
WHY INDIANA PARENTS CHOOSE

A Cross-Sector Survey of Parents' Views in a
Robust School Choice Environment

Andrew D. Catt
Evan Rhinesmith, Ph.D.



ABOUT EDCHOICE

EdChoice is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to advancing full and unencumbered educational choice as the best pathway to successful lives and a stronger society. EdChoice believes that families, not bureaucrats, are best equipped to make K-12 schooling decisions for their children. The organization works at the state level to educate diverse audiences, train advocates and engage policymakers on the benefits of high-quality school choice programs. EdChoice is the intellectual legacy of Milton and Rose D. Friedman, who founded the organization in 1996 as the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As Congress and dozens of states consider school choice programs, policymakers and the public look to the performance of Indiana’s tax-credit scholarships and school voucher program, the largest of its kind in America. Though many turn to student test scores to determine the success or failure of a program, many more focus on reports of parents’ experiences in a robust school choice environment. In this report, we examine the responses of Indiana school parents from all sectors to a survey—developed by EdChoice and conducted by Hanover Research—that aims to measure what motivates them to choose schools, their children’s schooling experiences, their awareness of school choice options, their satisfaction levels, and the goals they set for their children’s education.

The findings in this report come from an original survey of parents whose children are enrolled in Indiana’s schools, broken down into five distinct segments: voucher parents, tax-credit scholarship parents, public district school parents, public charter school parents, and non-choice private school parents—parents who pay for private schooling out of pocket rather than with the assistance of a school choice program.

This report addresses five research questions:

1. What motivates parents to leave one school for another school?
2. How important are academic quality, safety, and transportation to their decisions?
3. How difficult is it for parents to find the preferred schools for their children?
4. How satisfied were parents with their current and former schools?
5. What level of importance do parents place on a variety of educational goals for their children?

Key Findings

When asked for all of the reasons why they don’t currently have a child participating in one of Indiana’s school choice programs, more than one-third of parents said they were unaware of the programs, including:

- 16 percent of non-choice private school parents
- 36 percent of charter school parents
- 39 percent of district school parents

The vast majority of parents are somewhat or completely satisfied with the state’s voucher program (86%) and tax-credit scholarship program (83%):

- 62 percent are completely satisfied with the voucher program
- 45 percent are completely satisfied with the tax-credit scholarship program

Private school parents were significantly more likely than district school parents to report being satisfied with their child’s current school:

- 89 percent of non-choice private school parents were somewhat or completely satisfied
- 81 percent of voucher parents were somewhat or completely satisfied
- 79 percent of tax-credit scholarship parents were somewhat or completely satisfied
- 74 percent of district school parents were somewhat or completely satisfied
- 81 percent of charter school parents were somewhat or completely satisfied

On average, three-fifths of private school choice parents (60%) found it somewhat or very easy to find their child’s current school under Indiana’s voucher or tax-credit scholarship program:

- 65 percent of voucher parents found it somewhat or very easy
- 50 percent of tax-credit scholarship parents found it somewhat or very easy
- 6 percent of private school choice parents found it to be very difficult

When voucher and tax-credit scholarship parents were asked for all of the sources from which they heard about their chosen private choice school:

- 47 percent said they were told by friends or relatives
- 26 percent heard about the school through church
- 20 percent learned about the school on the internet
- 16 percent heard about the school from their local district school

Private school choice parents were also asked to take their list of all sources of information and identify which one source they trusted the most for learning about their private school:

- 37 percent said they trusted friends or relatives the most
- 16 percent said church
- 10 percent said internet
- 10 percent listed their local district school as their most trusted source

Of the 1,018 current and former voucher and tax-credit scholarship parents who responded to the 2017 survey, 85 percent have at least one child participating in the voucher or tax-credit scholarship program, 6 percent no longer meet program eligibility requirements, and 5 percent no longer have any children in K–12 education.

The majority of the 106 former private school choice parents who listed the type of school their child currently attends said they're now in a public school:

- 36 percent transferred to a public district school
- 29 percent remained in the same private school
- 19 percent transferred to a public charter school
- 13 percent transferred to a different private school
- 3 percent switched to being homeschooled

If Indiana's voucher program didn't exist, 45 percent of current voucher parents said they would send their children to their local district school, and 13 percent, a public charter school. That point, along with where former private school choice students now attend school, directly contradicts the Indiana Department of Education's assertion that all voucher students would attend private school regardless of whether or not the program existed.ⁱ

The majority of parents without children participating in Indiana's voucher or tax-credit scholarship programs would use one of those programs if they qualified, or if the award amount fully covered tuition and expenses:

- 78 percent of non-choice private school parents would be very or extremely likely to participate
- 60 percent of charter school parents would be very or extremely likely to participate
- 56 percent of district school parents would be very or extremely likely to participate

Non-choice private school parents (55%) were more likely than the district (29%) and charter school parents (32%) to indicate they would be extremely likely to participate in the voucher or tax-credit scholarship program if they qualified, or if the award amount fully covered tuition and expenses.

ⁱJeff Spalding (2014, June 30), School Choice: It's Easy as 1, 2, 3, but Not for IDOE [Blog post], retrieved from <https://www.edchoice.org/blog/school-choice-its-easy-as-1-2-3-but-not-for-idoe>

The majority of private school choice parents are more involved in a variety of activities since enrolling their children in their current school compared to their previous school:

- Communicating with teachers (61%)
- Participating in school activities (61%)
- Working on math or arithmetic with their children (55%)
- Volunteering or performing community service (55%)

More than two-thirds of private school choice parents (70%) have taken on a part-time or other job for additional income, changed their job, and/or taken out a new loan to support their child's K-12 education:

- 72 percent of voucher parents did at least one of those activities
- 66 percent of tax-credit scholarship parents did at least one of those activities
- 45 percent of non-choice private school parents did at least one of those activities
- 32 percent of district school parents did at least one of those activities
- 38 percent of charter school parents did at least one of those activities

Voucher and tax-credit scholarship parents are more likely than district school parents to see developing a love of country/patriotism and being accepted at a top-tier college as very or extremely important goals for their children.

Parents value the opportunity to choose a school they believe is a better fit for their student. Parents value the autonomy to choose a school outside of their neighborhood, especially if they can find a school that holds the same values. All families should have the opportunity to be completely satisfied when it comes to the school in which their children are educated, and though this may

wind up being a ZIP Code-assigned district school, all families should have the option to identify and choose the school that is best for each child in their family, regardless of income.

INTRODUCTION

School choice has been a tumultuous topic in Indiana over the past few years and even more so this year as debate around a proposed federal school choice program under the Trump/Pence administration has brought the performance of the state’s school vouchers—the largest program of its kind in America—into the national spotlight. Often times, those shouting the loudest about the efficacy, equity, and legitimacy of school choice programs are furthest from the schools. What gets lost in the political shouting match are the voices of those most affected by these programs: parents and students. With that in mind, this report aims to provide a voice to the parents of school-aged children in the state of Indiana.

Background

Indiana is home to the nation’s largest, single statewide school voucher program, with 34,299 students participating in 2016–17.¹ Vouchers give parents the freedom to choose a private school for their children using all or part of the public funding set aside for their children’s education. Under Indiana’s program, funds typically expended by a school district are allocated to a participating family in the form of a voucher to pay partial or full tuition for a child to attend a private school, including both religious and nonreligious options.²

Indiana’s voucher program, known as the Choice Scholarship Program, was enacted in 2011 and launched in the 2011–12 school year.³ Shortly thereafter, public school officials and the state teachers’ union filed a lawsuit that alleged the program violated the separation of church and state required by the state’s constitution by allowing funding of religious schools.⁴ A county judge ruled the program was constitutional in 2012, and opponents appealed to the Indiana Supreme Court.⁵ The Indiana Supreme Court ruled unanimously on March 26, 2013 that the Choice Scholarship Program does not violate any

provision of the state constitution.⁶ The issue was not appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States, which had ruled in 2002 regarding a voucher program in Ohio that vouchers are constitutional when parents have independent, private choice of schools without favoring or disfavoring religion.⁷

In 2017, Jennifer McCormick was elected Indiana’s superintendent of public instruction, and she brought her own views of the voucher program to the table. Talking about the Choice Scholarship Program, Superintendent McCormick has said, “I think it would be responsible of Indiana now that we have trend data for several years to really take a look at what was the intent of the program. Is it servicing students it’s intended to serve? Are we seeing a change in opportunity for students?”⁸ In an interview appearing in a three-part series on Indiana’s voucher program by National Public Radio, McCormick also said, “I think Indiana is in an interesting situation right now. Because we have six years that we’ve had the program. Our charge right now is, what is the next step? You know, we’re spending roughly \$146 million on a program and not really reviewing it. That is irresponsible.”⁹

Academic researchers have since released results of a longitudinal study of voucher students in Indiana (see Literature Review, p. 9). In this report, we expand on Indiana’s voucher and tax-credit scholarship programs beyond student test scores.

Why This Survey Matters

Thousands of parents in Indiana are choosing a school for their children other than their residentially-assigned school. This includes private schools, public charter schools, and public district schools. To find out why Hoosier parents choose *private schools*, EdChoice surveyed more than 4,000 private school parents in 2013, the results of which can be found in Paul DiPerna’s 2014 brief, *Why Indiana Voucher Parents Choose Private Schools*.¹⁰ In 2016, we followed up with about half of the voucher parents who responded in 2013 and

additionally surveyed more than 1,300 private school parents for the report, *Why Parents Choose: A Survey of Private School and School Choice Parents in Indiana*.¹¹

This iteration of the survey includes a sample of Indiana public district school, charter school, and private school parents, and followed up with voucher, tax-credit scholarship, and other private school parents who responded in 2013 and/or 2016. This report looks first at parents who are using the state's school choice programs and then at the broader group that includes private school parents who do not use the state's school choice programs, public charter school parents, and public district school parents.

As long as there is a debate surrounding school choice at the state and, especially, national level, many educational policymakers and stakeholders will need reliable data and information. Much of the discussion around school choice boils down to the differences across school sectors when it comes to student demographics, curricula, educational attainment, and/or potential life outcomes.¹² The differences are sometimes the easiest to see when looking at something or someone outside of oneself. Researchers are trained to test for and home in on significant differences. However, we believe it is paramount to note that it is not the differences between school or student types that should be the most important part of the conversation, but, rather, the commonalities parents have and how parents make the best choices they can for their children based on the options they have in their communities and their interpretation of the information they have available to them at the time. All parents surveyed for this report can call themselves “Hoosiers,” and they all have the potential to view the other survey respondents as members of their in-group, regardless of where they send their children to school.¹³

The purpose of this project is to better understand the experiences of all sectors of school parents and why they decide to choose a school for their children, especially when those children are using a voucher.

This report addresses the following research questions:

1. What motivates parents to leave one school for another school?
2. How important are academic quality, safety, and transportation to their decisions?
3. How difficult is it for parents to find the preferred schools for their children?
4. How satisfied were parents with their current and former schools?
5. What level of importance do parents place on a variety of educational goals for their children?

Types of School Choice in Indiana

Indiana's Choice Scholarship Program allows students from families that qualify for the federal free and reduced-price lunch (FRL) program to receive a voucher worth up to 90 percent of the state per-student spending amount for the sending district. Students from families earning up to 150 percent of the FRL rate (\$68,265 for a family of four in 2017–18) can receive a voucher worth up to 50 percent of the state funding allocation for the sending district. Moreover, students eligible to receive special education funds are eligible to use those funds for special education services at a voucher-accepting school. The program grew from 3,911 students in the first year to 34,299 students in 2016–17, which means approximately 3 percent of all students in Indiana are using a voucher (see Table 1, p. 8).¹⁴ The average voucher value has hovered around \$4,000 dollars—\$3,967 in 2011–12 and \$4,146 in 2016–17.¹⁵ This most recent amount is about 43 percent of the \$9,687 the state spends per pupil, based on the most recently available data.¹⁶

The Choice Scholarship Program evolved almost as quickly as the initial dialogue surrounding it, as shown by the increase in eligible pathways:

- 2011–12 (total participation capped at 7,500 students)

1. Two Semesters in Public School Pathway

Students enrolled in grades 1–12 in a public school for the previous two semesters preceding the first semester of a voucher who are from households earning up to 150 percent of the federal free and reduced-price lunch (FRL) program (\$68,265 for a family of four in 2017–18). Kindergarteners were added in 2013–14.

2. Previous Scholarship Granting Organization (SGO) Award Pathway

Students who meet the above household income criteria who previously received a tax-credit scholarship under the School Scholarship Tax Credit program.

- 2012–13 (total participation capped at 15,000 students)

3. Previous Choice Scholarship Student Pathway

Students who have previously received a Choice Scholarship and meet the above income criteria.

- 2013–14 (participation cap removed)¹⁷

4. Continuing Choice Scholarship Student Pathway

Students who have previously received a Choice Scholarship who are from households earning up to 200 percent of the FRL rate (\$91,020 for a family of four in 2017–18).

5. Special Education Pathway

Students with a “disability” that requires special education services or that have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and who are from households earning up to 200 percent of the FRL rate.

6. “F” Public School Pathway

Students who are residentially-assigned to attend a public school that has been assigned an “F” grade, regardless of prior attendance, who are from households earning up to 150 percent of the FRL rate.

7. Sibling Pathway

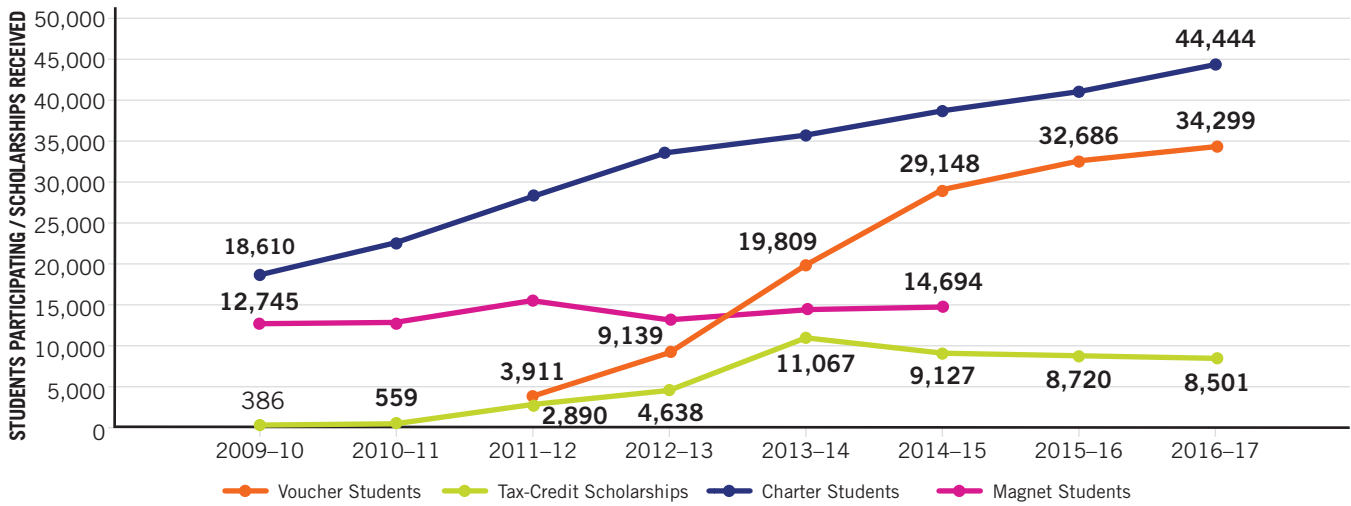
Siblings of students who have previously received a Choice Scholarship or tax-credit scholarship and who are from households earning up to 150 percent of the FRL rate.¹⁸

Indiana’s School Scholarship Tax Credit, a tax-credit scholarship program, was launched in 2010. This program grew from 386 scholarships in its first year to 8,501 scholarships in 2016–17 (see Figure 1), which is the latest release of data from the Indiana Department of Education. Students are eligible for scholarships if their family income does not exceed 200 percent of the FRL rate (\$91,020 for a family of four in 2017–18). The average scholarship value in 2016–17 was \$1,978.¹⁹ This is about 20 percent of what the state spends per pupil, based on the most recently available data.²⁰ Tax-credit scholarships allow taxpayers to receive full or partial tax credits when they donate to nonprofits that provide private school scholarships. Eligible taxpayers can include both individuals and businesses.²¹ Indiana’s School Scholarship Tax Credit program allows individuals and corporations to claim a 50 percent tax credit for contributions to approved scholarship-granting organizations (SGOs), which provide the private school scholarships. There is no limit on the dollar amount that can be claimed, although the total amount of tax credits awarded statewide is limited to \$12.5 million in 2017–18.²²

Charter schools are independently run public schools exempt from many rules and regulations in exchange for increased accountability. Typically, if charters receive more applications than they have open seats, they must accept students based on a lottery. Families do not need to use vouchers or tax-credit scholarships to pay to enroll their children in charter schools as these schools are already publicly funded.²³ Indiana passed a charter school law in 2001.²⁴ Charter school enrollment in the state has exponentially risen from 1,271 students in 2001–02 to an estimated 44,444 students attending 95 schools in 2016–17.²⁵ As shown in Table 1, when looking at all K–12 students in the state of Indiana, the percentage that are charter school students (3.2%) is greater than the percentage of voucher (2.9%) or tax-credit scholarship students (0.7%).

FIGURE 1

Indiana School Choice Participation Data



Sources: EdChoice, School Choice in America [web page], last modified September 11, 2017, retrieved from <http://www.edchoice.org/school-choice/school-choice-in-america>; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey", 2009-10 v.2a, 2010-11 v.2a, 2011-12 v.1a, 2012-13 v.2a, 2013-14 v.2a; "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey CCD School Data", 2014-15 v.1a, "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey Directory Data", 2014-15 v.1a, "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey Membership Data", 2014-15 v.1a; National Center for Education Statistics, Search for Public Schools [web page], accessed August 29, 2017, <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch>; Office of School Finance (2017), *Choice Scholarship Program Annual Report: Participation and Payment Data*, accessed August 25, 2017, retrieved from Indiana Department of Education website: <http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/choice/2016-2017-choice-scholarship-program-report-spring-revision-final-0811.pdf>

Indiana also offers more traditional forms of public school choice in the form of **magnet school** and **intradistrict and interdistrict open-enrollment** policies. Magnet schools are district-run, often with a focused theme such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM); Fine and Performing Arts; and others.²⁶ During the 2014–15 school year, Indiana enrolled more than 14,000 students in 30 magnet schools.²⁷ Intradistrict open-enrollment policies allow students to transfer to another public district school within their home school district, while interdistrict open enrollment policies allow students to transfer to a public district school outside of their home school district. Only Indianapolis Public Schools have a mandatory intradistrict open enrollment policy, but all Indiana public school districts have the option to accept or reject open enrollment students. There are multiple rules and regulations controlling the enrollment behaviors of families hoping to take advantage of Indiana’s intradistrict and interdistrict open enrollment policies.²⁸

Homeschool parents are subject to the same state laws required of unaccredited private schools, including ensuring the student receives 180 days of instruction, keeping attendance records and providing instruction equivalent to that given in the public schools, although the latter is not defined in state law.²⁹ However, due to sample size constraints, we do not separate out the analyses of homeschool parent responses in this report.

