

OCTOBER 2022

# Across the Aisle: What Voters and Parents Want in Education

The Hunt Institute's  
2022 Nationwide Voter & Parent  
Education Survey Results



# The Hunt Institute's 2022 Nationwide Voter & Parent Education Survey Results

## Research Methodology

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- Quantitative – Online Survey
- Lake Research Partners designed and administered this online survey conducted August 30 -September 12, 2022. The survey reached a total of 1,320 likely 2022 voters, which includes a base sample of 818 likely voters and oversamples of 101 African American likely voters, 100 Asian American Pacific Islander likely voters, 100 Latinx likely voters, 100 Native American likely voters, and 101 likely voters who are parents of school-aged children.
- Survey respondents were drawn from online panels and screened to be likely 2022 voters. The base sample of likely voters was weighted slightly by gender within region, age, party ID, gender within party ID, and age within race to reflect attributes of the actual population. Additionally, the African American and AAPI likely voter samples were weighted slightly by age, education, and party ID; the Latinx likely voter sample was weighted by region, education, and party ID; the Native American likely voter sample was weighted slightly by region, age, education, and party ID; and the parent likely voter sample was weighted slightly by gender, region, age, education, and party ID. All oversamples were then weighted down into the base to reflect their actual proportion of likely 2022 voters nationwide.
- The margin of error is +/- 2.7%. The margin of error for subgroups is higher.

# Executive Summary

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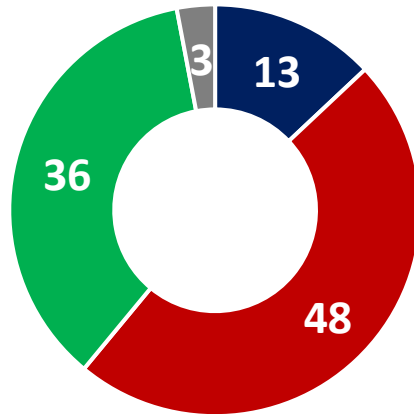
## Voters and parents alike have a clear vision of their priorities for education and schools, school funding, and parental involvement.

- **Pluralities of voters nationwide say their confidence in the public school system has decreased since the start of the pandemic (48%) and over the last year (47%).** Unlike voters overall, pluralities of parents say their confidence levels in the public school system has remained about the same since the start of the pandemic or over the last year.
- **Over half of voters nationwide say their state spends *too little* on public school funding (52%)** and a quarter say funding levels in their state is about the right amount (26%). **At the local level, a plurality of voters say public school funding in their community is *too little* (40%)** and 29% say it is about the right amount.
- A solid majority of voters and parents alike say parents should be included in their child's education and what they are taught. **This is a core value across partisan lines.**
- **Ensuring schools are free of guns and other physical violence or bullying, hiring quality teachers, teaching real-world skills, ensuring students are reading at grade level, and supports for children with disabilities are top tier issues** voters find both important to address and that they see as very big problems in public education today.
- **Teaching critical skills, increasing job skills and workforce training opportunities, and training educators and other school personnel to identify warning signs and intervention techniques related to mental health are strongly favored.** Proposals to implement literacy programs, strengthen school emergency response plans, increasing teacher salaries, and school funding transparency round out the top tier of education proposals strongly favored by voters nationwide.
- **Voters think individualized learning plans, additional counseling or social, emotional, and mental health support, and offering afterschool and/or summer learning opportunities would be very helpful for students moving forward.**
- Voters will reward elected officials who support increased funding for public schools, but they are tax sensitive.

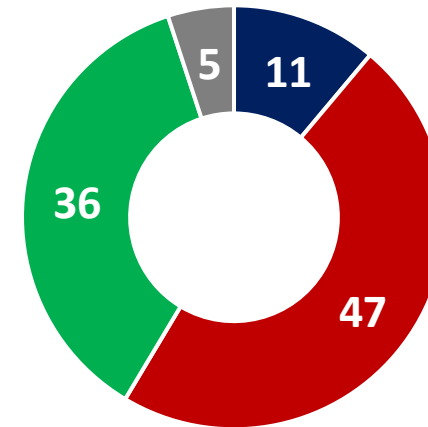
## Current State of Public Education

Pluralities of voters nationwide say their confidence in the public school system has decreased since the start of the pandemic and over the last year, with few saying their confidence has increased. About a third say their confidence has remained about the same. Unlike voters overall, pluralities of parents with school-age children say their confidence levels in the public school system has remained about the same since the start of the pandemic (43%) or over the last year (39%).

