell Phone	
6,000	3,600	Total	1,104	520	Disconnected
3,474	1,243	Released	137	6	Fax
2,526	2,357	Unreleased	194	9	Government/Business
1,897	657	Usable	-	5	Non Cell Phone
1,577	586	Unusable	5	-	Non Landline
1,897	593	Qualified	1,440	540	Unusable
54.6%	52.8%	Est. Usability	247	87	No Answer
100.0%	89.5%	Est. Eligibility	54	11	Busy
25.3%	20.2%	Est. Response	301	98	Usability Unknown
			480	120	Complete
			27	16	Break-Off
			507	136	Usable/Eligible
			342	227	Refused
			12	11	Language Barrier
			579	134	Voice Mail
			214	53	Call Back-Retired
			76	27	Strong Refusal
			3	1	Privacy Manager
			1,226	453	Usable/Eligible Unknown
			-	9	Under 18
			-	5	Not Resident of State
			-	2	Other Unknown
			-	16	Usable/Ineligible
			25.3%	20.2%	Response Rate

Mississippi Call Dispositions

<u>SUMMARY</u>			<u>DETAIL</u>		
Landline	Cell Phone		Landline	Cell Phone	
6,000	3,600	Total	1,122	525	Disconnected
3,780	1,358	Released	147	4	Fax
2,220	2,242	Unreleased	202	13	Government/Business
2,071	776	Usable	-	5	Non Cell Phone
1,709	582	Unusable	5	-	Non Landline
2,071	642	Qualified	1,476	547	Unusable
54.8%	57.1%	Est. Usability	477	67	No Answer
100.0%	81.6%	Est. Eligibility	38	15	Busy
23.2%	18.7%	Est. Response	515	82	Usability Unknown
			481	120	Complete
			25	9	Break-Off
			506	129	Usable/Eligible
			429	321	Refused
			18	8	Language Barrier
			473	116	Voice Mail
			319	87	Call Back-Retired
			42	37	Strong Refusal
			2	2	Privacy Manager
			1,283	571	Usable/Eligible Unknown
			-	18	Under 18
			-	9	Not Resident of State
			-	2	Other Unknown
			-	29	Usable/Ineligible
			23.2%	18.7%	Response Rate

New Jersey Call Dispositions

<u>SUMMARY</u>				<u>DETAIL</u>			
Landline	Cell Phone			Landline	Cell Phone		
6,000	3,600	Total		1,140	523	Disconnected	
3,936	1,475	Released		126	11	Fax	
2,064	2,125	Unreleased		179	12	Government/Business	
2,299	893	Usable		-	5	Non Cell Phone	
1,637	582	Unusable		6	-	Non Landline	
2,299	692	Qualified		1,451	551	Unusable	
58.4%	60.6%	Est. Usability		397	69	No Answer	
100.0%	76.2%	Est. Eligibility		51	9	Busy	
20.9%	17.3%	Est. Response		448	78	Usability Unknown	
				480	120	Complete	
				32	21	Break-Off	
				512	141	Usable/Eligible	
				498	341	Refused	
				51	23	Language Barrier	
				502	124	Voice Mail	
				416	108	Call Back-Retired	
				55	60	Strong Refusal	
				3	5	Privacy Manager	
				1,525	661	Usable/Eligible Unknown	
				-	33	Under 18	
				-	9	Not Resident of State	
				-	2	Other Unknown	
				-	44	Usable/Ineligible	
				20.9%	17.3%	Response Rate	