TABLE 1

Indiana K–12 Educational Choice Share

Voucher Share	2.9%
Tax-Credit Scholarship Share (<i>estimated</i>)	0.7%
Other Private School Share	5.2%
Public District School Share	85.1%
Public Charter School Share	3.2%
Home School Share (<i>estimated</i>)	2.9%

Source: Drew Catt (2017, January 25), U.S. States Ranked by Educational Choice Share, 2017 [Blog post], retrieved from <https://www.edchoice.org/blog/u-s-states-ranked-by-educational-choice-share-2017>

LITERATURE REVIEW

Though this research focuses on parental satisfaction and school experiences, the bulk of voucher research continues to focus on academic achievement and attainment. Recent research from Louisiana and Indiana have been the first to find significant negative effects for students enrolling in private schools using vouchers, though the results have improved over time.³⁰

Parental satisfaction in school choice programs is often included as a secondary measure of program success. While students' academic outcomes in private school choice programs to date are decidedly mixed (and dependent on the outcome of interest), research on parental satisfaction in private school choice programs has remained constant: Parents who are able to choose are more satisfied. Results of satisfaction research alone should not drive decisions about the success or failure of school choice programs. Rather, it is important to consider parental satisfaction as a piece of the school choice puzzle, providing a peek inside the black box of what parents want from their children's schools. In a panel discussion of the results of two parental satisfaction survey studies, Harvard researchers Paul Peterson and Marty West said the results of parental satisfaction research "indicate what parents want amid an environment of heated debate..."³¹

In this section, we review the literature examining parental satisfaction in private school choice programs, charter schools, and public district schools. This is by no means a comprehensive examination of parental satisfaction research. Rather, it is an examination of recently published research and seeks to provide a broad answer to the question of how satisfied parents are in these various school sectors.

How Satisfied Are Parents?

Nationally, public district schools continue to enroll the vast majority of students (76%), but

parents find themselves with more options through private schools, public charter schools, and open-enrollment for district schools.³² With these options becoming more readily available, parents now have more opportunities to "vote with their feet." This forces schools to ensure they are satisfying their customers (parents) to keep or expand their hold on the market. Here, we discuss the research on parental satisfaction in three major school sectors: private school choice programs, public charter schools, and public district schools.

Private School Choice Parental Satisfaction

Large scale studies of private school choice programs have often included parental satisfaction surveys, comparing the responses of parents who were awarded vouchers to those who continued with the status quo.

William Howell and Paul Peterson's *The Education Gap* is one of the most expansive examinations of urban private school voucher programs in the United States. Their study of parental satisfaction in Dayton, Ohio, New York City, and Washington, D.C., and the national Children's Scholarship Fund led them to the conclusion that "overall, the findings are unambiguous. The effects of parents' initial satisfaction with their child's switch from a public to a private school...were large, clear, sustained, and positive."³³

Results from Kim Metcalf's study of the Cleveland Scholarship Program and John F. Witte's study of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) reached similar conclusions on parental satisfaction. Metcalf's comparisons of scholarship recipients, scholarship applicants who did not receive a scholarship, and public school parents found that parents of scholarship students tended to be more satisfied.³⁴ Similarly, Witte compared winners and losers of a randomized lottery to obtain an MPCP scholarship and Milwaukee Public School parents, finding choice parents were more satisfied than other Milwaukee parents.³⁵

In the federally-mandated evaluation of the District of Columbia's Opportunity Scholarship Program, Patrick Wolf and his colleagues examined parental satisfaction along with the academic impacts of the program. They found "parents were 8 percentage points more likely to give their child's school a grade of A or B if offered a scholarship as compared with the control group."³⁶ In a follow-up study of the District of Columbia's voucher program, Brian Kisida and Patrick Wolf found that parents who used their vouchers expressed even higher levels of satisfaction with their chosen school across an extensive list of measures. This confirmed the researchers' hypothesis that "satisfied DC parental customers are choosing schools that offer tangible benefits related to the goals of public education."³⁷

Anna Egalite and colleagues at North Carolina State University conducted an evaluation of North Carolina's Opportunity Scholarship Program. Using survey responses from nearly 2,500 parents, they found that an overwhelming majority of parents (94 percent) assigned their child's new school an "A" or "B." These same parents were more likely to assign a grade of "C" or lower to the school where they previously enrolled their child.³⁸

Public Charter School Parental Satisfaction

Charter schools have become a popular option for parents outside of their assigned public district school, offering what seems to be a mix of both private schools and public district schools. Much like private school choice research, studies of the impacts of charter schools include parental satisfaction as a secondary outcome.

In a 2003 study of charter school and public district school parents in Washington, D.C., Mark Schneider and Jack Buckley compared satisfaction levels of the two groups of parents. The topline results from the study show that parents who enroll their children in charter schools rate their teachers, principals, facilities, and schools higher than parents who enroll their children in public district schools. Given the high demand for charter

school enrollment in Washington, D.C., at the time of this study, Schneider and Buckley were able to account for bias that may result from parents who actively sought out enrollment in charter schools. In this case, the authors compare charter parents to parents who applied for but were denied enrollment in D.C. charter schools, finding that charter parents "uniformly grade all dimensions of their schools higher than the control group."³⁹

A follow-up study of Washington, D.C., parents from Buckley and Schneider in 2006 compares District of Columbia Public School (DCPS) parents to the district's charter school parents. They find that nearly half of charter school parents gave their child's school an "A," which is 10 percent higher than DCPS parents.⁴⁰ This result held for other aspects of the satisfaction survey, including facilities, principals, and teachers. Conversely, DCPS parents were more likely to give their child's school a failing grade than charter parents. An interesting finding from this same research finds that while charter school parents express high levels of satisfaction initially, the advantage of charter school satisfaction "does not appear to hold up over time."⁴¹

In 2010, Mathematica Policy research released a study of the impacts of 36 charter middle schools in 15 states. In this study, all of the schools conducted admissions lotteries, providing similar groups of parents across sectors for which they could compare parental satisfaction. They find that parents of lottery winners were "significantly more satisfied with their schools than lottery losers according to all 11 measures of student and parental satisfaction and perceptions..."⁴²

In a 2016 evaluation of Arkansas charter school parents, researchers from the Office for Education Policy at the University of Arkansas surveyed parents in the charter school sectors Arkansas offers to parents. Arkansas has two types of charter schools: open enrollment and district conversion charter schools. Open enrollment charter schools are open for all students in the state, whereas district conversion charter schools are limited to students who live within a specific catchment area for the charter school. Open enrollment charters

in Arkansas enjoy a greater level of autonomy compared to district conversion charters and public district schools. This study compared the levels of satisfaction in the two charter school sectors, finding that open enrollment parents are more likely to state they are very satisfied compared to district conversion charter schools and are more likely to give their charter school an “A.”⁴³

Public District School Parental Satisfaction

There have been multiple studies of parental satisfaction in public district schools that often come to the same conclusion: Parents are satisfied with their local schools, but often give lower grades to public schools at the national level.⁴⁴ In fact, using 10 years of survey results, researchers at Harvard found that more than half of respondents give their local schools a grade of either A or B, whereas only a quarter of respondents give these same grades to schools nationally.⁴⁵ Rather than being the main subject of satisfaction research, public district school parents have limited opportunity to express their own levels of (dis)satisfaction. Often times, public district school parents are included in satisfaction research as the comparison group. However, these comparison group parents represent a limited—arguably non-representative—sample of public school parents, as they are often school choice lottery losers who have expressed some levels of dissatisfaction with their public school.

Comparing Parental Satisfaction in School Sectors

Research comparing levels of satisfaction for parents of students in the different school sectors is rare. However, two recent studies of parental satisfaction from researchers at Harvard use data from the 2016 *Education Next* survey of public opinion and the 2012 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) *Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey* to compare parents’ satisfaction in these three school sectors.

Using the results from the 2016 iteration of the *Education Next* survey, Sam Barrows, Paul Peterson, and Marty West show that “charter parents are more satisfied with important aspects of their schools—such as teacher quality, school discipline, and charter instruction—than are district-school parents, but they are less satisfied than private school parents.”⁴⁶ While parents at charter schools and private schools report higher levels of satisfaction compared to their counterparts in public district schools, the authors caution that the results are by no means causal and should not be interpreted as such.

Similarly, the results from the NCES survey find that parents at private schools are the most likely to say they are “very satisfied,” followed by parents at charter schools and district schools of choice.⁴⁷ Parents of students attending assigned district schools were the least likely to say they were “very satisfied,” but parents from all sectors expressed similarly high levels of satisfaction with their children’s schools.⁴⁸

Overall, the results of parental satisfaction research show parents are happy with their child’s school. Research on private school choice program parents are markedly one-sided, showing choice parents are more satisfied, especially after making their choice. In national surveys, private school parents are often more satisfied than all other parents and charter school parents are more satisfied than their public district school peers. However, to our knowledge, there have been no studies comparing the levels of satisfaction of parents who enroll in the three major school sectors, including those who enroll in private schools using vouchers and tax-credit scholarships.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES

Our online survey solicited responses from Indiana parents with a child either currently enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade or who had a child

enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade within the last five years. These parents had or could have a child enrolled in a public district school, a public charter school, or a private school.⁴⁹ A portion of the private school parents participated in one of Indiana's school choice programs—either the voucher program or the tax-credit scholarship program— but not all of them.

Responses to the survey were solicited in three phases. On June 5, 2017 at the launch of Phase I, a partner organization, Hanover Research, distributed the survey to 114,150 unique email addresses of Indiana parents. These email addresses were identified through a panel company, The Logit Group, using proprietary methods. Additional screener questions were included in the survey to ensure that all respondents live in Indiana and either currently have, or within the last five years have had, school-aged children. Following the initial email on June 5, each panelist received up to two reminder emails. The reminders were sent on a continuous basis until the end of the field. By the time the survey closed on July 11, 1,775 Phase I parents sent complete responses, and 894 sent partial responses, resulting in a 1.6 percent response rate.⁵⁰

Marking the launch of Phase II, on June 6, 2017, survey invitations were sent to 5,029 unique email addresses of voucher, tax-credit scholarship, and other private school parents collected in EdChoice's 2013 and/or 2016 surveys of Indiana private school parents. Following the initial email on June 6, reminder emails were sent on June 8, June 9, June 11, June 13, June 15, and June 17. By the time the survey closed on July 11, 545 Phase II parents sent complete responses, and 229 sent partial responses, resulting in a 15.4 percent response rate.

Finally, in an effort to get a greater number of responses from charter school parents, we employed a snowball sampling technique. Snowball sampling is a surveying method using a nonprobability sample to contact members of hard-to-reach or hidden populations. Phase III began on June 27, 2017, when the Network for Quality Education,

a state-based school member-organization, had emails sent to 82 charter school leaders asking them to send the survey invitation to parents at their school. Parents were not explicitly asked to share the survey invitation with other parents. A reminder was sent to these leaders on June 29. By the time the survey closed on July 11, 62 complete and 27 partial responses were received from Phase III parents. Since it is unknown how many parents received the survey invitation directly from charter schools, it is not possible to calculate a response rate for Phase III (see Appendix 1).

Before submitting the results of the survey for EdChoice's analysis, Hanover Research dropped a portion of respondents due to suspicion of specious responses. The organization disqualified respondents for such reasons as speeding through the survey (completing it in less than half the median time), selecting the same response across multiple matrix-style Likert-grid questions, or answering too few survey questions. Hanover Research dropped a total of 960 respondents of the 4,492 total responses received.⁵¹

Taking the responses received from each of these phases together, a total of 3,532 parents responded to the survey. With roughly 1,225,000 children enrolled in Indiana schools or homeschooled in Indiana, and assuming each parent responded to the survey for one child, the overall survey sample has a margin of error of about +/-2 percent.⁵² Table 2 (see page 13) shows the margins of error for particular parent groups, based on the type of school their child attends.

We understand there are limitations to the methods for the survey analyzed in this report because no statistical adjustments were made with respect to demographics, and we did not employ randomized or probability-based sampling. Additionally, we do not claim the samples of parents who responded to our survey are wholly representative of the corresponding populations of parents in each of the school sectors.

TABLE 2

Sample Size and Margin of Error by School Type

School Type	Population Size	School Year	Sample Size	Percent of Population	Margin of Error
District School	1,004,693	2016–17	1,452	0.14%	+/-3%
Charter School	44,444	2016–17	210	0.47%	+/-7%
Non-Choice Private School	107,510	2015–16	416	0.39%	+/-5%
Voucher Program	34,299	2016–17	733	2.14%	+/-4%
Tax-Credit Scholarship Program	8,501	2016–17	331	4.33%	+/- 5%

Notes: The sum of public school, charter school, and private school parents is less than the total survey sample size because homeschool parents or parents without a specified school type are not included. The school type indicates the type of school the parent's child attends (or attended most recently if their youngest child graduated within the last five years). School type was determined based on Q8 (for non-choice parents) and Q9 (for choice parents) in the survey. Percent of population calculations for non-choice private school and the tax-credit scholarship program assume a 90 percent single-user rate for the latter. All margins of error are calculated at the 95 percent confidence level and assume each parent responded to the survey for one child.

Sources: Office of School Finance (2017), *Choice Scholarship Program Annual Report: Participation and Payment Data*, accessed August 25, 2017, retrieved from Indiana Department of Education website: <http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/choice/2016-2017-choice-scholarship-program-report-spring-revision-final-0811.pdf>; National Center for Education Statistics, "Characteristics of Private Schools in the United States: Results From the 2015–16 Private School Universe Survey," accessed August 17, 2017; EdChoice, School Choice in America [web page], accessed September 11, 2017, retrieved from <http://www.edchoice.org/school-choice/school-choice-in-america>

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The first section of results—Parents' Awareness and Opinions of School Choice Programs—examines only voucher and tax-credit scholarship families, showing demographic differences when statistically significant.

The second section—Parents' Views on Their Children's Current Schools—examines all respondents' views of their current school, broken into the following "sectors":

1. Voucher Parents,
2. Tax-Credit Scholarship Parents,
3. Other Private School Parents (Non-Choice Private School),
4. Public District (Neighborhood) School Parents (District School), and
5. Charter School Parents.

The third section—Parents' Reasons for Switching Schools—examines parents whose children

switched schools at some point, broken into those same five sectors, as applicable. Both of the sections that have the cross-sectoral analyses include the topline results of each schooling sector, emphasizing differences when statistically significant.

Analytical Procedure

Before discussing the survey results, we want to provide some brief ground rules for reporting statewide sample, school sector sample, and demographic subgroup responses in this report. For each survey topic, there is a sequence for describing various analytical frames. We note the raw response levels for the statewide or sector-wide samples on a given question. If we detect statistical significance on a given item, then we briefly report cross-sector and/or demographic results and differences. We do not infer causality with any of the observations in this report.

Explicit subgroup comparisons/differences are statistically significant with at least 95 percent

confidence. Or, if a particular sector or subgroup only has differences that are statistically significant with 90 percent confidence, those differences will be noted as “marginally.” Sector and subgroup comparisons are meant to be suggestive for further exploration and research beyond this project.

Parents’ Awareness and Opinions of Private School Choice Programs

Voucher and tax-credit scholarship families presumably could have slightly different schooling experiences compared to other private school families and markedly different experiences compared to district and charter school families. This section focuses on the 733 voucher families and 331 tax-credit scholarship families in Indiana that responded to the 2017 survey.

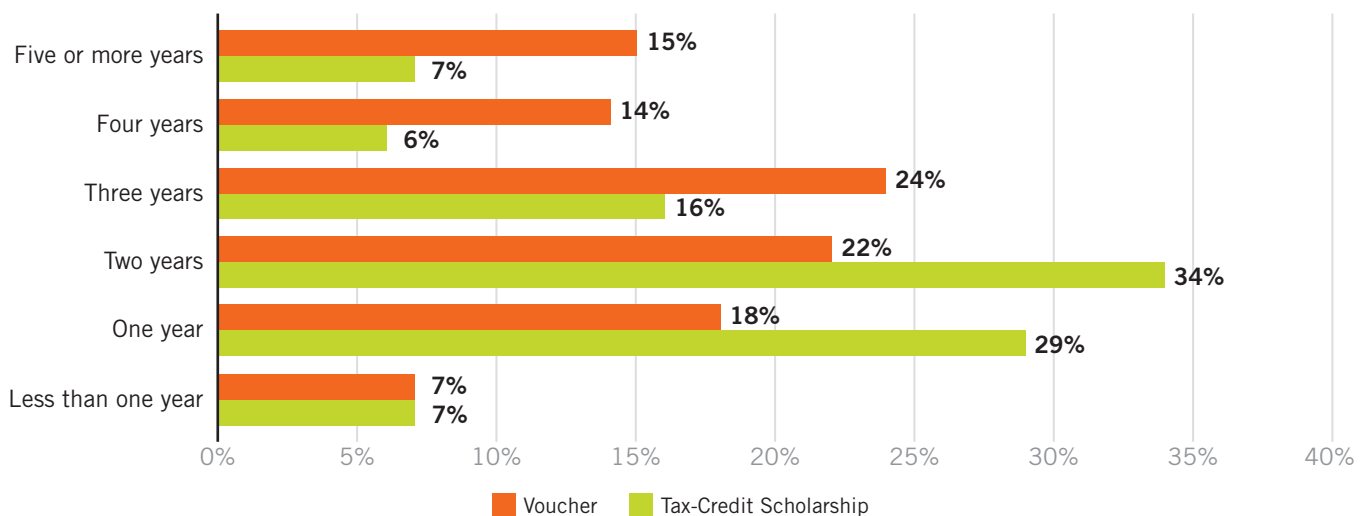
Number of Years in School Choice Programs

When looking at the 2017 survey respondents, more than one-third of tax-credit scholarship students (36%) have been using Indiana’s School

Scholarship Tax Credit program for one year or less and one-fourth of the voucher students (25%) have been using Indiana’s Choice Scholarship Program for the same amount of time. Slightly fewer than half of the voucher students (47%) have been in their program at least two years, while more than two-thirds of the tax-credit scholarship students (70%) have been in their program at least two years. It is possible that the tax-credit scholarship program being enacted the calendar year before the voucher program could partially explain this difference.

Based on survey responses, more than two-fifths (43%) of students participating in voucher or tax-credit scholarship programs are in elementary school, nearly one-fourth (24%) are in middle school, and more than one-fourth (28%) are in high school. Tax-credit scholarship and voucher program participation rates varied across grade levels. The most common response among voucher parents was fifth grade, whereas kindergarten was the most common response among tax-credit scholarship parents. Depending on the program, parental participation across each grade level represented ranged from 5 to 10 percent (see Appendix 2).