Has your confidence in the public school system increased, decreased, or stayed about the same **since the start of the pandemic**?\*



Has your confidence in the public school system increased, decreased, or stayed about the same **over the last year**?\*



\*split sampled

Increased

Decreased

Stayed about the same

Not sure

The following subgroups of are most likely to say their confidence has decreased in either question (combined results):

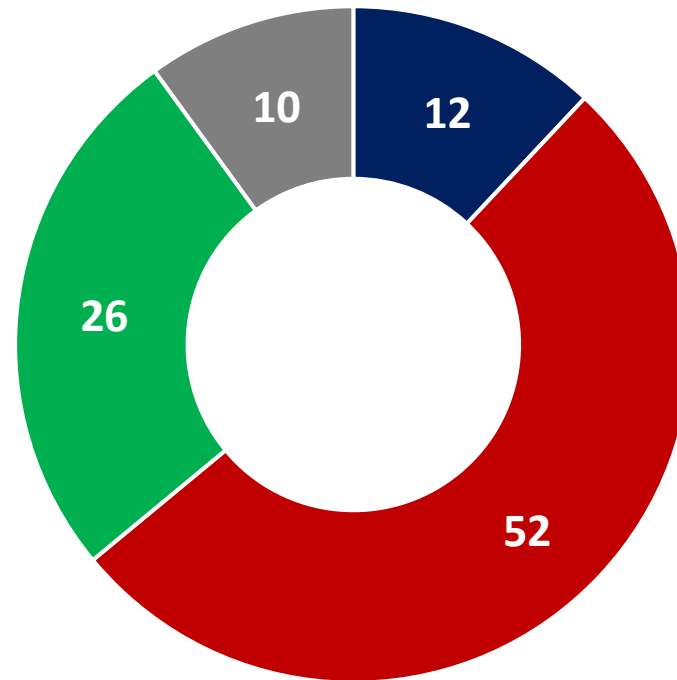
- Those who believe school district officials (87%), teachers /educators (83%), state education leaders (79%), school board members (75%), federal education officials (72%), and state elected officials (70%) have not handled COVID-19 well at all; Gen Z voters (73%); widowed voters (65%), Indigenous voters (62%) and self-employed voters (62%).



# Current State of Public Education

Over half of voters nationwide say their state spends too little on public school funding (52%) and a quarter say funding levels in their state is about the right amount (26%). Pluralities across most demographic subgroups say public school funding in their state is too little. The exception is Republicans, who split between saying it is too little (35%) and the right amount (36%).

Thinking of public school funding in your **state**, do you think your state spends [ROTATE] \_too much, \_too little, or about the right amount?\*



November 2021	
Too much	11%
Too little	45%
Right Amount	31%

Over time, the following subgroups of voters show the greatest increase thinking state public school funding is “too little”:

- Independents (+22 since 2021)
- K-5<sup>th</sup> grade parents (+20)
- Indigenous voters (+20)
- Voters in the West (+17)