New York Call Dispositions

<u>SUMMARY</u>			<u>DETAIL</u>		
Landline	Cell Phone		Landline	Cell Phone	
6,000	3,600	Total	1,027	548	Disconnected
3,843	1,484	Released	151	9	Fax
2,157	2,116	Unreleased	186	16	Government/Business
2,267	879	Usable	-	3	Non Cell Phone
1,576	605	Unusable	9	-	Non Landline
2,267	694	Qualified	1,373	576	Unusable
59.0%	59.2%	Est. Usability	438	55	No Answer
100.0%	77.8%	Est. Eligibility	57	16	Busy
21.2%	17.3%	Est. Response	495	71	Usability Unknown
			480	120	Complete
			35	17	Break-Off
			515	137	Usable/Eligible
			519	345	Refused
			47	20	Language Barrier
			457	134	Voice Mail
			368	101	Call Back-Retired
			64	58	Strong Refusal
			5	3	Privacy Manager
			1,460	661	Usable/Eligible Unknown
			-	29	Under 18
			-	8	Not Resident of State
			-	2	Other Unknown
			-	39	Usable/Ineligible
			21.2%	17.3%	Response Rate

DEMOGRAPHICS	ALABAMA		ARKANSAS		KANSAS		MISSISSIPPI		NEW JERSEY		NEW YORK	
	Weighted	UnWeighted	Weighted	UnWeighted	Weighted	UnWeighted	Weighted	UnWeighted	Weighted	UnWeighted	Weighted	UnWeighted
Male	44.7%	49.3%	44.3%	49.8%	45.8%	46.7%	46.5%	48.1%	48.0%	47.5%	46.4%	49.1%
Female	55.3%	50.7%	55.7%	50.2%	54.2%	53.5%	53.5%	51.9%	52.0%	52.5%	53.6%	50.9%
Asian	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.5%	1.2%	2.0%	0.0%	0.5%	5.5%	3.5%	3.2%	6.0%
Black	25.8%	26.6%	14.4%	12.3%	6.5%	8.1%	43.4%	35.2%	14.3%	13.0%	15.1%	21.6%
White	72.8%	69.9%	82.8%	84.1%	86.5%	85.4%	55.6%	61.7%	69.8%	76.9%	71.2%	63.0%
Other	1.3%	2.8%	2.8%	3.2%	3.2%	4.3%	0.5%	2.2%	0.5%	6.1%	2.2%	8.3%
Hispanic	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	0.2%	0.5%	0.5%	9.8%	0.5%	8.3%	1.2%
18-29	12.9%	6.3%	17.5%	5.8%	16.2%	7.5%	19.6%	8.6%	17.5%	10.1%	15.9%	12.3%
30-39	15.9%	12.8%	15.0%	16.6%	14.7%	17.1%	15.8%	18.1%	13.8%	21.8%	19.1%	25.0%
40-49	18.0%	22.6%	16.7%	12.4%	17.2%	22.8%	16.7%	19.4%	19.5%	22.8%	18.6%	20.2%
50-64	29.4%	30.8%	25.0%	34.0%	26.8%	28.1%	27.9%	28.7%	26.5%	24.1%	25.4%	22.9%
65 & Over	23.9%	27.1%	25.7%	30.5%	25.2%	24.4%	20.1%	24.9%	22.8%	19.8%	20.9%	17.2%
DK/Refused	-	0.3%	-	0.7%	-	0.2%	-	0.3%	-	1.5%	-	2.3%
< HS Graduate	19.2%	7.7%	18.7%	5.0%	11.7%	3.3%	21.3%	9.8%	13.2%	3.3%	15.8%	5.8%
HS Graduate	32.3%	32.6%	35.8%	31.0%	29.4%	24.6%	31.4%	32.0%	30.3%	23.3%	28.7%	22.1%
Some College	28.7%	25.1%	28.3%	27.5%	32.7%	29.6%	30.2%	27.2%	24.7%	28.7%	26.1%	27.0%
≥ College	19.8%	34.4%	17.2%	35.8%	26.2%	42.2%	17.1%	30.7%	31.8%	43.2%	29.4%	44.3%
DK/Refused	-	0.2%	-	0.7%	-	0.3%	-	0.3%	-	1.5%	-	0.8%

About the Author

Paul DiPerna (paul@edchoice.org) is Research Director for The Foundation for Educational Choice in Indianapolis. DiPerna joined the Foundation in September 2006, and his research includes surveys and polling on K-12 education issues. He also manages and edits all other research projects commissioned by the Foundation. DiPerna previously served as assistant director for the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution, working there for more than six years. He was a research analyst for the first five issues of the *Brown Center Report on American Education* (2000-2004), and managed the activities of the National Working Commission on Choice in K-12 Education (2001-2005). DiPerna has presented research at the American Sociological Association annual meeting, and he has published articles in *Education Next*, *First Monday*, and the *Washington Examiner*. In 2008, he authored a textbook chapter in the *Handbook of Research on Web Log Analysis*.