FIGURE 2 Number of Years Indiana Respondents’ Students Have Been in School Choice Programs
Voucher students are more likely to have been in a school choice program longer than tax-credit scholarship students.



number of parents responding (Q21+Q22) = 608 Voucher; 286 Tax-Credit Scholarship

Satisfaction with School Choice Programs

The vast majority of parents are somewhat or completely satisfied with the state’s voucher program (86%) and tax-credit scholarship program (83%). More than three-fifths of parents (62%) are completely satisfied with the voucher program and nearly half of parents (45%) are completely satisfied with the tax-credit scholarship program.

When it comes to somewhat or complete satisfaction with the voucher program, suburban (91%) and urban parents (89%) are more satisfied than rural parents (80%). Suburban voucher parents are more likely than the voucher average (86%) to list those top two responses, while voucher parents living in small towns (76%) and rural areas were less likely than the voucher average to provide those responses.

Voucher parents with at least a four-year college degree (89%) are more likely to report being somewhat or completely satisfied with the program than those without a four-year degree (80%).

Voucher mothers (64%) are marginally more likely than voucher fathers (55%) to be completely satisfied with the Choice Scholarship Program.

Ease of Finding School with School Choice Programs

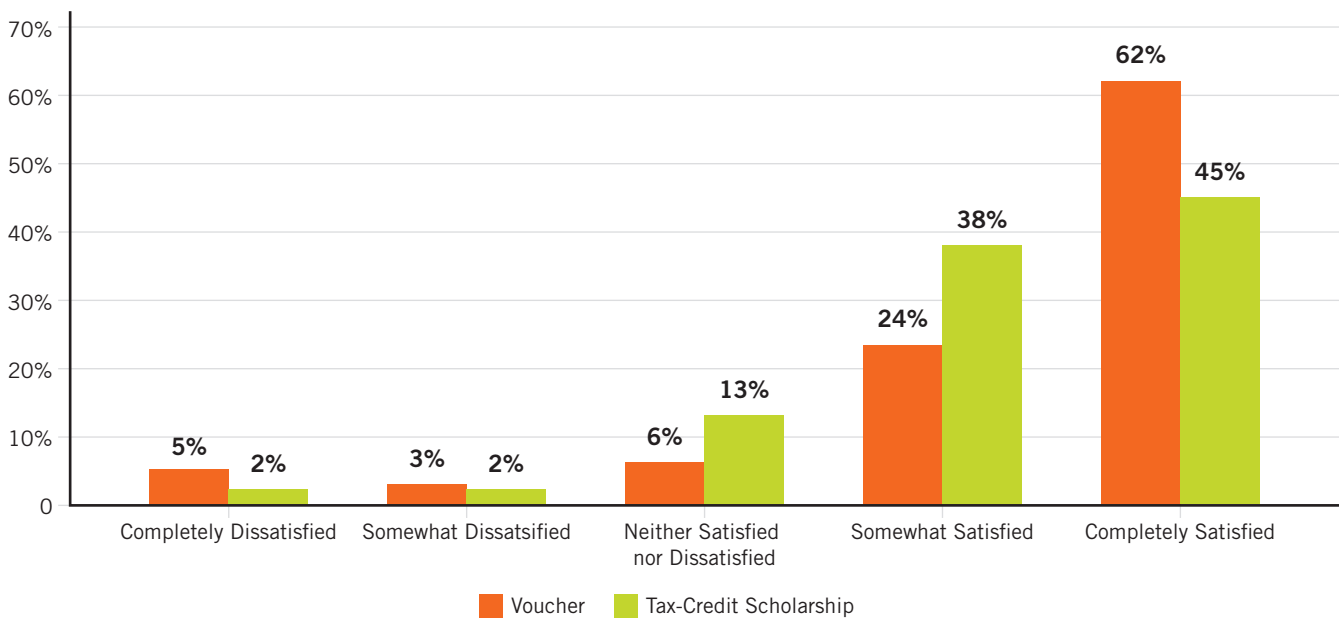
On average, three-fifths of school choice parents (60%) found it somewhat or very easy to find their child’s current school under Indiana’s voucher or tax-credit scholarship program. Only 6 percent of school choice parents found it to be very difficult.

- Urban (68%) and suburban (66%) school choice parents are more likely than those in small towns (53%) and rural areas (52%) to find it very or somewhat easy to find a school using one of Indiana’s school choice programs.
- White school choice parents (41%) were marginally more likely to say it was very easy to find the school than black school choice parents (32%).

FIGURE 3

Indiana Parents’ Satisfaction with School Choice Programs

More than four out of five school choice parents are satisfied with Indiana’s school choice programs.



number of parents responding (Q23+Q24) = 608 Voucher; 286 Tax-Credit Scholarship

- School choice parents with at least a four-year degree (65%) were more likely to provide the top two responses than those with less than a four-year degree (55%).
- School choice mothers (41%) were more likely to say it was somewhat or very easy when compared to school choice fathers (55%).
- Voucher parents (65%) were more likely than tax-credit scholarship parents (50%) to say it was somewhat or very easy.

The larger the town—and, therefore, the higher concentration of schooling options—the easier it was for voucher parents to find schools. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of urban voucher parents found it at least somewhat easy to find a school, while just over half (54%) of rural voucher parents said it was somewhat easy.

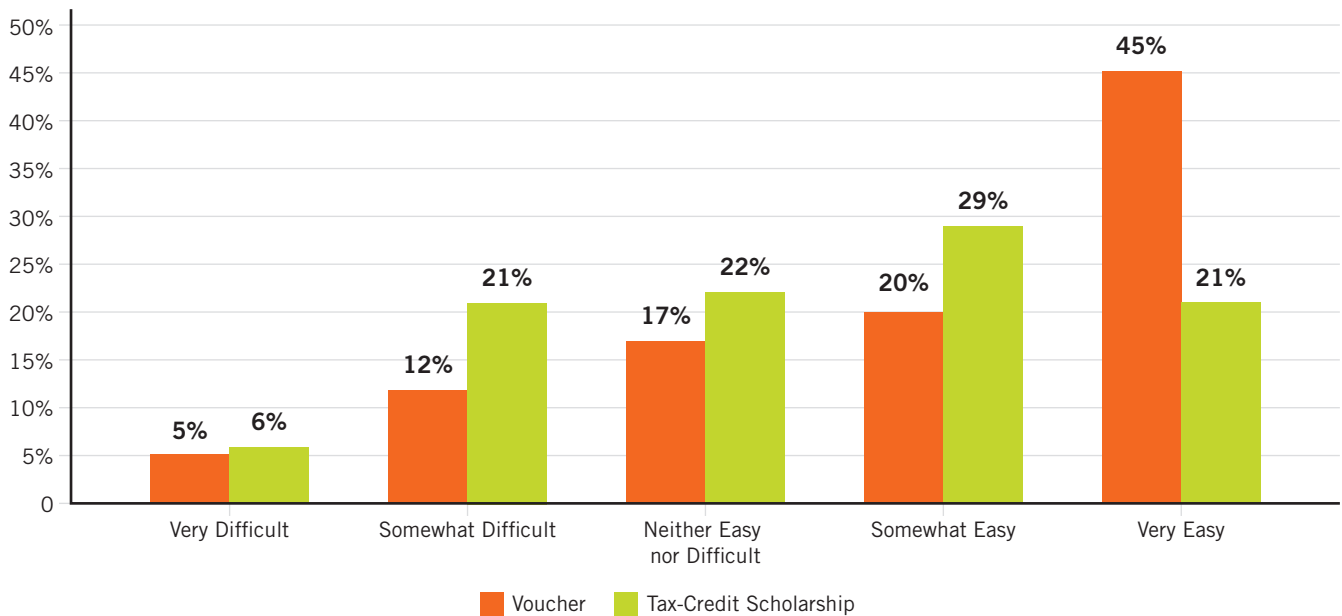
- Urban (74%) and suburban voucher parents (70%) were more likely than rural voucher parents (54%) to find it somewhat or very easy to find a school.

- Urban voucher parents were more likely than voucher parents in a small town (60%) to find it somewhat or very easy.
- Voucher parents in urban (58%) and suburban areas (51%) were more likely than those in rural areas (33%) to say it was very easy.
- Urban voucher parents were also more likely than voucher parents in small towns (35%) to list the top response, while suburban voucher parents (51%) were more likely than small town voucher parents to provide that top response.
- Voucher parents in middle-income households (47%) were marginally more likely than those in high-income households (38%) to say it was very easy to find a school using the voucher program.
- Voucher parents with at least a four-year college degree (69%) were more likely than voucher parents with less than a four-year college degree (57%) to say it was somewhat or very easy to find a school using the program. The difference between the top response of those two populations (49% and 36%, respectively) was also significant.

FIGURE 4

Ease of Finding a School for Indiana School Choice Parents

It was easier for voucher parents to find their current private school than it was for tax-credit scholarship parents.



number of parents responding (Q13) = 713 Voucher; 317 Tax-Credit Scholarship

- Voucher mothers (48%) were more likely than voucher fathers (36%) to say it was very easy to find their child’s private school using Indiana’s Choice Scholarship Program.

How Parents Initially Heard About Their Private School

Indiana school choice parents heard about the school their child attends in a variety of ways. When asked for all of the sources from which they heard about their chosen private school, nearly half of respondents (47%) said they were told by friends or relatives, more than one-fourth of respondents (26%) heard through church, and one-fifth of respondents (20%) learned about the school on the internet. Interestingly, nearly one out of six school choice respondents (16%) heard about their chosen private school from their local district school. Also, 91 parents provided an open-ended response providing information such as the school being affiliated with their church, having another family attend the school, and the school having a good reputation. None of the other five listed sources exceeded 12 percent (see Questionnaire and Topline Results document at edchoice.org/WhyINParentsChoose).

Living in more populous areas was associated with greater likelihood of parents saying they heard of their school through church. On the other hand, rural parents were more likely to say they relied on the internet. School choice parents in small town (23%) and rural areas (20%) were more likely than those in suburban (14%) and urban areas (11%) to list their local district school as a source of information.

- White school choice parents (28%) were more likely to say they heard about their chosen private school from church than black school choice parents (15%).
- School choice parents with at least a four-year college degree (51%) were more likely to list “friends or relatives” than those with less than a four-year degree (42%).

- Those in low-income households (39%) were less likely to say they heard of the school from friends or relatives than those in middle-income or high-income households (50% each).
- School choice families living in high-income households (26%) were more likely to list the internet as a source of information than those in middle-income households (16%).
- School choice mothers (49%) were more likely to say friends or relatives were a source of information than school choice fathers (41%).
- Fathers (28%) were more likely to list the internet as a source of information than mothers (18%).
- School choice fathers (23%) were also more likely than mothers (13%) to say their local district school was how they heard about their chosen private school.
- Tax-credit scholarship parents (20%) were more likely to say they heard about their chosen private school from their local district school than voucher parents were (14%).

Looking specifically at voucher parents, those in urban areas (36%) were more likely than those in small towns (15%) to list church as a source of information. Voucher parents in urban areas were more likely than those in suburban (25%) or rural areas (25%) to list church as a source. Those in urban areas (12%) were more likely to say they heard of the school on the internet than those in small town (27%) or rural areas (23%). Voucher parents in small town or rural areas were more likely to say internet than suburban voucher parents (14%). More than one-fifth of voucher parents in small towns (22%) listed their local district school as a source of information, which was more likely than those in urban areas (9%). Voucher parents in rural areas (17%) were more likely to list their local district school than those in urban areas.

Voucher parents with at least a four-year college degree (49%) were more likely than those without (41%) to list friends or relatives as a source of information for learning about their current school, while those with less than a four-year college degree (18%) were more likely than those with at least that degree (12%) to list their local district school as their source of information for learning about their current school.

Voucher parents in low-income households (38%) were less likely than those in middle-income (48%) or high-income households (48%) to list friends or relatives as a source of information. Those in high-income households (23%) were more likely to use the internet to find their school than those in middle-income households (15%).

Voucher fathers (24%) were more likely to list the internet as a source of information than voucher mothers (17%). Voucher fathers (20%) were also

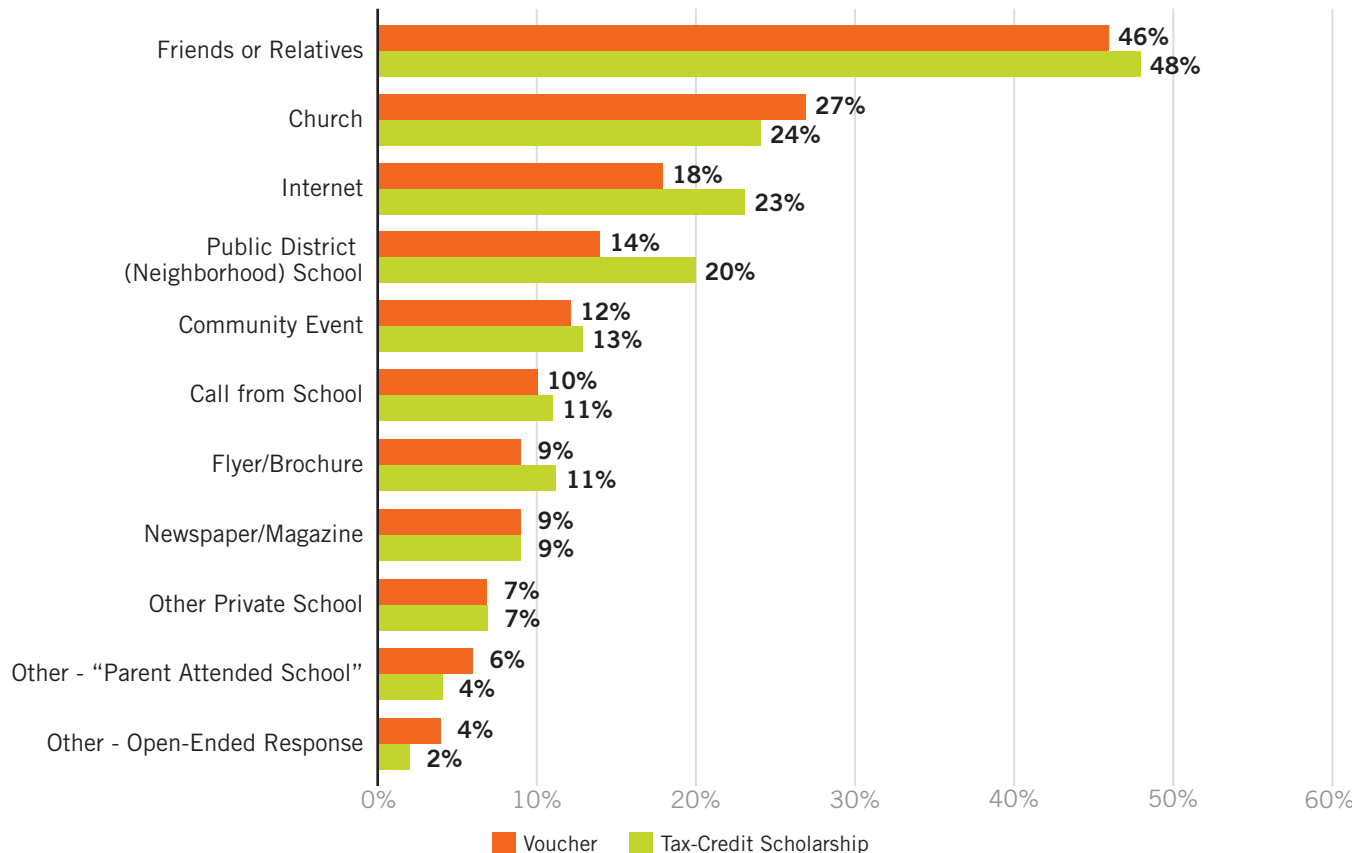
more likely to list their local district school than voucher mothers (13%).

Most Trusted Source of Information

School choice parents were also asked to list the source of information they trusted the most for learning about their private school, and nearly two-fifths (37%) said they trusted friends or relatives the most. Nearly one-sixth (16%) said, “church,” one-tenth (10%) said, “internet,” and one-tenth (10%) listed their local district school.

We do see differences in the most trusted source of information among different groups of choice parents. Urban school choice parents (23%) were more likely than small town (11%) or rural school choice parents (9%) to list church as their most trusted source of information. School choice parents with less than a four-year degree (12%)

FIGURE 5 Indiana Parents’ Sources for Learning About Schools of Choice
Nearly three-fourths of school choice parents used friends or relatives or church as a source of information.



number of parents responding (Q17) = 711 Voucher; 314 Tax-Credit Scholarship

were more likely than those with at least such a degree (7%) to say their local district school was their most trusted source of information for learning about their private school.

School choice families in low-income households (15%) were more likely than those in middle-income households (7%) to say the internet was their most trusted source of information.

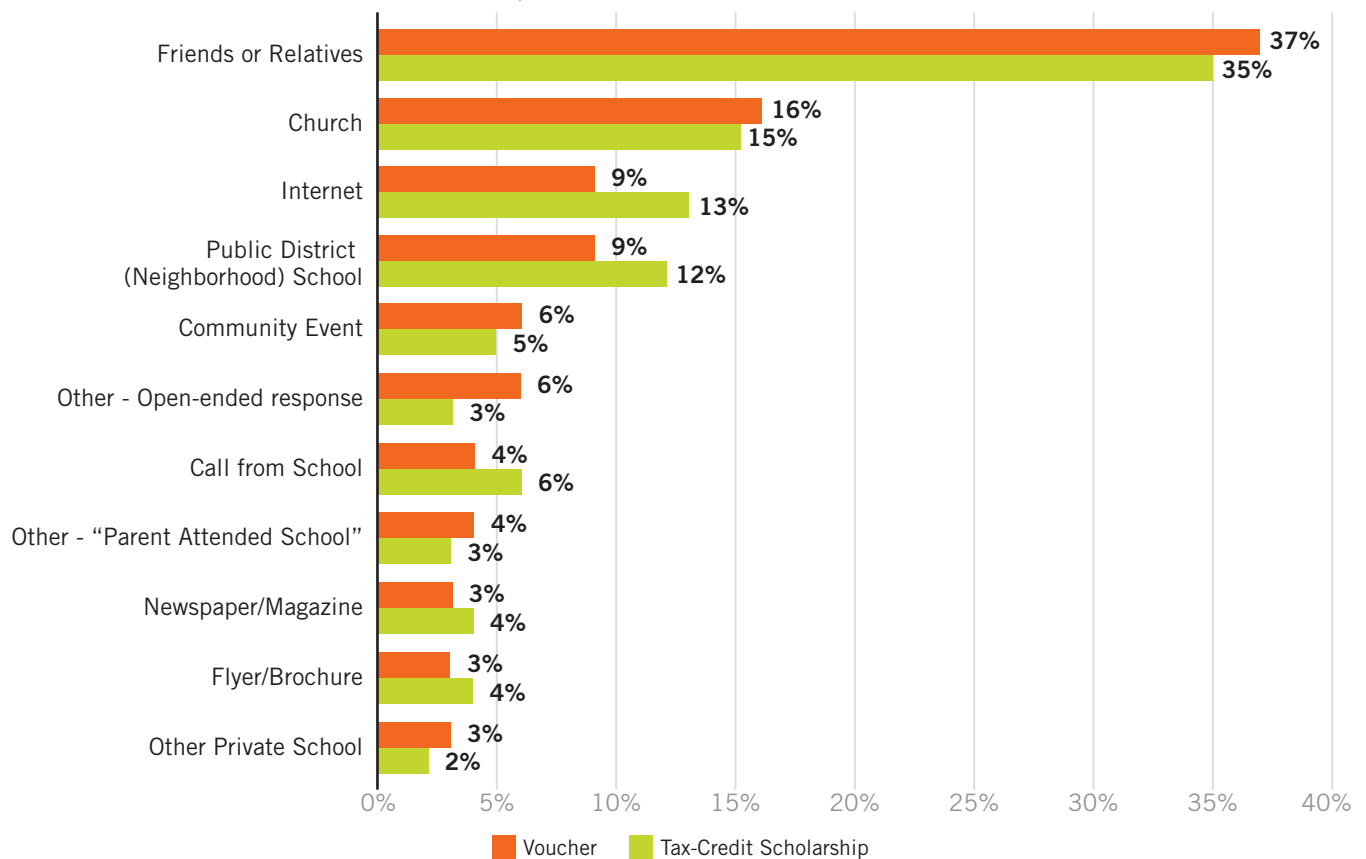
School choice mothers (41%) were more likely than school choice fathers (29%) to list friends or relatives as their most trusted source of information for learning about their private school. School choice fathers (13%) were more likely than school choice mothers (8%) to say their local district school was their most trusted source of information.