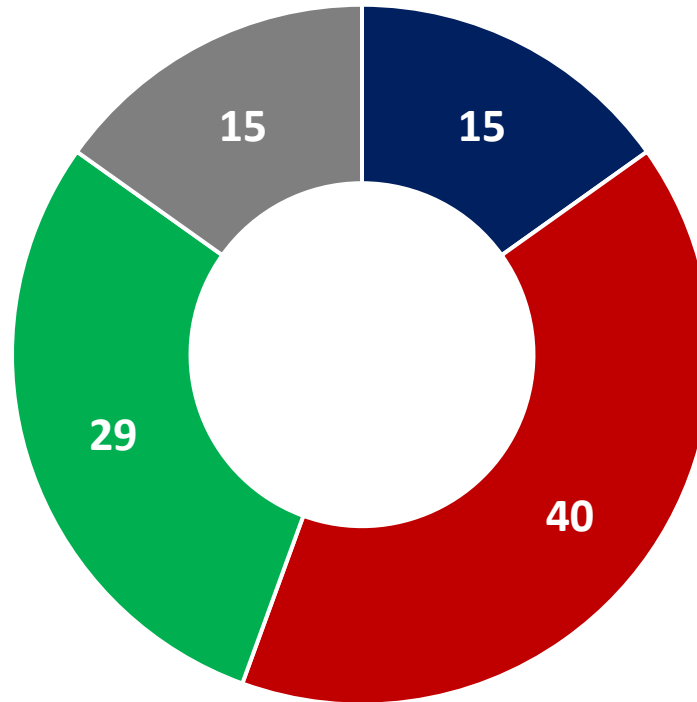
\*split sampled



# Current State of Public Education

At the local level, a plurality of voters say public school funding in their community is too little (40%) and 29% say it is about the right amount. At least half of younger voters, Democrats, and Black voters say public school funding in their community is too little.

Thinking of public school funding in your **community**, do you think your community spends [ROTATE] \_too much, \_too little, or about the right amount?\*



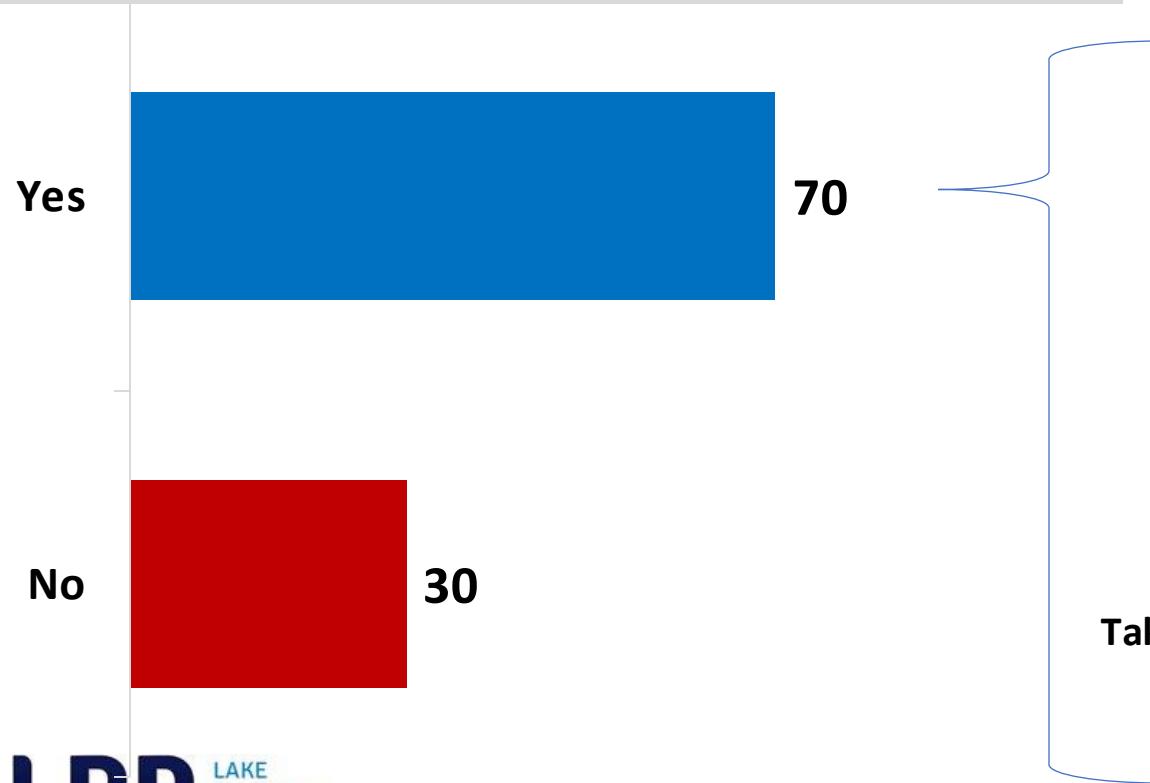
November 2021	
Too much	10%
Too little	40%
Right Amount	37%