A native of Pittsburgh, DiPerna attended the University of Dayton as an undergraduate and received an M.A. in political science from the University of Illinois.

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About Braun Research, Inc. (BRI)

The Braun Research network of companies, founded in 1995, combined employ 60 full-time and over 600 part-time employees engaged in data collection via telephone, and internet for various survey research firms, government and advertising agencies, local community organizations, local and national business groups, foundations, universities and academic entities, as well as religious organizations. In 15 years, Braun Research has conducted more than 6,900 research projects by telephone, internet, and mail worldwide.

Nationally-known research firms have hired Braun Research, including the Gallup Organization, the Pew Research Center, the Eagleton Poll, Mathematica Policy Research, and the *Washington Post*. Braun Research has worked for the New Jersey Department of Health and Human Services, as well as other government agencies including the United States Departments of the Treasury and Defense, and the Center for Disease Control.

Braun Research is a well-respected firm employing techniques and standards approved by various survey research academic organizations and other affiliations including those with whom Braun is an active member, including AAPOR (American Association for Public Opinion Research) and MRA/CMOR (Market Research Association/Council on Marketing and Opinion Research) and CASRO (Council on American Survey Research Organizations).

Braun's services on behalf of other research firms are up to standards required by various professional associations where Braun enjoys membership, and in some cases, participates actively. Paul Braun is a member of the MRA/CMOR committees on response rate improvement and in launching a seal of quality for the industry. Paul Braun is recognized as a leader in the field by colleagues who asked him to serve on these committees. He has served as President of the New Jersey Chapter of AAPOR.

About The Foundation for Educational Choice

The Foundation for Educational Choice is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and nonpartisan **organization, solely dedicated to advancing Milton and Rose Friedman’s vision of school choice** for all children. First established as the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation in 1996, the Foundation continues to promote school choice as the most effective and equitable way to improve the quality of K-12 education in America. The Foundation is dedicated to research, education, and outreach on the vital issues and implications related to choice and competition in K-12 education.

Commitment to Methods & Transparency

The Foundation for Educational Choice is committed to research that adheres to high scientific standards, and matters of methodology and transparency are taken seriously at all levels of our organization. We are dedicated to providing high-quality information in a transparent and efficient manner.

All individuals have opinions, and many organizations (like our own) have specific missions or philosophical orientations. Scientific methods, if used correctly and followed closely in well-designed studies, should neutralize these opinions and orientations. Research rules and methods minimize bias. We believe rigorous **procedural rules of science prevent a researcher’s motives**, and an organization’s particular orientation, from pre-determining results. If research adheres to proper scientific and methodological standards, its findings can be relied upon no matter who has conducted it. If rules and methods are neither specified nor followed, then the biases of the researcher or an organization may become relevant, because a lack of rigor opens the door for those biases to affect the results.

Our authors take responsibility for research design, analysis, charts, and any unintentional errors or misrepresentations. They welcome any and all questions related to methods and findings.

Survey Questionnaire and Topline

Interview Dates: July 26 to August 1, 2010
Sample Frame: Registered Voters
Sample Sizes: AL=601; AR=603; KS=602; MS=603; NJ=602; NY=603; Total=3,614
Margin of Error: ± 4.0 percentage points for each state sample;
± 1.6 percentage points for the total sample

*Displayed numbers in tables are percentages, unless otherwise noted.
Due to rounding, percentage totals for a given question may be slightly greater or less than 100%.*

[INTRODUCTION]

Hello, I am _____ calling for Braun Research Inc. in Princeton, New Jersey. We are conducting a telephone opinion survey on behalf of the Foundation for Educational Choice and would like to know your opinions on some important issues. We are not selling anything or asking for donations. May I please speak to someone who is registered to vote and is at home right now?