Tax-credit scholarship parents (13%) were marginally more likely than voucher parents (9%) to list the internet as their most trusted source of information.

Voucher parents in urban areas (24%) were more likely than those in small town (7%) and rural areas (12%) to list church as their most trusted source of information. Those in rural areas were more likely than voucher parents in small towns. Suburban voucher parents (17%) were more likely than those in small towns to say church was their most trusted resource.

Small town voucher parents (16%) were more likely than those in urban areas (5%) to say their local district school was their most trusted source of information. Rural voucher parents (10%) were

FIGURE 6 Indiana Parents' Most Trusted Source for Learning About Schools of Choice
More than half of school choice parents see friends or relatives or church as the most trusted source.



number of parents responding (Q18) = 709 Voucher; 313 Tax-Credit Scholarship

more likely to list their local district school than those in urban areas.

Voucher parents with less than a four-year college degree (12%) were more likely than those with at least that degree (8%) to list the internet as their most trusted resource. The same applies for those saying their local district school was their most trusted resource (12% and 6%, respectively).

Voucher parents living in low-income households (15%) were more likely than those in middle-income (7%) and high-income households (8%) to say the internet was their most trusted resource of information for learning about their private school.

Mothers of voucher students (40%) were more likely than fathers (30%) to list friends or relatives as their most trusted resource.

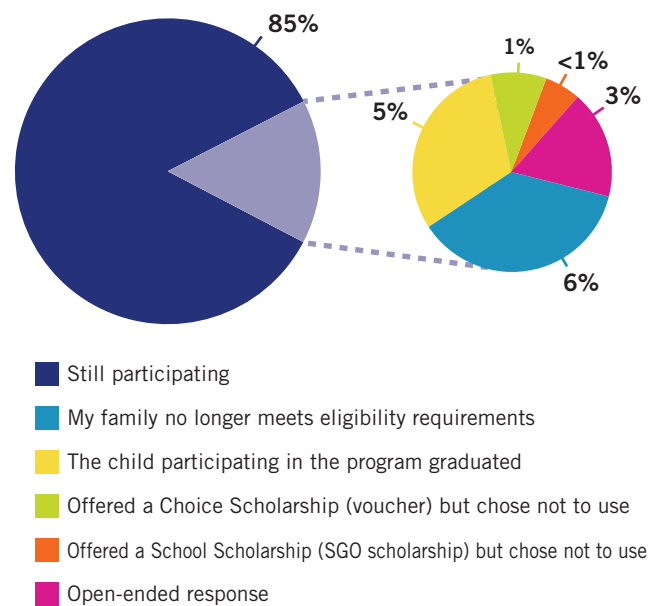
Reasons for Leaving

We know based on Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) data that anywhere from 76 percent to 81 percent of students participating in the state’s voucher program have stayed in the program each year from 2011–12 to 2016–17.⁵³ However, IDOE does not track the reasons why participants leave the program. Parents of known 2013–14 and 2015–16 participants were asked if they were still participating in the program and, if not, the reason why they no longer participate.

Based on responses to the 2017 survey, more than four out of five parents (85%) who had a student participating in one of Indiana’s school choice programs when surveyed in 2013 and/or 2016 said they still have at least one child attending private school and participating. When asked why their child no longer participated in one of Indiana’s school choice programs, 57 out of 155 former school choice parents (37%) said their child no longer participates in the voucher or tax-credit scholarship program because their family no longer meets the eligibility requirements. Nearly one-third (48 out of 155; 31%) said their child that was participating

graduated from high school. Of the 27 parents that provided an open-ended response, seven parents indicated their child no longer participates in the program because they moved out of state, five were unhappy with their school, three switched to their local district or charter school, two mentioned financial concerns, and seven responses could not be grouped.

FIGURE 7 Reasons Former Indiana School Choice Parents No Longer Use School Choice Programs



number of parents responding (Q10 = “Yes” + Q27) = 1,018

Other than having their child graduate from high school, the reasons behind leaving a voucher or tax-credit scholarship school were previously unknown prior to last year when 62 parents provided a variety of responses.⁵⁴ This year, how important were academic quality, safety, and transportation to parents’ decision to leave?

When asked to select all of the applicable reasons, 47 out of 107 former school choice parents (44%) said their decision to leave the program had nothing to do with their child’s school. Approximately one-sixth of parents (17%) said they left their voucher or

tax-credit scholarship school because of problems with teachers and/or administrators, which was proportionally similar to what was found in 2016 (18%).⁵⁵ Thirteen percent of parents cited location as a reason for leaving their school. Another 13 percent of parents said tuition and cost concerns were a reason for leaving. One-tenth of parents (10%) said the school’s academic quality was a reason for leaving, and no other response garnered more than 9 percent.

Post-School Choice School

Of the 106 respondents who indicated that their child was still in school after leaving one of Indiana’s school choice programs, more than one-third (36%) said their child transferred to their local district school and nearly one-fifth (19%) said their child transferred to a public charter school. More than one-fourth of parents (29%) said their child was able to remain in the same private school, while 13 percent of parents said their child transferred to a

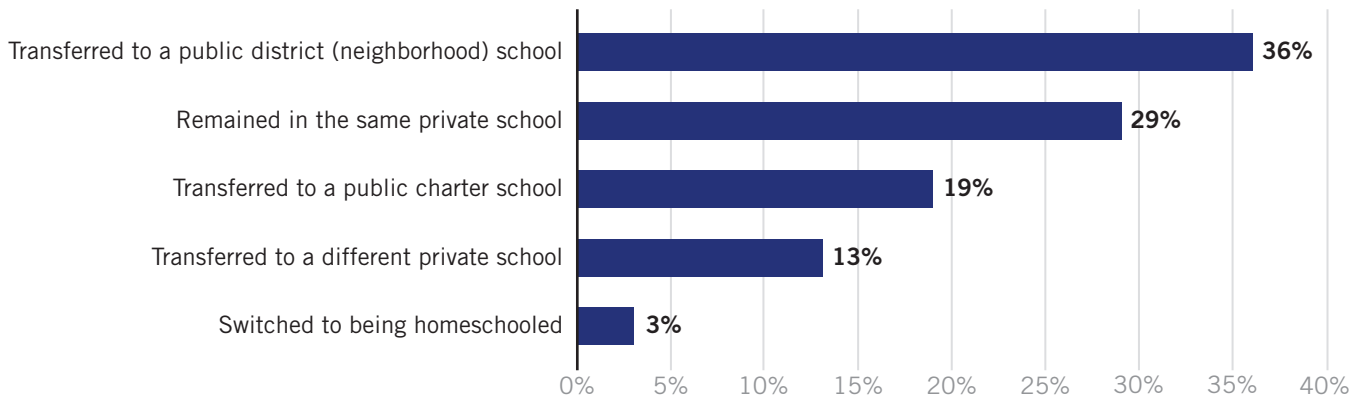
TABLE 3 Reasons Indiana Families Left Their Voucher or Tax-Credit Scholarship Schools

Reason	Percent of Respondents Selecting	Percent of Respondents Indicating Most Important Reason
The decision to leave the program had nothing to do with my child's school.	44%	0%
Problems with teachers/administrators	17%	12%
Location	13%	15%
Tuition/cost concerns	13%	12%
Academic quality	10%	7%
Transportation issues	9%	12%
Lack of diversity	9%	5%
Problems with other students (e.g. bullying)	8%	8%
Poor discipline	8%	2%
Lack of morals/character/values instruction	7%	3%
Not enough individual attention	7%	3%
School too big	7%	7%
Unsafe environment	5%	0%
Lack of extracurricular activities (e.g. athletics, arts, etc.)	4%	3%
Other - Open-ended response	4%	7%
Large class size	3%	3%
Did not have grade level needed (e.g. student going from elementary school to middle school)	2%	0%
Lack of religious environment/instruction	2%	0%

number of parents responding (Q30) = 107; (Q31) = 60

FIGURE 8

Where Students Who Left Indiana Voucher and Tax-Credit Scholarship Programs Now Attend School
Most students now attend a public school.



number of parents responding (Q32) = 106

different private school. Three parents (3%) said their child switched to being homeschooled.

Though some parents did provide the most important reason for choosing a new school after leaving their choice program school, it is important to note that the sample size is extremely small. However, for those who did respond, the most popular reasons for leaving were academics, the school's proximity to work/home, and moving their child back to their district-assigned school. Of the parents who reported leaving their choice school, nearly half (46%) stated they were equally satisfied with their new school, 28 percent said they were more satisfied, and 26 percent said they were less satisfied with their child's new school.

Alternatives to Program Participation

This year, we asked current school choice parents what type of school to which they would send their children if they were not participating in the state's voucher or tax-credit scholarship programs. More than two-fifths (43%) said their child would attend their local district school, while approximately one-eighth (13%) would send their child to a public charter school. Nearly one-third of school choice parents (31%) would try to keep their child in the same private school, while 7 percent would send their child to a different private school. An additional 7 percent would homeschool their children.

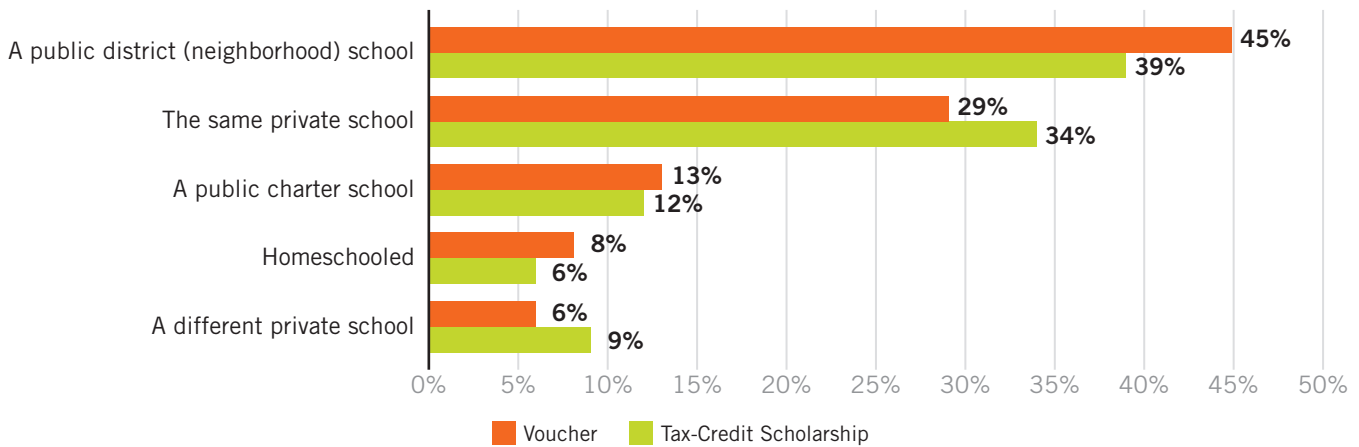
There are a multitude of significant differences when looking at the varying demographics of voucher parents and where they would send their child to school if they were not participating in Indiana's Choice Scholarship Program.

Urban voucher parents (53%) are more likely than rural voucher parents (40%) to send their child to their local district school. Voucher parents living in suburban (17%) and rural areas (16%) are more likely to send their child to a public charter school than urban voucher parents (6%).

Voucher parents with less than a four-year college degree (47%) are more likely than those with at least a four-year college degree (38%) to send their child to their local district school. Conversely, voucher parents with at least a four-year college degree (37%) are more likely to keep their child in the same private school than those without that degree (23%).

Voucher families in high-income households (40%) are more likely than those in middle-income households (27%) to keep their child in the same private school, while those in high-income households are more likely than low-income households (22%). Voucher families in middle-income households (9%) are more likely than those in high-income households (3%) to homeschool their child.

Voucher fathers (20%) are more likely than voucher mothers (11%) to say they would send their child to a public charter school.

FIGURE 9**Where Indiana Parents Would Send Their Children to School If They Were Not Participating in School Choice Programs***More than two-fifths of school choice parents would enroll their children in their local district school.*

number of parents responding (Q25) = 586 Voucher; 244 Tax-Credit Scholarship

Why Parents Never Participated

All families who have never had a child participate in either Indiana’s voucher or tax-credit scholarship program were asked why, and the responses varied. When asked to select all of the reasons that applied, more than one-third of applicable parents (34%) said they were unaware of Indiana’s school choice programs. Nearly one-third (32%) said a reason for not participating was they were happy with the school their child attends. More than one-fourth (27%) said their family does not qualify for either the voucher or tax-credit scholarship program. Approximately one-sixth of parents (17%) said a reason for not participating was they want to support their public schools.⁵⁶

There are several significant differences in the responses provided across schooling sectors. District school parents (39%) and public charter school parents (36%) were more likely than non-choice private school parents (16%) to say they were unaware of Indiana’s school choice programs.

Those with children in district schools (35%) or public charter schools (42%) were more likely than non-choice private school parents (15%) to say a reason for not participating is because they are happy with the school their child attends. Public

charter school parents were more likely to list this reason than district school parents.

Non-choice private school parents (69%) were more likely than district school parents (16%) and charter school parents (22%) to say a reason for not participating was because their family does not qualify for either of Indiana’s school choice programs. Public charter school parents were more likely to list that reason than district school parents.

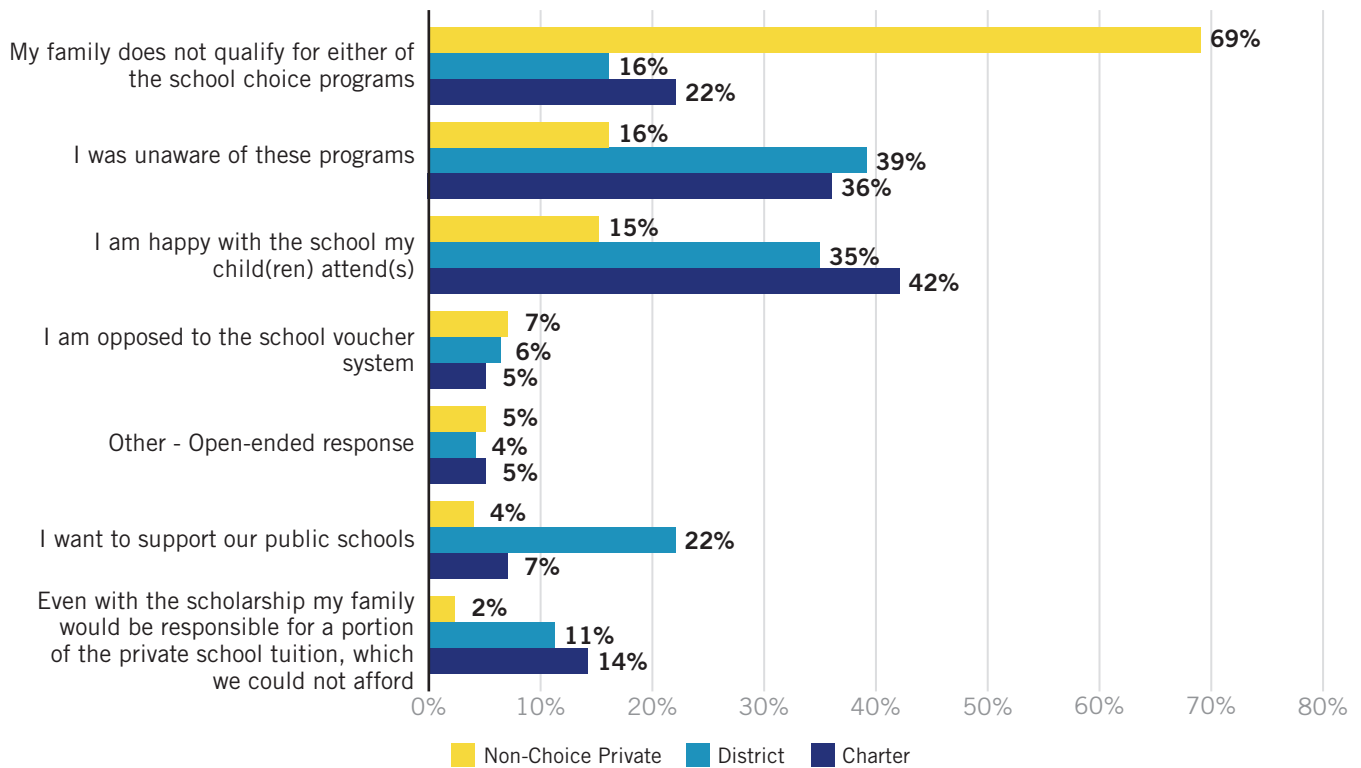
District school parents (22%) were more likely than public charter school parents (7%) and non-choice private school parents (4%) to cite a reason for not participating as wanting to support their local public schools.

Both district school parents (11%) and public charter school parents (14%) were more likely than non-choice private school parents (2%) to say one reason for not participating was because, even with the scholarship, their family would be responsible for a portion of the private school tuition, which they could not afford.

District school parents in rural areas (44%) were more likely than those in urban areas (35%) to say they were unaware of Indiana’s school choice programs.

FIGURE 10**Why Families Have Never Used One of Indiana's School Choice Programs**

More than one-third of parents without a voucher or tax-credit scholarship student were unaware of Indiana's school choice programs.



number of parents responding (Q42) = 398 Non-Choice Private; 1,342 District; 195 Charter

White district school parents (39%) were more likely than black district school parents (27%) to say a reason for not participating is because they are happy with the school their child attends.