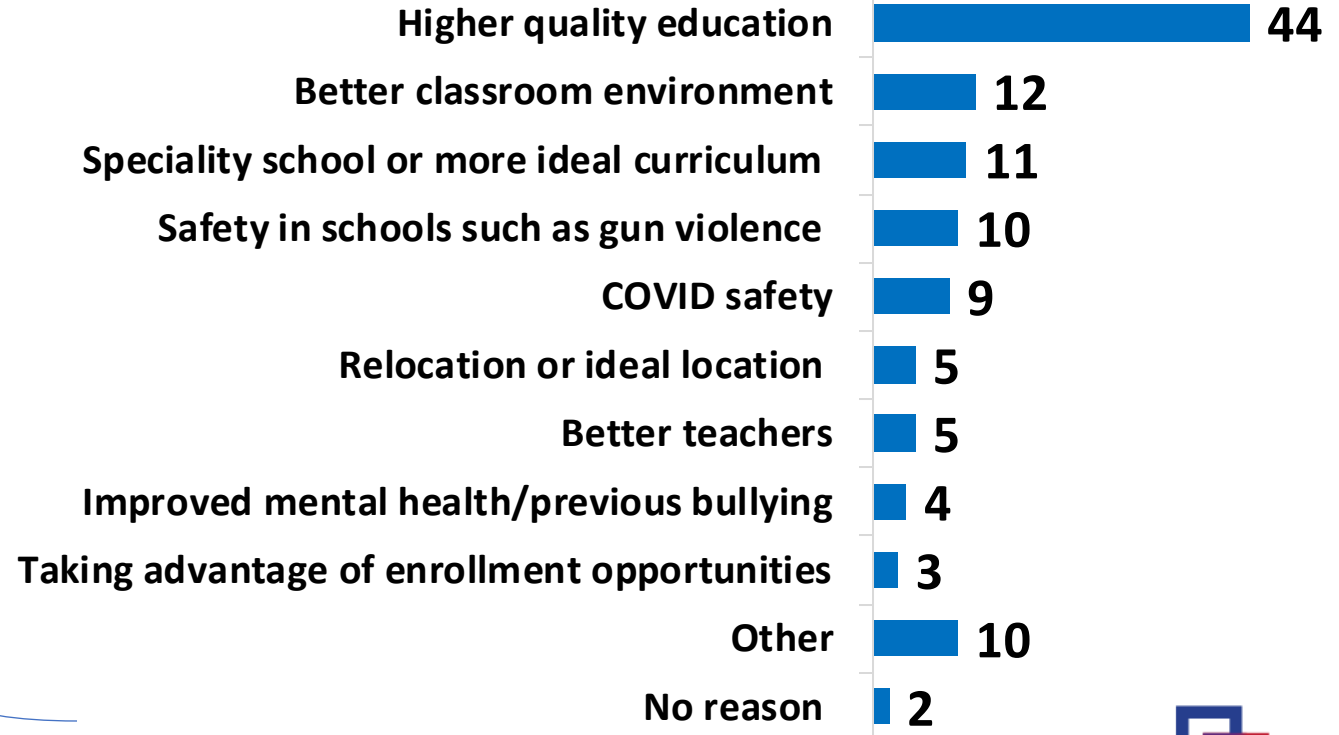
# Current State of Public Education

Seven in 10 parents whose child or children are not enrolled in a traditional public school this school year say they were previously enrolled in a traditional public school. They decided to enroll their child in a charter, magnet, private, parochial, or another type of school environment primarily so that their child could access higher quality education.