[IF NEEDED:]

The Foundation for Educational Choice is a non-profit, non-partisan research organization.

[IF NEEDED:]

The survey should take approximately 7 to 10 minutes.

“For this brief interview, if you are completely unsure about your answer or have no feelings for an answer, you can say ‘I Don’t Know’.” [ENTER AS “DK”]

1. Do you feel things in K-12 Education in **[INSERT STATE NAME]** are generally going in the right direction, or do you feel things have generally gotten off on the wrong track?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Right Direction	35	46	49	41	39	36	41
Wrong Track	53	41	38	52	49	53	48
DK (VOL.)	12	13	13	8	12	11	11

2. What ONE WORD best describes your impression of **[INSERT STATE NAME]**'s public school system? Just the one word that best describes **[INSERT STATE NAME]**'s education system.

[OPEN-END. IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "NO RESPONSE".]

Specific impressions offered by 10 or more respondents per state. Numbers represent counts (n), not percentages.

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY
Good	83	80	102	78	99	68
Poor	48	33	29	28	23	26
Fair	28	28	21	27	22	20
Lacking	20	18	17	25	19	20
OK	20	17	16	16	19	14
Mediocre	17	14	15	15	17	13
Average	15	13	15	14	14	11
Improving	15	11	14	14	14	11
Bad	12	11	13	13	12	-
Adequate	11	-	12	13	11	-
Behind	11	-	10	11	11	-
Under-Funded	11	-	-	10	10	-
-	-	-	-	-	10	-

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Unique Impressions	149	168	168	163	170	198	505
Gave Impression	529	508	531	529	544	550	3,191
No Response	72	95	71	74	58	53	423

3. How would you rate **[INSERT STATE NAME]**'s public school system?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Excellent	6	12	14	9	10	7	10
Good	34	36	49	33	42	36	38
Fair	36	30	25	36	33	35	33
Poor	22	18	10	21	12	21	17
DK (VOL.)	2	5	2	1	3	2	2

4. Do you believe that public school funding in **[INSERT STATE NAME]** is at a level that is:

[ROTATE “TOO HIGH” AND “TOO LOW”]

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Too High	6	6	10	10	23	13	11
About Right	23	40	35	29	33	27	31
Too Low	65	45	48	56	38	53	51
DK (VOL.)	6	9	8	6	7	7	7

5. How much do you think is currently spent on each student in **[INSERT STATE NAME]**'s public schools? Your estimate (to the nearest thousand dollars) will represent the combined expenditures of local, state, and federal governments.

[OPEN-END. RECORD SPECIFIC ESTIMATE. IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE LISTING CATEGORIES BELOW, AND RECORD CATEGORY. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Median Estimate	\$2,500	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$3,000	\$8,000	\$5,000	\$4,000
Gave Response (n)	236	255	276	259	323	292	1,641
"Depends" (n)	365	348	326	344	279	311	1,973

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Less Than \$4,000	51	41	40	47	30	38	41
\$4,001 - \$8,000	21	28	31	24	23	22	25
\$8,001 - \$12,000	7	9	10	9	19	16	12
\$12,001 - \$16,000	3	3	2	2	9	5	4
Over \$16,000	3	4	4	5	11	7	6
DK (VOL.)	15	16	12	14	8	13	13

6. How much confidence do you have in this response? **[If Q5=DK, then skip question]**

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
A Great Deal	17	20	13	18	17	17	17
A Good Amount	28	29	27	28	28	33	29
Just Some	38	36	45	43	37	33	38
None At All	16	15	12	10	13	14	13
DK (VOL.)	2	1	3	1	5	3	3

7. What is your best estimate for **[INSERT STATE NAME]**'s high school graduation rate, from 0 to 100%? For this survey, the graduation rate is defined as the percentage of high school students who advance from freshman year to receiving a high school diploma within four years.