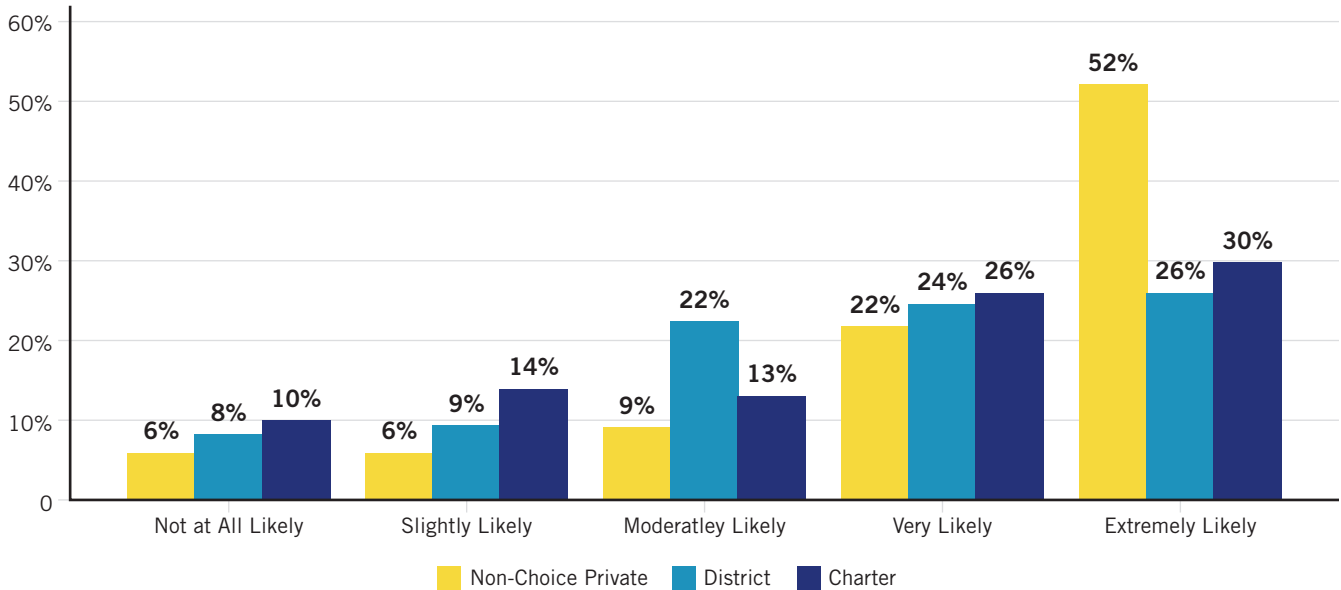
District school parents in low-income households (51%) were more likely than those in middle-income (34%) or high-income households (26%) to say they were unaware of Indiana's school choice programs. District school parents in middle-income households were more likely than those in high-income households to be unaware of the programs.

District school parents without a four-year college degree (43%) were more likely than those with at least that degree (26%) to say they were unaware of Indiana's school choice programs.

Mothers of district school children (39%) were more likely than fathers (29%) to say they were unaware of the school choice programs in Indiana.

Of the 1,939 non-choice private, district, and charter school parents that provided reasons why none of their children have used Indiana's voucher or tax-credit scholarship programs, 1,187 indicated how likely they would be to have their children participate if they qualified or if the award amount was enough to cover tuition and expenses. More than three-fifths of parents (62%) indicated they would be very or extremely likely, with more than one-third (36%) providing the top response. Non-choice private school parents (78%) were more likely than district (56%) and charter school parents (60%) to say they would be very or extremely likely to have their child participate, and that difference is significant. Non-choice private parents (55%) were more likely than the district (29%) and charter school parents (32%) to provide the top response.

District school parents in small towns (63%) were marginally more likely than those in suburban (52%)

FIGURE 11**Likelihood Families Would Participate in One of Indiana's Private School Choice Programs***More than three-fifths of parents would be very or extremely likely to have their children participate in one of Indiana's school choice programs if they qualified or if the award amount was enough to cover tuition and expenses.*

number of parents responding (Q43) = 320 Non-Choice Private; 744 District; 121 Charter

or rural areas (53%) to say they would be very or extremely likely to have their child participate in one of Indiana's school choice programs if they qualified or if the award amount was enough to cover tuition and expenses. There was also a marginally significant difference in the top response category between small town district school parents (32%) and those in rural areas (34%). Mothers of district school children (56%) were more likely than fathers (42%) to say they would be very or extremely likely to have their child participate in the voucher or tax-credit scholarship program.

school is a public district school, while private schools were the second most preferred. Though this difference is not statistically significant, it provides an interesting insight into the preferences of charter school parents. Charter schools—public schools that do not implement admissions standards—provide autonomy to administrators and teachers that are more commonplace in private schools. In essence, charter schools provide a happy medium for parents who may want more than what a public district school offers, but are either unwilling or unable to pay for private school tuition.

Parents' Views on Their Children's Current Schools

This section breaks down survey results by the five previously mentioned segments.

Table 4 shows the preferred school for charter school parents if their child was not able to attend their chosen school. In most cases, the most preferred option outside of their chosen charter

Overall, the full sample of respondents provides a diverse set of viewpoints based on school type. The most heavily represented group is the set of respondents from public district schools. This is not a surprise as this is the most popular school setting. Voucher parents were the second largest group of respondents, as just under a quarter of all respondents said they had at least one child using or having previously used a voucher to enroll in a private school. Charter school parents were the

TABLE 4

Type of School Parents Would Choose if Charter School Was Not an Option

(1 = Most Preferred Option,
3 = Least Preferred Option)

School Type	Average Ranking
District School	1.69
Private School	1.89
Homeschooled	2.42

number of parents responding (Q7) = 647

smallest portion of respondents, with less than 10 percent of the sample representing charter schools.

School Satisfaction Level

As is the norm when surveying parents and the public about schools, a majority are at least satisfied with their student’s school. However, in the case of those who responded to this survey, an overwhelming majority were at least somewhat satisfied with their current school. Private school parents expressed the highest levels of satisfaction, as 59 percent of non-choice private school parents, 56 percent of voucher respondents, and 47 percent of tax-credit scholarship parents stated they were “completely satisfied” with their child’s school. For the three school sectors, respondents enrolling their student in the district school expressed the lowest levels of satisfaction (see Figure 12 on the following page).

There are some statistically significant differences when comparing the respondents from the different school sectors. As discussed previously, approximately four out of five private school choice parents (81% of voucher and 79% of tax-credit scholarship) and nearly nine out of 10 (89%) non-choice private school parents were satisfied with their school. When aggregating the full sample of private school respondents, four out of five (80%) private school parents were at least satisfied with their current school. When compared to the nearly

TABLE 5

Respondents by Program or School Type

Respondent Type	Number of Respondents
Voucher	733
Tax-Credit Scholarship	331
Non-Choice Private	417
District	1,455
Charter	211

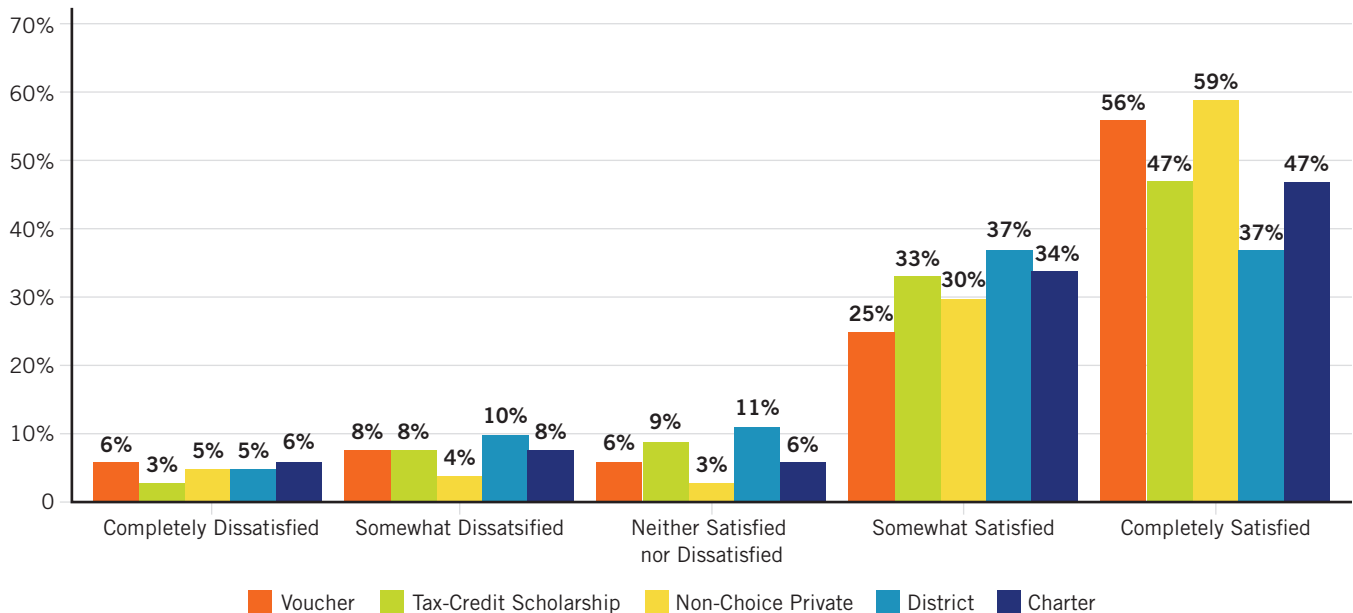
Q8+Q9

three-quarters (74%) of district school respondents, the difference is statistically significant in favor of private school parents. Comparatively, 81 percent of charter school parents reported being somewhat or completely satisfied with their child’s current school.

Attractive School Qualities

While Indiana has a robust private school choice program and a variety of charter schools, parents are also able to voluntarily enroll their child in a district school outside of their neighborhood. Parents must take a variety of school qualities into account when making a choice to either enroll in their district school or look for a new school outside of their assigned school.

When asked to list all the qualities in a school that led parents to choose their child’s school or remain enrolled in their assigned district school, the most common response was academics. This included choice program and non-choice program private school parents. This was followed by a safe environment and morals/character/values instruction. More than half of private school and charter school parents selected these three qualities as important when choosing their school. However, district school parents were more likely to select the school’s proximity to home or work, as nearly half (48 percent) of these parents selected this as an important school quality.

FIGURE 12**Indiana Parents' Current Levels of Satisfaction with Their Children's Schools***Private school parents are the most likely to report being satisfied.*

number of parents responding (Q14+Q44) = 713 Voucher; 317 Tax-Credit Scholarship; 398 Non-Choice Private; 1,341 District; 195 Charter

Non-choice private school parents placed a premium on academic quality in their school, along with morals/character/values instruction and the religious environment offered in most private schools. For each of these school qualities, seven out of 10 parents selected this as a reason for choosing their student's school (see Figure 13). The differences in the percentage of private school parents who selected these qualities compared to other school sectors were all statistically significant. The most popular quality among charter school parents was a small school, as six out of every 10 charter school respondents selected this item, which is a statistically significant difference compared to the other school sectors.

Most Important School Quality

While parents could select from a variety of school qualities, it is important to know if there are differences in the single most important factor that helps parents choose a school. This is similar to the 2016 EdChoice survey, which also asked private school parents to select the single most important

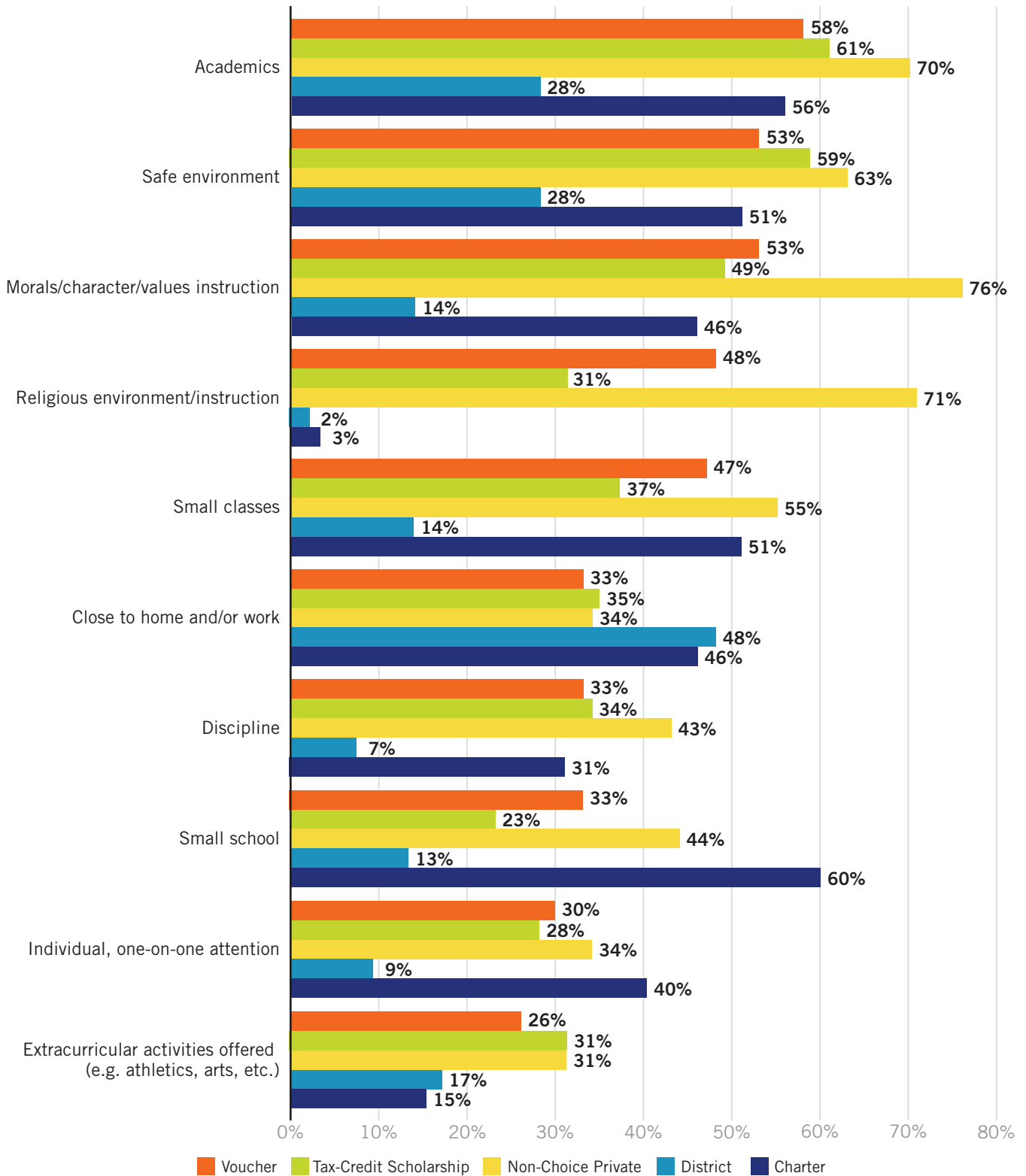
school quality influencing their choice. The most popular reason was the religious environment offered by a private school (see Figure 14 on p. 29).

For district school parents, the single most important factor for enrolling in a district school is that it is their assigned public school. Nearly half (45 percent) of district school respondents selected this school quality. Interestingly, this difference is statistically significant when compared to charter school parents. Charter parents stated a small school (15 percent) and the academics (19 percent) offered at their chosen school were the two most important reasons. Compared to district public schools, these differences were statistically significant.

Similar to the results for private school parents in 2016, the most important reason for non-choice program families to choose a private school was the availability of a religious environment/instruction. This difference is statistically significant when compared to district school parents, but not any other group. This result is similar for voucher parents, as nearly one-quarter of voucher

FIGURE 13**Top 10 School Qualities Chosen by Indiana School Parents**

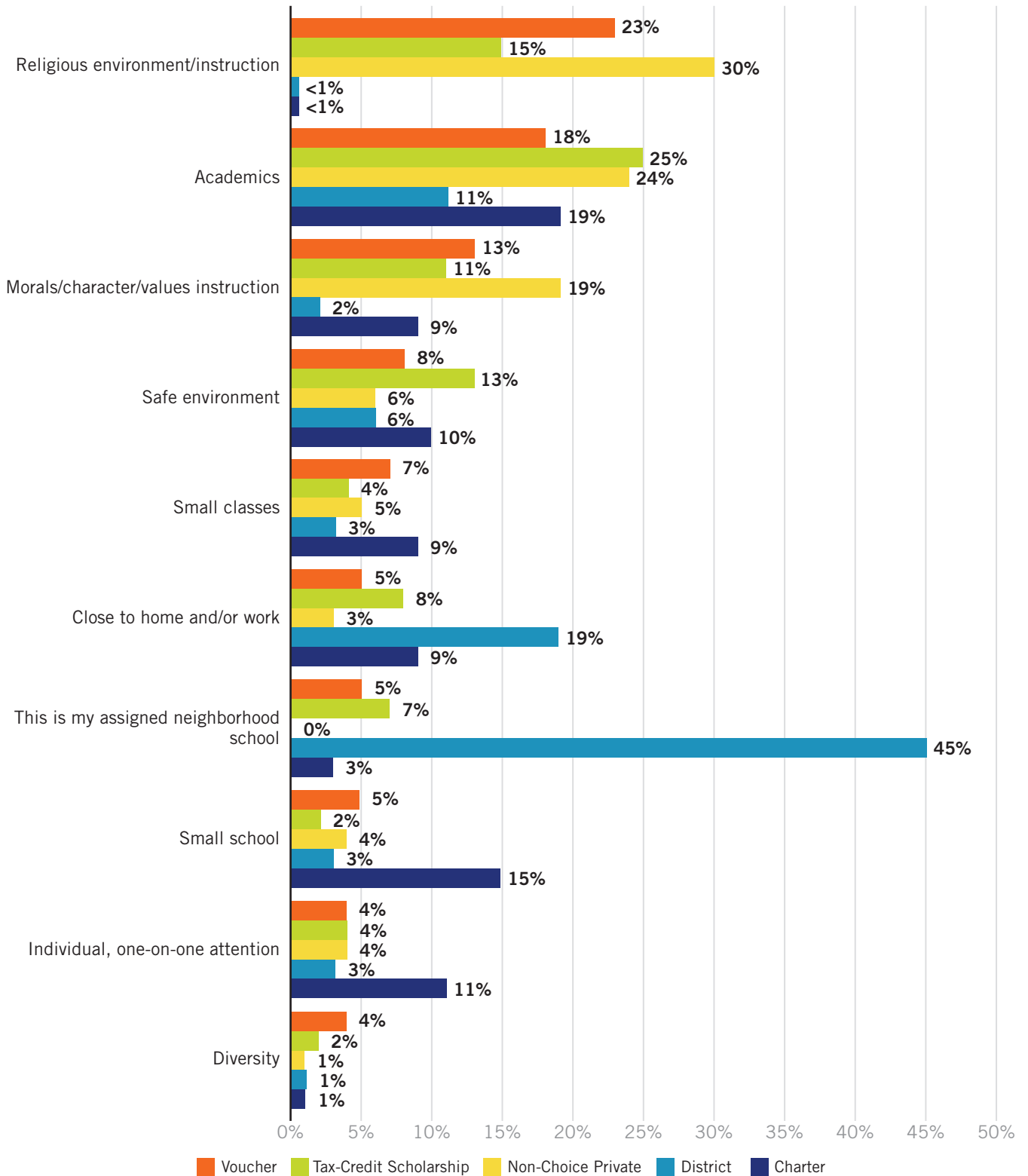
School choice and other private school parents are more likely to say academics are a choosing factor compared to charter and neighborhood school parents.



number of parents responding (Q15+46) = 712 Voucher; 314 Tax-Credit Scholarship; 398 Non-Choice Private; 1,339 District; 195 Charter

FIGURE 14**10 Most Important Reasons Indiana Parents Choose a School**

Voucher and tax-credit scholarship parents have a higher likelihood than district school parents to say academics are the most important choosing factor.



number of parents responding (Q16+47) = 711 Voucher; 314 Tax-Credit Scholarship; 397 Non-Choice Private; 1,337 District; 194 Charter

respondents said a school offering a religious environment/instruction was the most important reason for selecting their school. This difference is statistically significant at the 95 percent level when compared to tax-credit scholarship parents.