You have indicated that your child or children are NOT enrolled in a traditional public school this year (2022-2023). Were they previously enrolled in a traditional public school? (N=125 unweighted)



In a few words, please explain why you and your family decided to enroll your child in a charter, magnet, private, parochial/religious, or another type of school environment. [OPEN END] (N=84 unweighted)



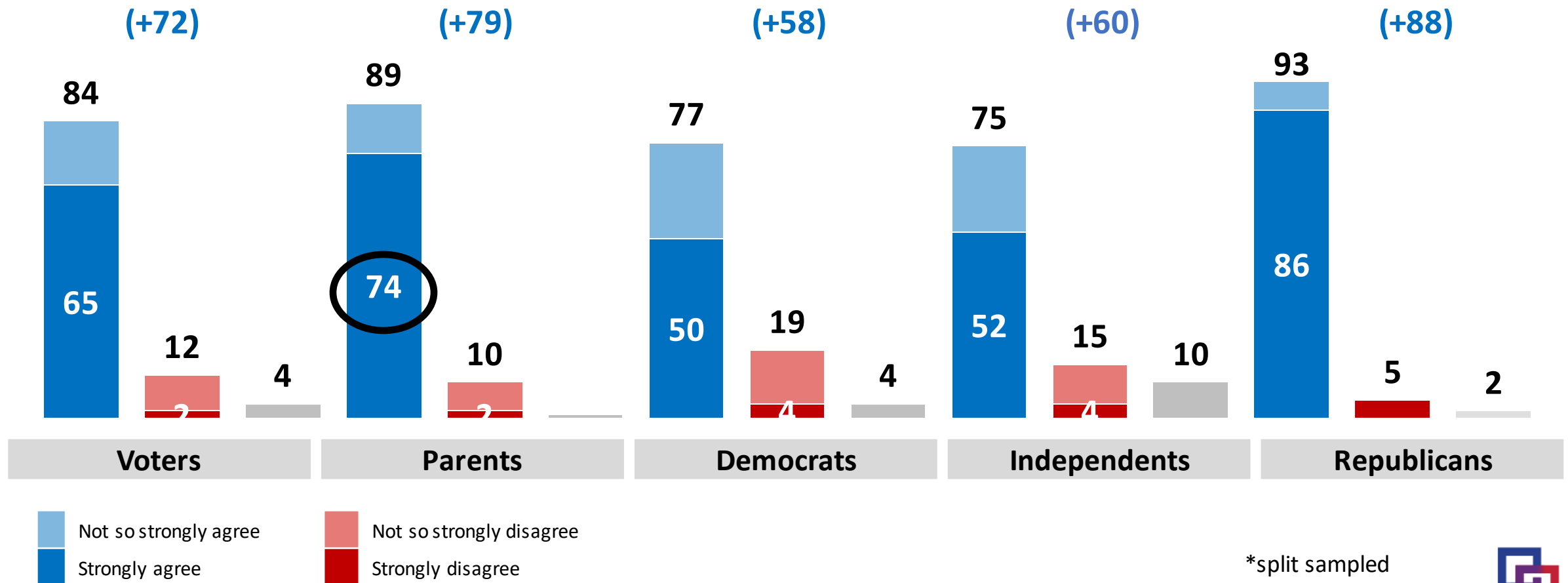
78% of parents who say their child had previously changed schools say their child attend private school now.



# Current State of Public Education

A strong majority of voters say parents should be included in their child's education and what they are taught and parents agree at even higher numbers. This is a core value across partisan lines.

Do you agree or disagree that parents should be included in their child's education and what they are taught?\*