[OPEN-END. IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Median Estimate	70%	75%	75%	70%	75%	65%	70%
Average Estimate	66%	70%	74%	65%	72%	63%	68%
Gave Response (n)	563	561	564	567	566	560	3,381
DK (VOL.) (n)	38	42	38	36	36	43	233
DK (VOL.) (%)	6	7	6	6	6	7	6

8. How much confidence do you have in this response? **[If Q7=DK, then skip question]**

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
A Great Deal	22	23	17	26	22	24	22
A Good Amount	36	38	40	35	42	35	38
Just Some	34	33	36	34	32	35	34
None At All	8	4	7	4	4	5	5
DK (VOL.)	1	2	1	1	<1	1	1

9. Compared to all other states taking the same academic achievement test, do you think **[INSERT STATE NAME]** nationally ranks...

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Within The Top 10	11	13	14	10	28	18	16
11 to 20	18	13	29	16	28	29	22
21 to 30	17	22	30	17	18	22	21
31 to 40	16	18	13	14	13	10	14
41 to 50	30	27	7	38	7	16	21
DK (VOL.)	8	7	8	5	6	5	7

10. How much confidence do you have in this response? **[If Q9=DK, then skip question]**

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
A Great Deal	24	31	17	28	25	27	25
A Good Amount	30	31	38	33	32	32	33
Just Some	38	31	38	33	36	36	35
None At All	6	6	6	5	6	5	6
DK (VOL.)	2	2	1	1	1	<1	1

11. If it were your decision and you could select any type of school, what type of school would you select in order to obtain the best education for your child?

[RANDOMIZE RESPONSES TO AVOID BIAS]

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Charter School	8	12	13	8	12	14	11
Homeschooling	11	14	9	10	7	7	10
Private School	40	33	35	38	39	49	39
Regular Public School	38	37	40	43	40	29	38
Virtual School	<1	2	1	1	1	1	1
DK (VOL.)	3	1	3	1	1	1	2

12. What is the most important school attribute (or characteristic) to be the main reason you would select a **[INSERT SCHOOL TYPE FROM QUESTION Q11]**?

[RANDOMIZE RESPONSES TO AVOID BIAS]

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Extracurricular Activities	7	8	8	9	9	8	8
Location	6	5	4	8	5	6	6
Religious or Philosophical Mission	7	9	8	6	4	5	7
School Size, Class Size	12	10	13	10	13	18	13
Standards, Curriculum	25	26	27	21	30	23	25
Structure, Discipline	19	19	20	19	17	18	19
Test Scores, Performance	17	11	13	17	14	13	14
Other	6	7	6	6	6	7	6
DK (VOL.)	2	5	1	4	1	2	3

“For the remainder of this interview, if you are completely unsure about your answer or have no feelings for an answer, feel free to say “I Don’t Know”.” [ENTER AS “DK”]

13. How familiar are you with “charter schools” in K-12 education?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Very Familiar	6	10	12	8	12	15	11
Somewhat Familiar	25	27	27	23	42	38	30
Not That Familiar	46	45	45	39	35	32	40
I Have Never Heard of “Charter Schools”	18	14	10	21	6	10	13
DK (VOL.)	6	5	6	9	5	5	6

14. Charter schools are public schools that have more control over their own budget, staff, and curriculum, and are exempt from many existing public school regulations. In general, do you favor or oppose charter schools? **[PROBE:]** Would you say strongly or somewhat favor/oppose?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Strongly Favor	24	26	25	23	30	32	27
Somewhat Favor	34	34	37	39	40	36	36
Somewhat Oppose	11	13	14	13	8	13	12
Strongly Oppose	10	10	6	7	11	7	9
DK (VOL.)	21	18	18	18	11	13	16

15. How familiar are you with “virtual schools” in K-12 education? These schools are sometimes called "cyber schools" and "online schools".