Unlike voucher and non-choice private school parents, the most important reason for selecting a school for tax-credit parents was the academic environment. One-fourth of tax-credit scholarship parents said the academic quality of their school was the most important reason to select their school. When compared to voucher and all other private school parents, this difference is statistically significant at the 95 percent level.

Parental Involvement

Prior research on parent involvement has shown that more involvement from a parent has a positive effect on student achievement. Private school choice program parents were asked to indicate how much they are involved in specific activities since enrolling their child in their new private school compared to their previous school. Activities ranged from communicating with teachers to using an online educational resource (see Figure 15).

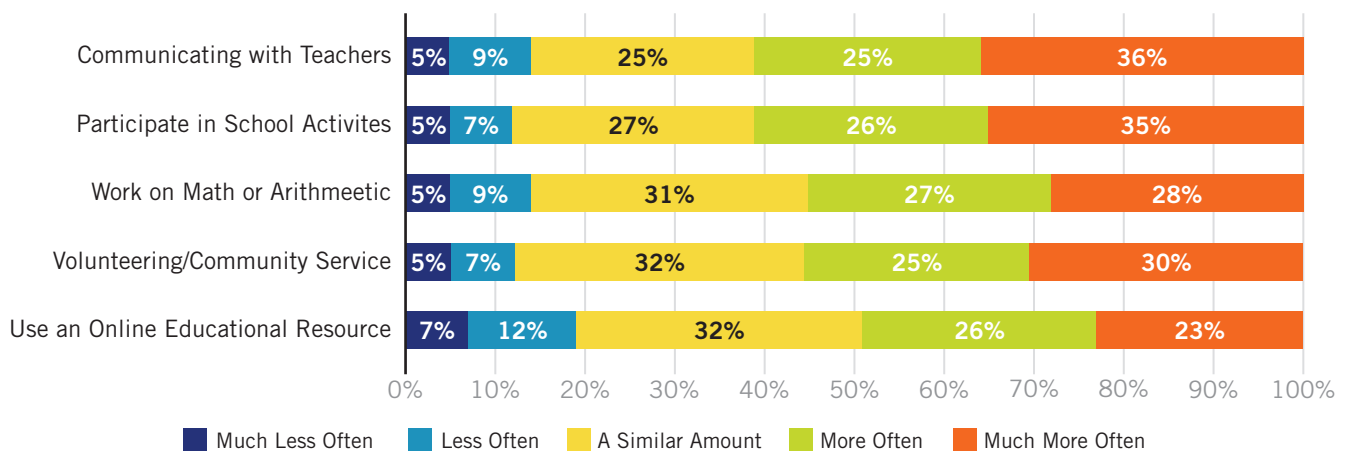
As shown, most parents reported being more involved in their child’s academic pursuits than in the previous school. Specifically, more than three of every five respondents said they communicate with their child’s teacher more often and participate in school activities more often. In all cases, less than 20 percent of respondents said they participate in these activities less often than in their previous school.

Much like previous iterations of this survey, there were no statistically significant differences in parental involvement. However, school choice parents state they are more likely to be involved in different aspects of their child’s education than in their previous school, such as communicating with their child’s teacher and participating in school activities.

Supporting Children’s Education

Parents in Indiana were asked about the things they have done to support their child’s K–12 education, and nearly half of all parents (48%) changed their job, took on a part-time or another job for additional income, or took out a loan.

FIGURE 15 Indiana Parents’ Activity Levels in Their Voucher and Scholarship Schools Compared to Their Previous Schools
More than three out of five school choice parents communicate with teachers more often in their current school compared to their previous school.



number of parents responding (Q19) = 874, 873, 868, 875, and 758, respectively

Nearly half of the voucher (47%) and tax-credit scholarship parents (46%) said they took on a part-time or another job for additional income, and those parents were more likely than the average parent (30%) and non-choice private (30%), charter (20%), and district school parents (19%) to provide that response. Non-choice private school parents were more likely than district school parents and more likely than charter school parents to say the same. Comparatively, national survey results show 21 percent of school parents have taken an additional job to support their child’s education.⁵⁷

Voucher parents (32%) were more likely than the average parent (23%), non-choice private school parents (20%), and district school parents (18%) to say they changed their job to support their child’s K–12 education. Tax-credit scholarship parents (25%) were also more likely than district school parents. Voucher parents were more likely than tax-credit scholarship parents to provide that response, while charter school parents were more

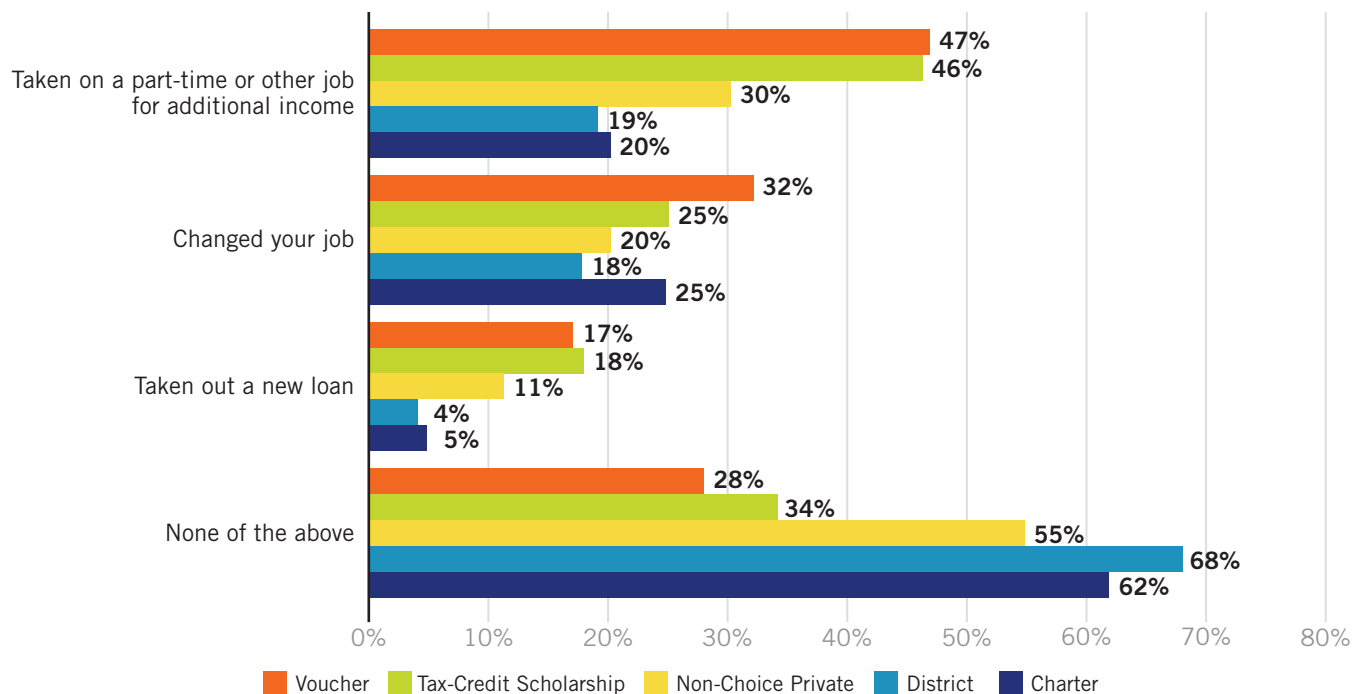
likely than district school parents. Nationally, 14 percent of a sample of school parents reported changing jobs to support their child’s education.⁵⁸

More than nine out of 10 parents (93%) said for at least four months of a school year they have helped with homework at least one night per week (76%), significantly changed their daily routine (41%), had a family member or friend help look after their child (37%), paid for before or after care services for their child (32%), paid for transporting their child to/from school (22%), and/or paid for tutoring (21%).

Parents’ Goals for Their Children’s Education

Measures of non-cognitive skills based on self-reporting by students can help explain outcomes of student behavior and test-score gains in middle school, and schools can have an effect on

FIGURE 16 Things Indiana School Parents Have Done to Support Their Children’s K–12 Education
About half of school choice parents have taken on a part-time or other job for additional income to support their children’s K–12 education.

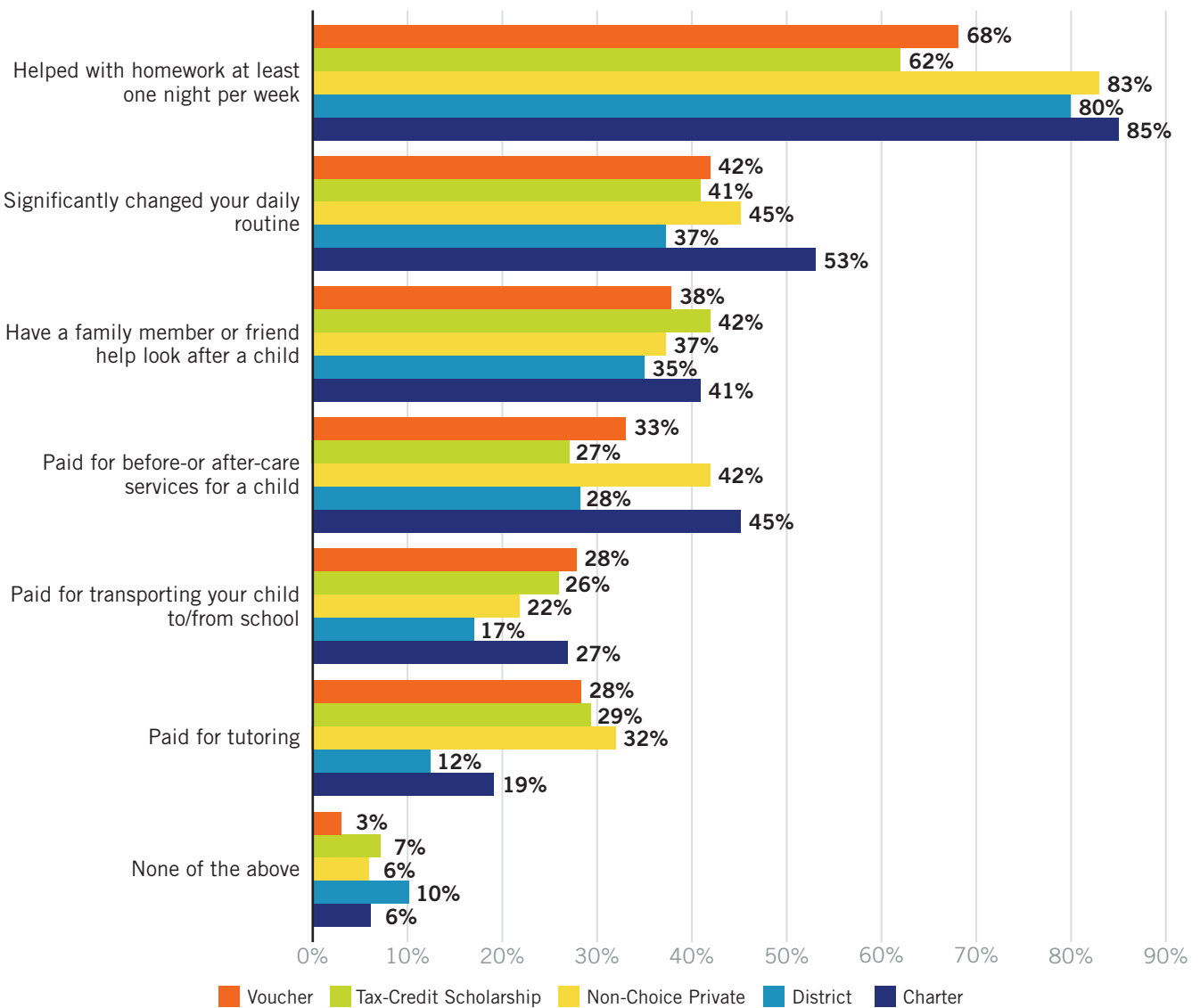


number of parents responding (Q49) = 595 Voucher; 239 Tax-Credit Scholarship; 302 Non-Choice Private; 1,089 District; 165 Charter

students' non-cognitive skills assessed through self-reports.⁵⁹ Although the survey for this questionnaire went to parents and not students, it is our hope that researchers that focus more on social-emotional learning will be able to use the parent reports of students in their work.

All parents were asked to rank the importance of 19 educational goals, separately, for their children to attain in school, including questions relating to self-management, academic self-efficacy, social awareness, and growth mindset.⁶⁰ Nine out of 10 parents (90%) said it is very or extremely important for their children to: believe they can succeed academically (academic self-efficacy), learn strong

FIGURE 17 Things Indiana School Parents Have Done for At Least Four Months of a School Year to Support Their Children's K-12 Education
District school parents are least likely to significantly change their daily routine, have family or friends look after their children, or pay for tutoring and other services to support their children's education.



number of parents responding (Q50) = 595 Voucher; 239 Tax-Credit Scholarship; 302 Non-Choice Private; 1,087 District; 165 Charter

verbal and written communication skills, and learn good study habits and self-discipline (self-management). More than four out of five parents said it is very or extremely important for their children to: develop strong critical thinking skills (89%), develop a strong moral code of conduct (88%), develop strong self-esteem (87%), believe that effort increases learning (growth mindset;

86%), be prepared for college (86%), identify their interests and pursue their talents on their own (84%), develop strong social skills (social awareness; 83%), and develop a love of learning (83%). Nearly four out of five parents (78%) said it is very or extremely important for their children to be able to work collaboratively in teams.

TABLE 6 Importance Placed on Educational Goals by School Parents—Very Important/Extremely Important

Educational Goal	Voucher (%)	Tax-Credit Scholarship (%)	Non-Choice Private (%)	District (%)	Charter (%)	Sample Average (%)
Believes they can succeed academically	87	84	94	92	94	90
Learns strong verbal and written communication skills	88	83	94	92	95	90
Learns good study habits and self-discipline	87	85	94	91	91	90
Develops strong critical thinking skills	85	85	95	91	94	89
Develops a strong moral code of conduct	86	83	94	87	91	88
Develops strong self-esteem	84	81	89	89	85	87
Believes that effort increases learning	86	83	91	86	88	86
Is prepared for college	84	82	93	85	88	86
Can identify their interests and pursue their talents on their own	82	80	87	85	90	84
Develops strong social skills	82	78	86	85	78	83
Develops a love of learning	80	81	86	84	85	83
Is able to work collaboratively in teams	77	79	80	78	81	78
Learns how to work with people from diverse backgrounds	77	73	79	79	84	78
Understands how important it is to go to college	76	75	84	76	82	77
Develops a love of country/patriotism	68	70	59	56	55	61
Develops an appreciation for nature	59	66	42	54	58	55
Is accepted at a top-tier college	57	64	53	45	47	51
Finishes high school with job skills that do not require further education	54	57	31	48	47	48
Develops fluency in a foreign language	51	50	35	32	40	39

number of parents responding (Q48) varies by item

Parents' Reasons for Switching Schools

The IDOE keeps track of voucher students who previously attended a public school in Indiana prior to enrolling in a private school. For the 2015–16 school year, just more than half (52%) of the families using a voucher had never attended a public school. This increased to 54 percent during the 2016–17 school year.⁶¹

In last year's study of why Indiana parents choose, more than half of respondents said their child had never attended another school. However, for those who had exercised their option to choose, 25 percent said their child had previously enrolled in a public district school. Unfortunately, the 2016 survey did not include public school parents. This year we were able to compare public and private sector parents. With that in mind, how do non-choice private school families compare to public district and charter school parents when it comes to previous school attendance?

Though the research for this paper did not involve individual student-level matching and tracking to determine if a student ever attended a public school in Indiana, the survey did ask the type of school the students attended prior to their current private school.

When comparing parents from the three school sectors (excluding voucher and tax-credit scholarship recipients), charter school parents

were the most likely to have moved their child from a different school. Non-choice private school parents were the least likely to have previously enrolled their child, as just less than one-third had switched their child's school (see Figure 18).

When looking at the types of schools previously attended, more than two-thirds of those who switched had previously attended a public district school. Three out of every four (77%) parents enrolling in a district school had previously attended a different district school. For non-choice private school parents, two of every five respondents (40%) said their student previously attended a *different* private school. Charter school parents were similar to district school parents, as nearly two-thirds (64%) of respondents attended a public district school prior to their new school.

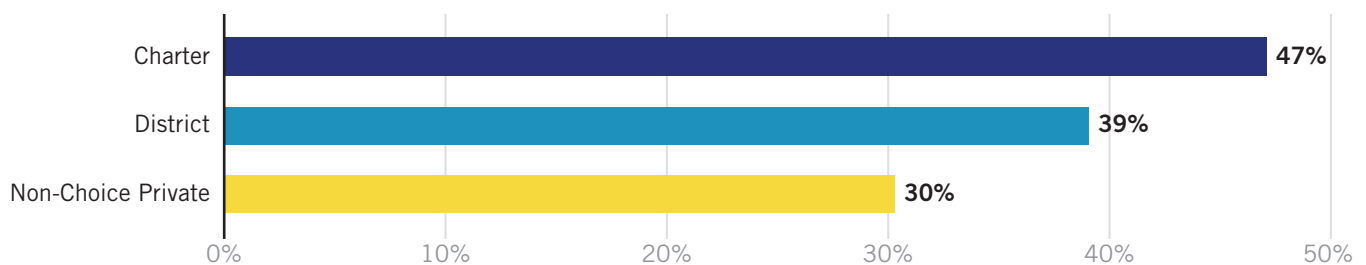
Why Families Left Their Previous School

While some parents in Indiana leave their previous school to participate in one of the state's private school choice programs, this is not always the case. Parents listed a variety of reasons for why they left. For all respondents, more than one-third said the location of the previous school led them to leave. Among private school and charter school parents, more than one-third of each stated they left due to the academic quality. Nearly half of charter school parents (49%) who left their previous school said their child did not get enough individual attention at their previous school.