\*split sampled

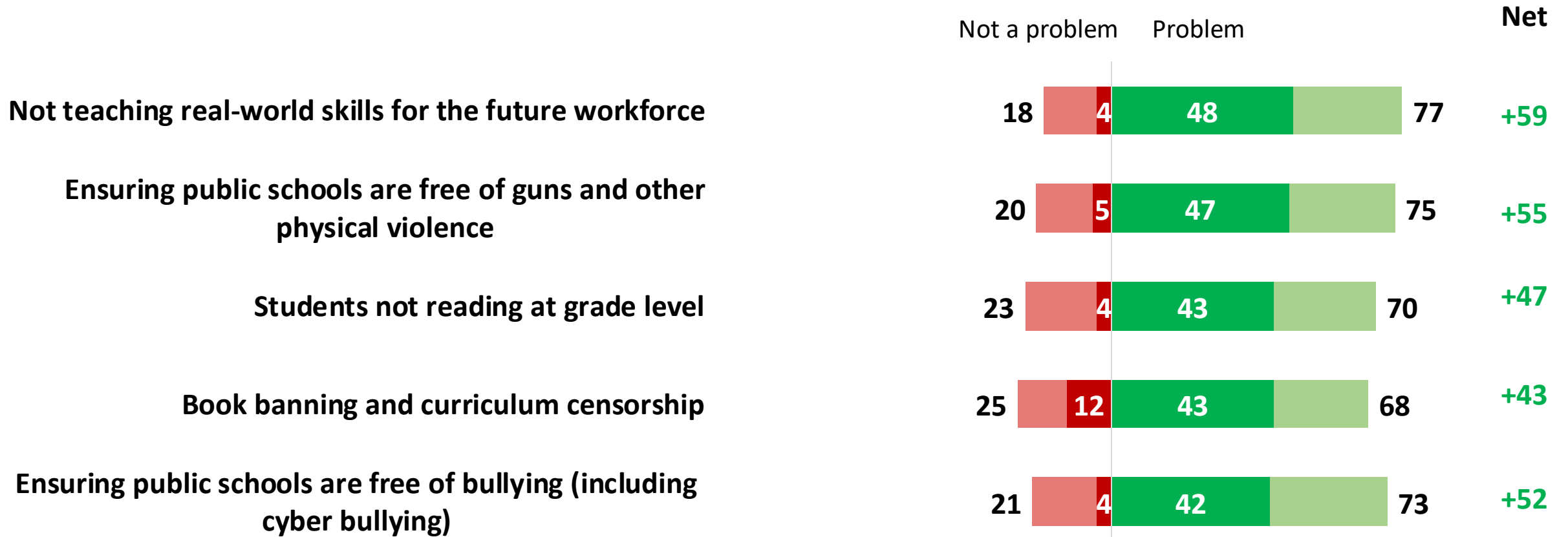




# Current State of Public Education

Voters are most likely to say that not teaching real-world skills for the future workforce and ensuring public schools are free of guns and other physical violence are very big problems in public education today. Students not reading at grade level, book banning and curriculum censorship, and ensuring public schools are free of bullying round out the top tier of problems.

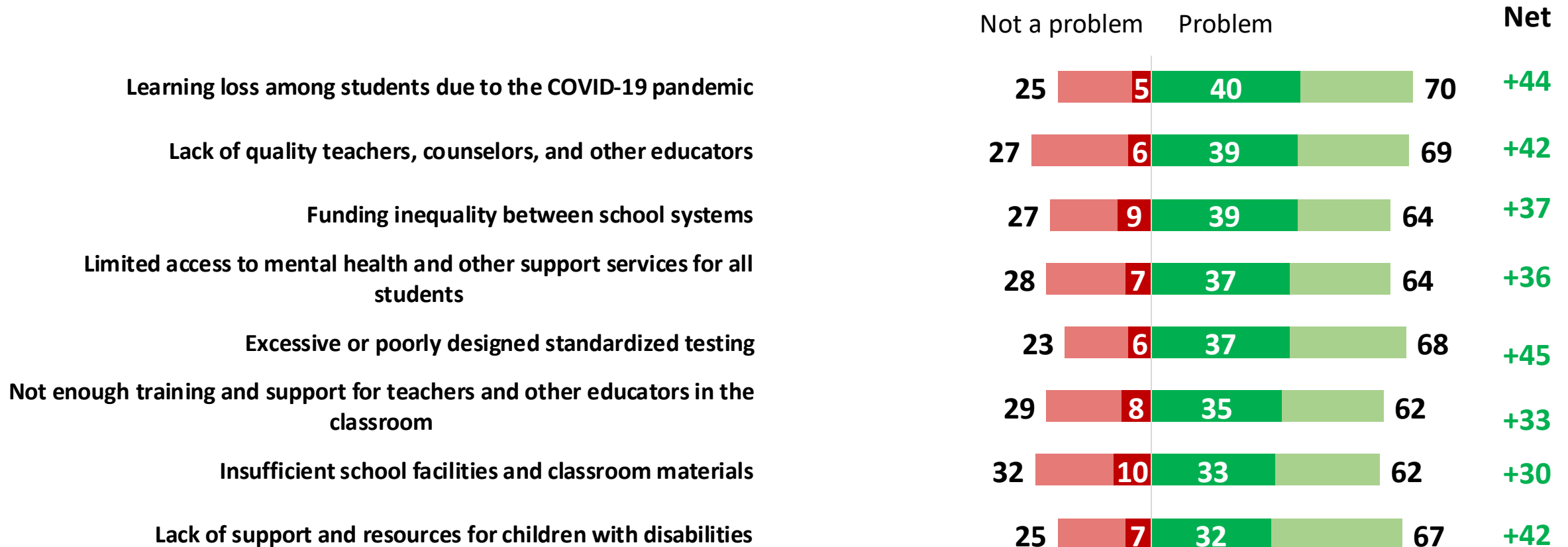
Here is a list of different issues related to public education. For each one please indicate how big of a problem you think it is.\*  
**[TOP TIER]**