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Very Familiar	6	13	13	12	6	8	10
Somewhat Familiar	20	16	24	19	21	16	19
Not That Familiar	38	39	42	40	46	41	41
I Have Never Heard of “Virtual Schools”	34	28	20	27	26	33	28
DK (VOL.)	2	3	2	2	2	3	2

16. Virtual schools can be run publicly or privately, allowing students to work with their curriculum and teachers over the internet – in combination with, or in place of, traditional classroom learning. In general, do you favor or oppose virtual schools?
[PROBE:] Would you say strongly or somewhat favor/oppose?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Strongly Favor	9	12	11	12	9	8	10
Somewhat Favor	22	19	27	23	18	25	22
Somewhat Oppose	22	18	21	21	26	19	21
Strongly Oppose	34	33	30	30	32	38	33
DK (VOL.)	13	17	11	13	15	10	13

17. Some states give tax credits to individuals and businesses if they contribute money to nonprofit organizations that distribute private school scholarships. This policy supports a “tax-credit scholarship system”. In general, do you favor or oppose a tax-credit scholarship system? **[PROBE:]** Would you say strongly or somewhat favor/oppose?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Strongly Favor	26	34	23	32	32	36	30
Somewhat Favor	34	31	33	33	37	34	34
Somewhat Oppose	14	10	17	12	13	9	12
Strongly Oppose	11	12	12	12	10	13	12
DK (VOL.)	15	14	15	13	9	9	12

18. How familiar are you with “school vouchers” in K-12 education?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Very Familiar	7	12	14	13	16	13	12
Somewhat Familiar	26	29	29	28	34	29	29
Not That Familiar	34	29	32	33	29	34	32
I Have Never Heard of “School Vouchers”	30	26	22	25	20	23	24
DK (VOL.)	3	4	3	2	1	1	2

19. A school voucher system allows parents the option of sending their child to the school of their choice, whether that school is public or private, including both religious and non-religious schools.

If this policy were adopted, tax dollars currently allocated to a school district would be allocated to parents in the form of a “school voucher” to pay partial or full tuition for their child’s school. In general, do you favor or oppose a school voucher system? **[PROBE:]** Would you say strongly or somewhat favor/oppose?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Strongly Favor	33	39	31	43	39	41	38
Somewhat Favor	29	21	26	31	30	25	27
Somewhat Oppose	11	12	19	10	7	11	12
Strongly Oppose	17	18	17	10	19	15	16
DK (VOL.)	10	9	8	6	5	8	8

“Now, just a few questions for statistical purposes only. ...”

20. When you were growing up, did you go to public or private school?

[IF RESPONDENT SAYS "both," ASK: "Where did you go MOST of the time?" IF STILL "both" CODE AS SUCH... IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS 'DK']

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Public School	89	91	81	88	71	74	82
Private School	5	2	10	5	19	13	9
Both	6	7	8	7	9	12	8
DK/Refused (VOL.)	1	1	0	<1	1	1	1

21. Are you currently the parent or guardian of a child who lives with you, and who is in any grade from Pre-School through High School?

[IF NEEDED: IF CHILD IS GOING INTO PRESCHOOL IN THE UPCOMING SCHOOL YEAR, ENTER "YES"]

[IF NEEDED: IF CHILD JUST GRADUATED IN 2010, ENTER "NO"]

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Yes	31	36	27	38	30	36	33
No	69	64	73	62	71	65	67
DK/Refused (VOL.)	0	1	0	<1	0	0	<1

22. Generally speaking, do you usually consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?

[Code for Democrat, Republican, Independent, Libertarian, Tea Party, Other, or “DK”]

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Democrat	35	38	32	45	33	41	37
Republican	32	25	35	25	26	21	27
Independent	22	25	24	19	29	27	24
Other	5	7	6	5	7	4	6
Libertarian (VOL.)	1	<1	<1	1	1	1	1
Tea Party (VOL.)	1	<1	<1	1	<1	1	<1
DK/Refused (VOL.)	6	6	3	4	5	5	5