FIGURE 18

Percentage of Indiana Parents Who Say Their Children Have Switched Schools

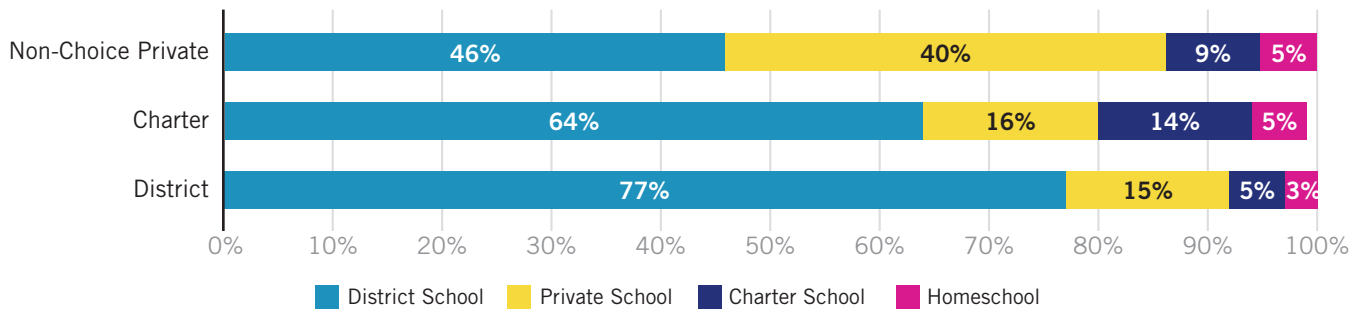
More than one-third of parents reported their child has switched schools at one point.



number of parents responding (Q34) = 408 Non-Choice Private; 1,415 District; 206 Charter

FIGURE 19

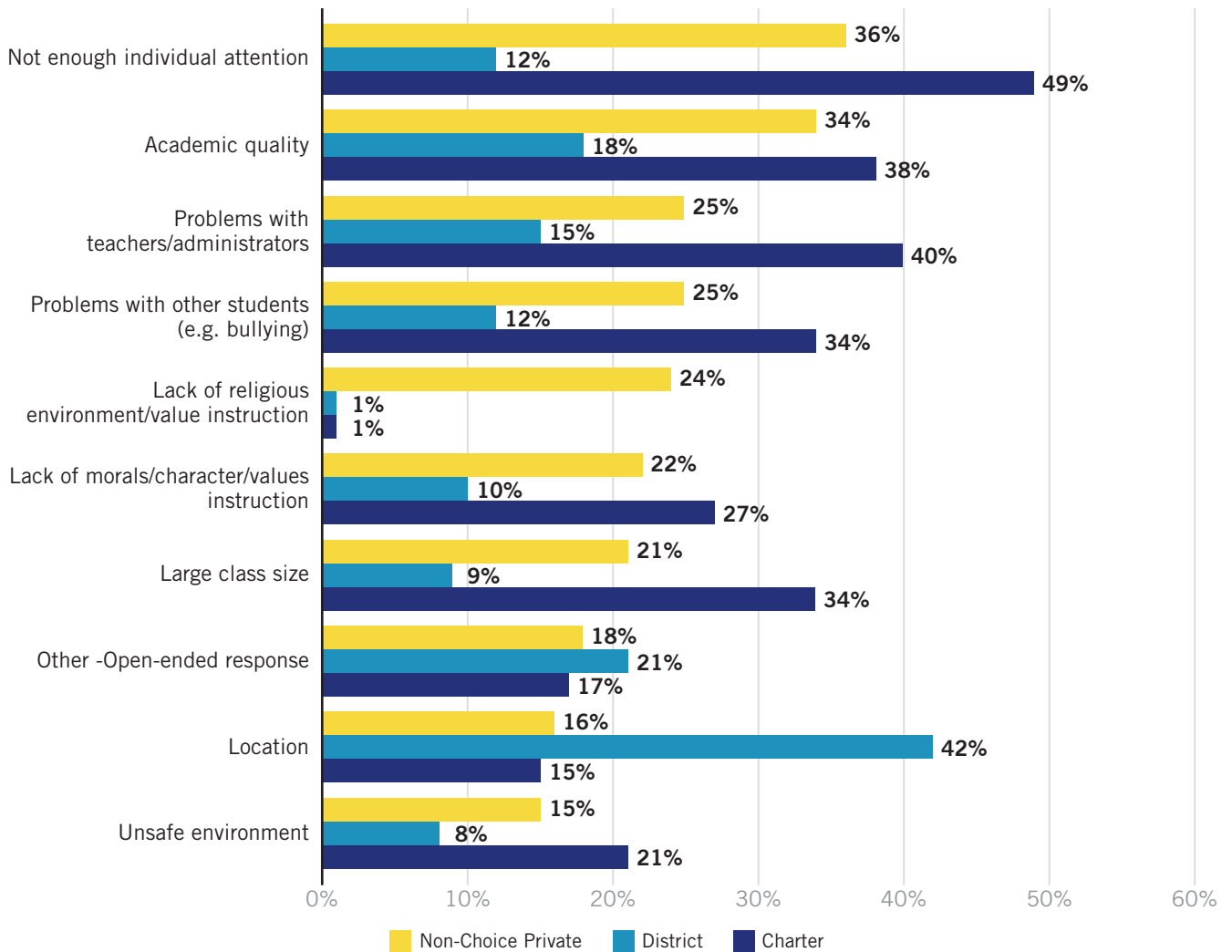
Percentage of Indiana Families Who Switched from District, Charter, Private, or Home Schools
More than two-thirds of students who switched were previously enrolled in their local district school.



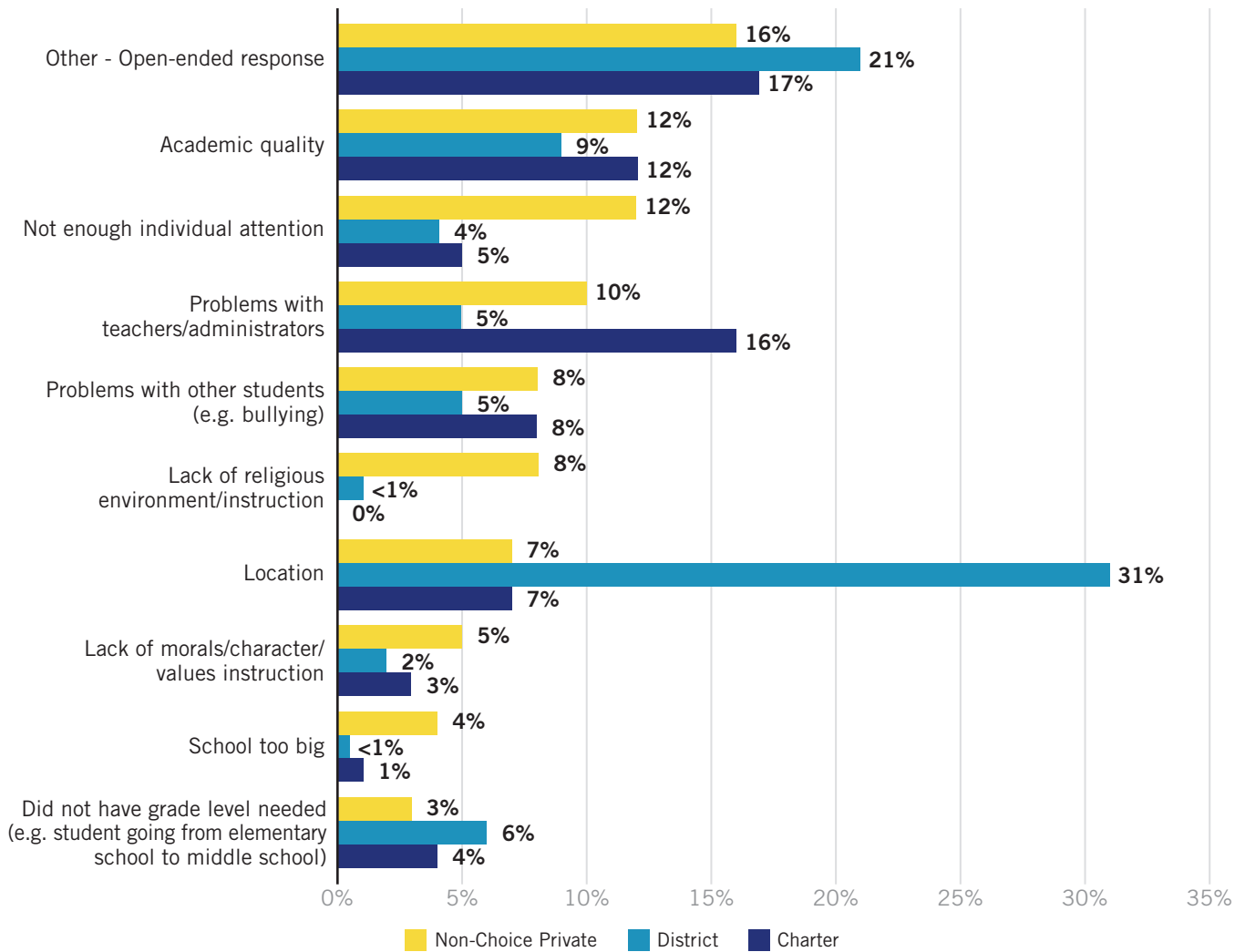
number of parents responding (Q35) = 124 Non-Choice Private; 548 District; 97 Charter

FIGURE 20

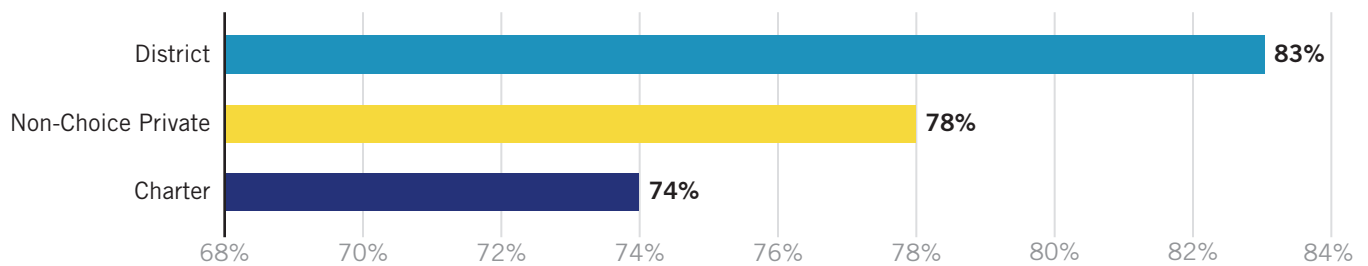
Top 10 Influences that Inspired Indiana Parents' Decision to Switch Schools
More than one-third of parents said the location of their child's school influenced their decision to leave.



number of parents responding (Q37) = 118 Non-Choice Private; 530 District; 92 Charter

FIGURE 21**Top 10 Most Important Influences that Inspired Indiana Parents' Decision to Switch Schools***Location and academic quality were the most frequently cited influences that inspired parents to switch their children's schools.*

number of parents responding (Q38) = 118 Non-Choice Private; 530 District; 92 Charter

FIGURE 22**Proportion of Parents Whose Previous Schools Supported Their Decision to Leave***More than four-fifths of parents said their previous school supported their decision to switch schools.*

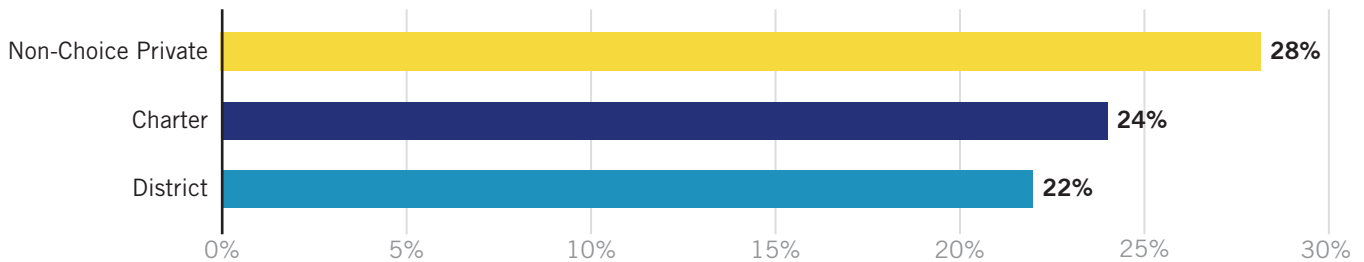
number of parents responding (Q36A) = 430 District; 89 Non-Choice Private; 62 Charter

Note: Strong caution is advised when interpreting results for charter school parents in this figure, since the sample size is smaller than 80.

FIGURE 23

Proportion of Parents Whose Previous Schools Tried to Persuade Them to Stay

Nearly one-fourth of parents said their child's previous school tried to persuade them not to switch schools.



number of parents responding (Q36B) = 109 Non-Choice Private; 83 Charter; 463 District

Most Important Reason Families Left Their Previous School

Though respondents listed a variety of reasons for leaving their previous school, the most important reason varied for respondents from each of the different school sectors. Non-choice private school parents most often provided their own response as the most important reason for leaving their previous school. District school parents listed the school's location as the most important reason for leaving. Charter school parents were similar to their private school peers and provided their own reason as the most important reason for leaving. However, a similar percentage of charter school parents stated they had problems with teachers and/or administrators at their previous school as the most important reason for leaving.

Previous School's Reaction to Families Leaving

Although many parents heard about their child's new school from their child's former school, not all schools supported parents' decision to switch schools. Overall, more than four-fifths of parents (82%) said their child's previous school supported their decision to leave. More than three-fourths of non-choice private school parents (78%) said their child's previous school supported their decision to leave. District school parents (83%) were marginally more likely than charter school parents (74%) to say their previous school supported their decision.⁶² We feel it is important to remind

readers that 77 percent of district school parents who switched previously enrolled their child in a district school, while only 16 percent of charter school parents who switched enrolled their child in a charter school.

On the other hand, nearly one-fourth of parents (24%) said their child's previous school tried to persuade them to stay. More than one-fourth of non-choice private school parents (28%) said the previous school tried to persuade them to stay, while less than one-fourth of charter (24%) and district school parents (22%) said the same.

DISCUSSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Nearly two decades worth of surveys on the satisfaction levels of school choice families exist today, and the findings discussed in this report supplement the previous body of research. If self-reported parental satisfaction was the main measure of a school's success, then Indiana's private schools would be more successful than its public charter schools, which would be more successful than the local district schools.

In that same line of thinking, the most successful voucher and tax-credit scholarship schools, based on parental responses to the survey, are in urban areas, while the least successful are in small towns. This potentially speaks to the differences in schooling experiences by community type.

However, parents saying they are satisfied with no explanation provides little substance to policymakers. With that in mind, we have attempted to gather and present clarifying information and data in this report.

When asked what motivated parents to leave their previous school, many charter school and private school parents expressed some levels of dissatisfaction with the academic quality of their child's previous school. Interestingly, most parents who chose to leave their previous school said the school was supportive of their decision.

Private school parents were most likely to say they are completely satisfied with their children's schools. District school parents were the least likely to say there were completely satisfied and were more likely to express some levels of dissatisfaction with their children's schools.

Private school parents are more likely than their public school peers to state they are choosing their school based on academic quality, but continue to list religious environment/instruction as the most important reason for choosing schools, similar to the 2016 results. Tax-credit scholarship and charter school families state that academics are the most important reason for choosing their schools. Unsurprisingly, public district school families stated the school's location was the most important reason for enrolling their child in a school. This makes intuitive sense, given that a majority of families in Indiana enroll their children in their neighborhood schools.

Among private school choice parents, a majority said that it was at least somewhat easy to find their school of choice. Nearly half of the parents who participated in the school voucher program said that it was very easy to find their chosen school. Notably, many reported hearing about their chosen school from friends or relatives.

Voucher and tax-credit scholarship parents are more likely than district school parents to see developing a love of country/patriotism and being

accepted at a top-tier college as very or extremely important goals for their children.

Tax-credit scholarship and voucher parents were more likely than district school parents to see finishing high school with job skills that do not require further education as being a very or extremely important educational goal for their children.

Regardless of school sector, parents are satisfied with their children's schools. However, our survey shows that parents who can exercise choice through charter schools, non-choice program private school enrollment, private school enrollment through a voucher or tax-credit scholarship program are more likely to express some level of satisfaction compared to their district school counterparts.

Given these results, it would appear that parents in Indiana are more satisfied with their child's education when they are able to choose a school setting that most closely reflects their own values.

Policymakers should note that more than half of the former school choice program parents transferred their children to public schools from their former voucher or tax-credit scholarship schools. Additionally, more than half of the current school choice parents said they would send their children to public schools if the voucher or tax-credit scholarship program did not exist. Those points directly counter the Indiana Department of Education's assertion that voucher students would attend private school regardless of whether the program existed.⁶³

Overall, the results presented here show that parents value the opportunity to choose a school they believe is a better fit for their child. Parents value the autonomy to choose a school outside of their neighborhood, especially if they can find a school that holds the same values. All families should have the opportunity to be completely satisfied when it comes to the school in which their children are educated, and though that may

wind up being a ZIP Code-assigned district school, all families should have the option to identify and choose the school that is the best for their children, regardless of income.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Though this study continues to show that parents are more satisfied when they are given the opportunity to choose a school, it does not show whether parents are choosing schools that are a good fit. This survey has provided parents from the most common school sectors the opportunity to voice their opinion on schools, but it has been conducted in the context of a choice environment. As the literature review shows, we still lack information on the perceptions of public district school parents and their school satisfaction.

In this branch of qualitative school choice research, we have found that parents who are given the opportunity to choose a school outside of their neighborhood school are more likely to be satisfied. According to the survey analyzed in this report, parents choosing private schools in Indiana often value the religious environment their new private school offers to them, while public charter school parents value the academics and small school environment offered by the more autonomous public schools. Though parents in Indiana are quite happy with their district schools overall, policymakers have the opportunity to leave school customers more satisfied by offering greater autonomy to choose. Though intriguing, these results do not show that being able to choose causes parents to be more satisfied. That is beyond the scope of this research. However, it confirms what has been found previously, parents are more satisfied when they are able to choose beyond a neighborhood limit.

Although the research in this report might suggest a potential link between school satisfaction and social-emotional learning, that relationship was

not formally tested. Even if it were, which of these—school satisfaction or social-emotional learning—do researchers, let alone parents, deem to be the more important?

The next known steps for research related to the survey used for this report are two-fold:

1. a brief, conference paper, and/or journal article that analyzes a dataset connecting the 2017 survey respondents and responses with their 2013 and/or 2016 responses; and
2. a brief, conference paper, and/or journal article that analyzes the last two sets of survey questions on parents' geography/willingness to move and student transportation.

In the future, researchers also have the potential to resurvey parents that responded to the survey to see if their satisfaction levels or views change, if they changed schooling type, and, if so, why or why not. Additional questions might ask whether or not parents visited their current school prior to enrolling, whether or not they visited any school when making their decision, which types of schools they visited, and how many schools they visited total and how many times per school.

The survey used for this report could also be replicated in other states with school choice programs.

CONCLUSION

When EdChoice started surveying private school choice parents in Indiana, there were approximately 30,000 students using vouchers and tax-credit scholarships to access a school of choice. Now there are more than 40,000 students accessing private schools of choice, and we expect that number to continue to grow. We believe that a regular surveying of parents' preferences, their understanding and usage of the choice programs,

and how and why they choose schools is critical to give feedback to the public about choice programs, to policymakers as they make adjustments to the programs, and to education providers who wish to serve these choice families. We also believe that it is paramount to continually compare the preferences of all school parents, not just those utilizing a private school choice program. Only by doing so are we able to peer behind the larger curtain of educational choice, regardless of schooling sector.