# Current State of Public Education

In a second tier with lower intensity, voters place learning loss, lack of quality teachers, funding inequality between school systems, limited access to mental health, not enough training and support for teachers, insufficient school facilities and classroom materials, and lack of support and resources for children with disabilities.

Here is a list of different issues related to public education. For each one please indicate how big of a problem you think it is.\*  
[SECOND TIER]



# Current State of Public Education

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**Few believe that public officials have handled the impacts of the pandemic well. Voters and parents want to see states and districts utilize federal relief funds for lasting changes in education, and a large majority point to**

- 82% of democrats, 72% of independents, and 61% of republicans agree that COVID-19 widened the learning gap between students from low-income and high-income families.
- Only a quarter of parents believe school district officials (26%), state education leaders (26%), and school board members (24%) handled the impacts of COVID-19 very well.
- A majority of voters (58%) and parents (59%) strongly agree that states and school districts should be taking advantage of the large, once in a generation amount of federal relief dollars to support schools and students and implement positive, long-term changes to our education system.
- 77% of both voters and parents strongly agree that investing in our children is not a political choice, but is rather the moral, right and smart choice for our children.

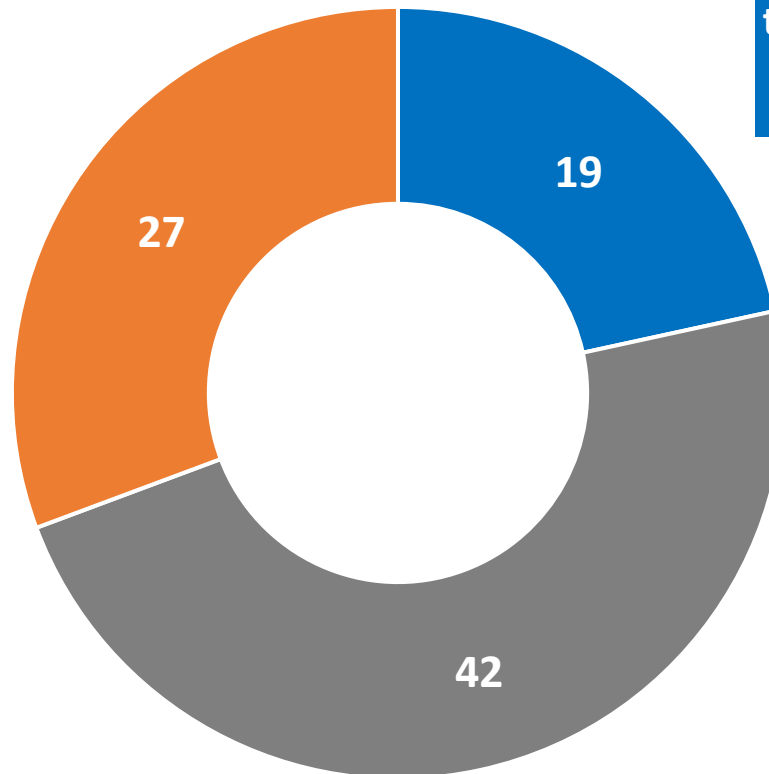
# Education Priorities & Proposals

A plurality of voters want states and school districts to use their one-time COVID relief funds to address both immediate challenges and make longer term investments. Older voters, Republicans, voters in the South Atlantic, and voters in rural areas tend to align with addressing immediate challenges. Younger voters, parents of children under 12, and subgroups of voters in the Northeast and West tend to align with longer term investments.