23. How would you describe your views on most political matters? Generally, do you think of yourself as liberal, moderate, or conservative? **[rotate liberal and conservative]**

[Code only for Liberal, Moderate, Conservative, or “DK”]

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Liberal	12	19	18	14	21	23	18
Moderate	32	31	34	36	45	42	37
Conservative	45	42	39	40	29	28	37
DK/Refused (VOL.)	11	8	9	10	5	7	8

24. What is your zip code? **[OPEN END]**

25. How would you best describe where you live?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Urban	12	16	18	13	18	35	18
Suburban	19	15	26	14	49	33	26
Small Town	42	41	38	42	24	19	34
Rural	24	27	15	30	9	10	19
DK/Refused (VOL.)	3	1	4	2	1	3	2

26. Which of the following age categories do you fall in?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
18 – 29	13	18	16	20	18	16	17
30 – 39	16	15	15	16	14	19	16
40 – 49	18	17	17	17	20	19	18
50 – 64	29	25	27	28	27	25	27
65 & Over	24	26	25	20	23	21	23
DK/Refused (VOL.)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

27. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin or descent, or not?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Hispanic	1	1	7	2	12	15	6
Not Hispanic	98	98	92	98	87	85	93
DK/Refused (VOL.)	1	1	1	<1	1	<1	1

28. Which of the following describes your race?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Asian/Asian American	0	0	1	0	6	3	2
Black/African American	26	14	7	43	14	15	20
White/Caucasian	73	83	87	56	70	71	73
Other	1	2	3	<1	<1	2	1
DK/Refused (VOL.)	<1	1	3	1	10	9	4

29. What is your religion, if any? **[DO NOT READ CATEGORIES]**

[IF GIVEN SPECIFIC PROTESTANT DENOMINATION, SIMPLY CODE PROTESTANT]

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Catholic	9	11	24	9	43	42	23
Jewish	<1	1	1	1	4	7	2
Muslim	1	<1	<1	1	1	1	1
Protestant	77	72	55	79	33	28	57
Other	3	6	5	4	2	1	4
None	7	8	11	6	11	16	10
DK/Refused (VOL.)	3	3	3	1	6	5	3

30. What is the last grade or class that you completed in school? **[DO NOT READ CATEGORIES]**

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

- None (Grades 1-8)
- High School Incomplete (Grades 9-11)
- High school Graduate (Grade 12 or GED Certificate)
- Technical, Trade, or Vocational School (AFTER High School)
- Some College (Associate’s Degree, No 4-Yr Degree)
- College Graduate (Bachelor’s Degree., or Other 4-Yr Degree)
- Post-Graduate Training or Professional Schooling After College (e.g., Toward a Master's Degree, Ph.D.; Law, Medical School)

Collapsed and recoded categories to produce the following table...

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Less Than HS Graduate	19	19	12	21	13	16	17
HS Graduate, GED, etc.	32	36	29	31	30	29	31
Some College or Associate’s Degree	29	28	33	30	25	26	28
Bachelor’s Degree or Higher	20	17	26	17	32	29	24
DK/Refused (VOL.)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

31. Would you tell me into which of the following categories your total family income falls?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Under \$25,000	27	24	17	30	19	19	23
\$25,000 – \$49,999	25	28	30	23	17	21	24
\$50,000 – \$74,999	18	19	22	19	23	22	21
\$75,000 – \$124,999	10	10	10	9	13	15	11
\$125,000 – \$200,000	4	3	3	4	8	5	5
Over \$200,000	2	2	2	1	4	2	2
DK/Refused (VOL.)	15	15	16	13	16	16	15

32. [CODE GENDER OF RESPONDENT; DO NOT ASK, UNLESS GENDER IS IN QUESTION]

	AL	AR	KS	MS	NJ	NY	Total
Female	55	56	54	54	52	54	54
Male	45	44	46	47	48	46	46