APPENDIX 1

Survey Project & Profile

TITLE: 2017 Survey of Indiana School Parents

SURVEY SPONSOR: EdChoice

SURVEY DEVELOPER: EdChoice

SURVEY DATA COLLECTION

AND QUALITY CONTROL: Hanover Research

INTERVIEW DATES: June 5 to July 11, 2017

INTERVIEW METHOD: Web

INTERVIEW LENGTH: 8.78 minutes (median)

LANGUAGE(S): English only

SAMPLING METHOD: Phase I: panel

Phase II: direct email to 2013 and/or 2016 EdChoice private school survey respondents

Phase III: snowball sample of charter school parents

POPULATION SAMPLE: Statewide sample of school parents in Indiana

SAMPLE SIZE: Voucher Parents, N = 733 (partial and complete)

Tax-Credit Scholarship Parents, N = 311 (partial and complete)

Non-Choice Private School Parents, N = 416 (partial and complete)

District School Parents, N = 1,452 (partial and complete)

Charter School Parents, N = 210 (partial and complete)

MARGINS OF ERROR: Voucher Parents = $\pm 4\%$

Tax-Credit Scholarship Parents = $\pm 5\%$

Non-Choice Private School Parents = $\pm 5\%$

District School Parents = $\pm 3\%$

Charter School Parents = $\pm 7\%$

RESPONSE RATES: Phase I = 1.6%

Phase II = 15.4%

Phase III = N/A (snowball sample)

WEIGHTING?: No

OVERSAMPLING?: No

The authors are responsible for overall survey design; question wording and ordering (see separate Questionnaire and Topline Results document at www.edchoice.org/WhyINParentsChoose); this paper's analysis, charts, and writing; and any unintentional errors or misrepresentations.

APPENDIX 2

Additional Tables

Reported Grades of Indiana School Choice Participants

Grade Level	Voucher	Tax-Credit Scholarship
Kindergarten	8%	10%
First Grade	5%	6%
Second Grade	6%	6%
Third Grade	7%	6%
Fourth Grade	8%	8%
Fifth Grade	10%	6%
Sixth Grade	8%	8%
Seventh Grade	8%	9%
Eighth Grade	9%	8%
Ninth Grade	7%	7%
10th Grade	5%	7%
11th Grade	9%	7%
12th Grade	7%	8%

number of parents responding (Q12) = 713 Voucher; 317 Tax-Credit Scholarship

APPENDIX 2

Continued

Parental Satisfaction with Indiana's Choice Scholarship Program

		Completely Dissatisfied (%)	Somewhat Dissatisfied (%)	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied (%)	Somewhat Satisfied (%)	Completely Satisfied (%)	N =
(a)	ALL RESPONDENTS	5	3	6	24	62	608
	COMMUNITY						
(b)	Urban	3	2 ^{d*e*}	6	17 ^{d*e*}	72 ^{d**e**}	192
(c)	Suburban	5	0 ^{d**e**}	4 ^{d*}	23	68 ^{d**e**}	160
(d)	Small Town	7	7 ^{b*c**}	11 ^{c*}	30 ^{b*}	46 ^{b**c**}	76
(e)	Rural	6	6 ^{b*c**}	7	26 ^{b*}	54 ^{b**c**}	171
	RACE/ETHNICITY						
(f)	Black	7	8 ^{h**}	3	25	57	60
(g)	Hispanic	5	2	10	19	64	42
(h)	White	5	2 ^{g**}	6	25	62	385
	HOUSEHOLD INCOME						
(i)	Under \$45,601	3	4	11 ^{j*k}	22	60	147
(j)	\$45,601 to \$74,999	6	4	4 ^{i*}	25	61	167
(k)	\$75,000 & Over	6	2	5 ⁱ	28	59	18
	EDUCATION						
(l)	< Four-Year College Degree	6	5 ^m	9 ^{m*}	26	54 ^{m**}	238
(m)	≥ Four-Year College Degree	4	2 ^l	4 ^{l*}	23	67 ^{l**}	283
	RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD						
(n)	Mother	5	2 ^{op**}	6	23	64 ^{op**}	380
(o)	Father	7	5 ^{np**}	7	27	55 ^{np*}	122
(p)	Legal Guardian	0	31 ^{n**o**}	15	31	23 ^{n**o*}	13

Regular font superscript letters indicate significance at the 90 percent level (using a Z-test), with one accompanying asterisk (*) indicating significance at the 95 percent level and two accompanying asterisks (**) indicating significance at the 99 percent level, across comparison groups: bcde/gh/ijk/lm/nop.

Source: EdChoice, 2017 Indiana Parent Survey (conducted June 5 to July 11, 2017), Q23.

Notes: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in Indiana and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews.

Parents' Levels of Ease or Difficulty Finding a School in Indiana's Choice Scholarship Program

		Very Difficult (%)	Somewhat Difficult (%)	Neither Easy Nor Difficult (%)	Somewhat Easy (%)	Very Easy (%)	N =
(a)	ALL RESPONDENTS	5	12	17	20	45	713
	COMMUNITY						
(b)	Urban	2 ^{d**e*}	8 ^{e**}	17	15 ^{d*e}	58 ^{d**e**}	212
(c)	Suburban	3 ^{d*e*}	11 ^{e*}	16	19	51 ^{d*e**}	188
(d)	Small Town	9 ^{b**c*}	13	18	25 ^{b*}	35 ^{b**c*}	97
(e)	Rural	8 ^{b*c*}	18 ^{b**c*}	20	22 ^b	33 ^{b**c**}	203
	RACE/ETHNICITY						
(f)	Black	4	17	11 ^{g*}	27	40	70
(g)	Hispanic	12 ^{h**}	16	25 ^{f*}	20	27 ^{h**}	51
(h)	White	4 ^{g**}	12	18	20	48 ^{g**}	423
	HOUSEHOLD INCOME						
(i)	Under \$45,601	6	14	19	19	42	175
(j)	\$45,601 to \$74,999	5	12	19	17 ^{k*}	47 ^k	188
(k)	\$75,000 & Over	6	15	15	26 ^{j*}	38 ^l	207
	EDUCATION						
(l)	< Four-Year College Degree	6	15	22 ^{m**}	21	36 ^{m**}	283
(m)	≥ Four-Year College Degree	5	12	14 ^{**}	20	49 ^{**}	306
	RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD						
(n)	Mother	5 ^p	13	15 ^o	19	48 ^{o*p**}	416
(o)	Father	5 ^p	14	22 ⁿ	23	36 ^{n*p}	149
(p)	Legal Guardian	18 ^{no}	24	24	24	12 ^{n**o}	17

Regular font superscript letters indicate significance at the 90 percent level (using a Z-test), with one accompanying asterisk (*) indicating significance at the 95 percent level and two accompanying asterisks (**) indicating significance at the 99 percent level, across comparison groups: bcde/gh/ij/klm/nop.

Source: EdChoice, 2017 Indiana Parent Survey (conducted June 5 to July 11, 2017), Q23.

Notes: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in Indiana and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews.

APPENDIX 2

Continued

Why District School Parents Haven't Opted to Use Indiana's Voucher or Tax-Credit Scholarship Programs

		I am happy with the school my child(ren) attend(s). (%)	My family does not qualify for either of the school choice programs. (%)	I want to support our public schools. (%)
(a)	ALL RESPONDENTS	35	16	22
	COMMUNITY			
(b)	Urban	36	17	23 ^c
(c)	Suburban	34	20 ^{d*e*}	18 ^{bde}
(d)	Small Town	33	13 ^{c*}	24 ^c
(e)	Rural	37	13 ^{c*}	23 ^c
	RACE/ETHNICITY			
(f)	Black	27 ^{h*}	17	18
(g)	Hispanic	32	17	29
(h)	White	39 ^{g*}	17	23
	HOUSEHOLD INCOME			
(i)	Under \$45,601	31 ^{i*k**}	7 ^{j**k**}	18 ^{i*k}
(j)	\$45,601 to \$74,999	39 ^{i*}	18 ^{i**k*}	26 ^{j*}
(k)	\$75,000 & Over	42 ^{i**}	26 ^{i**j*}	24 ⁱ
	EDUCATION			
(l)	< Four-Year College Degree	34 ^{m*}	14 ^{m**}	19 ^{m**}
(m)	≥ Four-Year College Degree	41 ^{l*}	23 ^{l**}	29 ^{l**}
	RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD			
(n)	Mother	36 ^o	17	22 ^o
(o)	Father	43 ^{np*}	18	28 ^p
(p)	Legal Guardian	24 ^{o*}	6	21

Regular font superscript letters indicate significance at the 90 percent level (using a Z-test), with one accompanying asterisk (*) indicating significance at the 95 percent level and two accompanying asterisks (**) indicating significance at the 99 percent level, across comparison groups: bcde/fgh/ijk/lm/nop.

Source: EdChoice, 2017 Indiana Parent Survey (conducted June 5 to July 11, 2017), Q42.

Notes: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in Indiana and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews.

Even with the scholarship my family would be responsible for a portion of the private school tuition, which we could not afford. (%)	I am opposed to the school voucher system. (%)	I was unaware of these programs. (%)	N =
11	6	39	1,342
13	8	35 ^{e*}	356
10	7	39	337
9	5	39	234
10	5	44 ^{b*}	401
6 ^h	7	43	94
7	7	44	41
12 ⁱ	7	36	867
10 ^{i*}	3 ^{k**}	51 ^{j**k**}	405
16 ^{i*k*}	6 ^{k*}	34 ^{i**k*}	262
9 ^{j*}	12 ^{i**j*}	26 ^{i**j*}	345
10	5 ^{m**}	43 ^{m**}	663
12	10 ^{l**}	26 ^{l**}	397
11	6	39 ^{o*}	817
9	8	29 ^{n*}	191
18	12	42	33

APPENDIX 2

Continued

Likelihood of District School Parents' Children Participating in One of Indiana's School Choice Programs

		Not at All Likely (%)	Slightly Likely (%)	Moderately Likely (%)	Very Likely (%)	Extremely Likely (%)	N =
(a)	ALL RESPONDENTS	9	10	25	27	29	744
	COMMUNITY						
(b)	Urban	7 ^e	12 ^c	23 ^c	28	31	198
(c)	Suburban	11	7 ^{bd}	30 ^{bd*}	23	29	196
(d)	Small Town	7	13 ^c	17 ^{c*e}	31	32 ^e	117
(e)	Rural	12 ^b	10	25 ^d	29	24 ^d	224
	RACE/ETHNICITY						
(f)	Black	4	5	16 ^h	35	40 ^{h*}	57
(g)	Hispanic	4	8	29	33	25	24
(h)	White	11	13	26 ^f	26	25 ^{*e}	471
	HOUSEHOLD INCOME						
(i)	Under \$45,601	5 ^{i**k**}	13	25	29	28	240
(j)	\$45,601 to \$74,999	14 ^{**}	12	25	25	24	139
(k)	\$75,000 & Over	12 ^{**}	10	25	26	26	182
	EDUCATION						
(l)	< Four-Year College Degree	8 [*]	12	26	30 [*]	25	374
(m)	≥ Four-Year College Degree	13 ^{m*}	11	25	21 ^{m*}	30	210
	RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD						
(n)	Mother	9 ^{o*}	11	24 ^o	28	28	456
(o)	Father	15 ^{n*}	10	32 ⁿ	21	22	97
(p)	Legal Guardian	9	23	18	32	18	22

Regular font superscript letters indicate significance at the 90 percent level (using a Z-test), with one accompanying asterisk (*) indicating significance at the 95 percent level and two accompanying asterisks (**) indicating significance at the 99 percent level, across comparison groups: bcde/fg/ij/klmnop.

Source: EdChoice, 2017 Indiana Parent Survey (conducted June 5 to July 11, 2017), Q43.

Notes: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in Indiana and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews.

Where Indiana Voucher Parents Would Send Their Children If They Were Not Participating in the Choice Scholarship Program

		Different Private School (%)	Homeschool (%)	Public Charter School (%)	Same Private School (%)	Local District School (%)	N =
(a)	ALL RESPONDENTS	6	8	13	29	45	586
COMMUNITY							
(b)	Urban	5	7	6 ^{c**e**}	29	53 ^{cde*}	179
(c)	Suburban	3 ^e	8	17 ^{b**}	30	42 ^b	144
(d)	Small Town	5	12	12	30	41 ^b	74
(e)	Rural	8 ^c	6	16 ^{b**}	29	40 ^{b*}	178
RACE/ETHNICITY							
(f)	Black	15 ^{h**}	5	27 ^{h**}	18 ^{h*}	35	55
(g)	Hispanic	7	2	22 ^{h**}	31	38	45
(h)	White	4 ^{f**}	7	9 ^{f**g**}	34 ^{f*}	46	364
HOUSEHOLD INCOME							
(i)	Under \$45,601	6	8 ^k	18 ^{j*}	22 ^{k**}	45	143
(j)	\$45,601 to \$74,999	6	9 ^{k*}	11 ^{i*}	27 ^{k*}	47 ^k	171
(k)	\$75,000 & Over	5	3 ^{ij*}	15	40 ^{i**j*}	37 ⁱ	176
EDUCATION							
(l)	< Four-Year College Degree	6	7	16	23 ^{m**}	47 ^{m*}	243
(m)	≥ Four-Year College Degree	5	7	12	37 ^{l**}	38 ^{l*}	262
RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD							
(n)	Mother	6	8	11 ^{o**p**}	30	45 ^{o*}	357
(o)	Father	4	5	20 ^{n**p}	34	37 ^{n*p*}	130
(p)	Legal Guardian	9	0	45 ^{n**o}	27	18 ^{o*}	11

Regular font superscript letters indicate significance at the 90 percent level (using a Z-test), with one accompanying asterisk (*) indicating significance at the 95 percent level and two accompanying asterisks (**) indicating significance at the 99 percent level, across comparison groups: bcde/fgh/ijk/lm/nop.

Source: EdChoice, 2017 Indiana Parent Survey (conducted June 5 to July 11, 2017), Q25.

Notes: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in Indiana and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews.

NOTES

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⁴ Scott Elliott (2011, August 28), Ind. School Voucher Program Cheered, Criticized, *USA Today*, retrieved from <https://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/education/story/2011-08-28/Ind-school-voucher-program-cheered-criticized/50169064/1>

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⁸ Chelsea Schneider (2017, March 26), Are Voucher Students Improving?, *Indianapolis Star*, ¶10, retrieved from <https://www.indystar.com/story/news/education/2017/03/26/voucher-students-improving/97750824>

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¹² For an informative read on the disconnect between the latter two, please see: Jay P. Greene (2017, June 26), The Disconnect

Between Educational Measures and Life Outcomes, *EducationNext*, retrieved from <https://educationnext.org/disconnect-educational-measures-life-outcomes>

¹³ “As a child of two Purdue grads, I’ll never call myself a ‘Hoosier,’ even though I have multiple degrees with ‘Indiana University’ somewhere on them.” – Drew Catt

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¹⁵ EdChoice, School Choice in America [web page], last modified September 7, 2017, retrieved from <https://www.edchoice.org/school-choice/school-choice-in-america>

¹⁶ Author’s calculation; U.S. Census Bureau (2017), *Public Education Finances: 2015* (G15-ASPEF), p. 20, table 8, retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2017/econ/g15-aspef.pdf>

¹⁷ See note 5

¹⁸ Office of School Finance (2017), *Choice Scholarship Program Annual Report: Participation and Payment Data*, accessed August 25, 2017, retrieved from Indiana Department of Education website: <https://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/choice/2016-2017-choice-scholarship-program-report-spring-revision-final-0811.pdf>

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²⁷ National Center for Education Statistics, Search for Public Schools [dataset], accessed July 11, 2017, retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/index.asp>

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⁴⁷ See note 32

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 23

⁴⁹ Parents of homeschool children were included in the initial round of responses, though these respondents were disqualified after receiving more than 60 responses.

⁵⁰ EdChoice incentivized parents to complete the survey by entering them into a randomized drawing to win one of 10 \$200 gift cards or one of 20 \$100 gift cards.

⁵¹ Note that the sample sizes listed above for each phase of solicitation and school type reflect the final, cleaned data, with all errant responses dropped.

⁵² National Center for Education Statistics, Table 205.80. Private Elementary and Secondary Schools, Enrollment, Teachers, and High School Graduates, by State: Selected Years, 2003 through 2013, last modified December 2015, retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_205.80.asp

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⁵⁴ See note 11

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ There were 67 parents who provided an open-ended response as a reason, including 12 parents (less than 1%) who said they were happy with their current school, 12 parents (less than 1%) who said they don't need or qualify for the programs, 10 parents (less than 1%) who said there aren't any participating schools near where they live, eight parents (less than 1%) who said they were unfamiliar with the program, seven parents (less than 1%) who cited transportation concerns, six parents (less than 1%) who cited concerns about the programs or private schools, five parents (less than 1%) who said their child isn't eligible, three parents (less than 1%) who said their child started attending private school before the programs existed (and are therefore not eligible), three parents (less than 1%) who cited financial reasons, and eight parents (less than 1%) whose responses could not be grouped.

⁵⁷ Paul DiPerna and Andrew D. Catt (2016), *2016 Schooling in America Survey: Public Opinion on K–12 Education and School Choice* (Polling Paper 20), retrieved from EdChoice website: https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/2016-10_SIA-Poll-Update.pdf

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Martin R. West, Matthew A. Kraft, Amy S. Finn, Rebecca E. Martin, Angela L. Duckworth, Christopher F. O. Gabrieli, and John D. E. Gabrieli (2016), Promise and Paradox: Measuring Students' Non-Cognitive Skills and the Impact of Schooling, *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 38(1), pp. 148–170, <https://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0162373715597298>

⁶⁰ Student Goals questions adapted from Dara Zeehandelaar and Amber M. Winkler (Eds.) (2013), *What Parents Want: Education Preferences and Trade-Offs: A National Survey of K-12 Parents*, retrieved from Thomas B. Fordham Institute website: <https://edexcellence.net/publications/what-parents-want.html>, with social-emotional learning item guidance from Martin R. West (associate professor of education, Harvard Graduate School of Education), e-mail message to authors, April 19, 2017. Some see these aspects of social-emotional learning as potential student and school improvement measures. CORE Districts, Improvement Measures [web page], accessed August 14, 2017, retrieved from <https://coredistricts.org/our-data-research/improvement-measures>

⁶¹ See note 18

⁶² **We advise strong caution** when interpreting results for charter school parents for this question, due to the relatively small sample size ($n \leq 80$).

⁶³ Jeff Spalding (2014, June 30), School Choice: It's Easy as 1, 2, 3, but Not for IDOE [blog post], retrieved from <https://www.edchoice.org/blog/school-choice-its-easy-as-1-2-3-but-not-for-idoe>

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Any errors in this publication are solely those of the authors.

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