Which of the following statements comes closer to your own view?

States and school districts should use their one-time COVID relief funds to address immediate challenges, like learning loss

States and school districts should make longer term investments with their one-time COVID relief funds



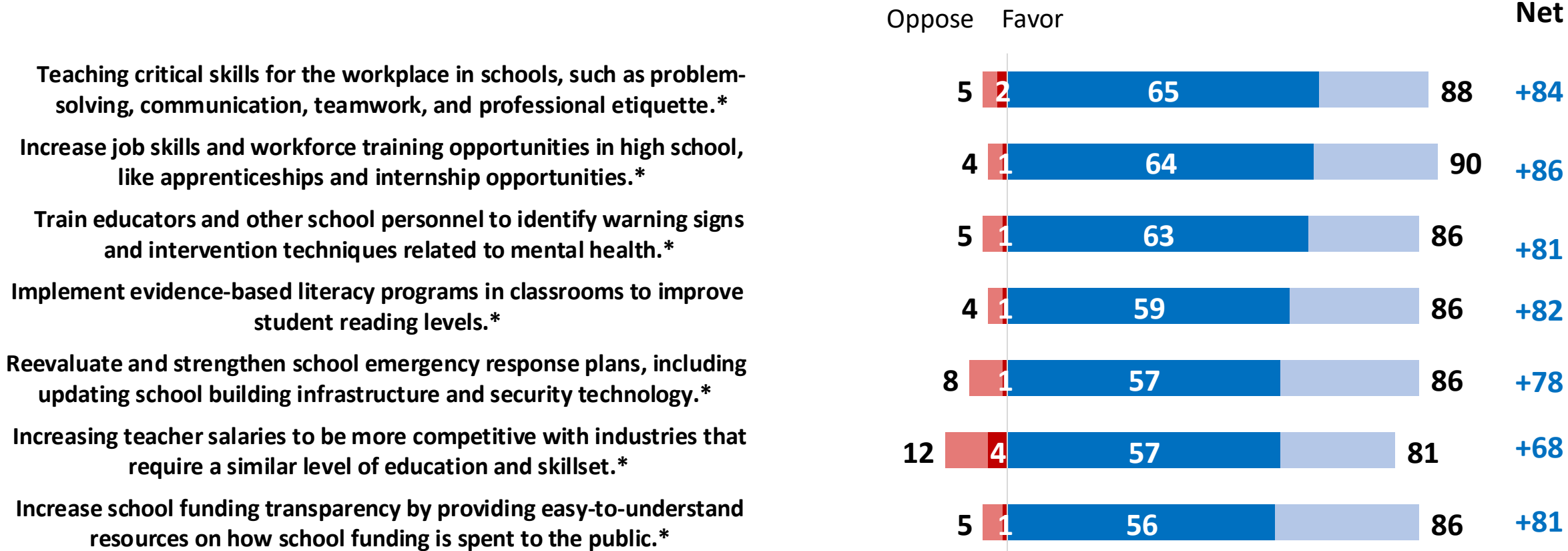
Both

Neither – 3%  
Not sure – 9%



Reactions to policy proposals align with what voters want education leaders to address and a number of them are very strong. Teaching critical skills, increasing job skills and workforce training opportunities, plus training educators and other school personnel to identify warning signs and intervention techniques related to mental health, are strongly favored proposals. Proposals to implement literacy programs, strengthen school emergency response plans, increase teacher salaries, and school funding transparency round out the top tier of proposals.

Now you will see a list of different proposals people say could improve public schools if our public officials and education leaders prioritized them. For each, indicate whether you would favor or oppose the proposal. [FIRST TIER]



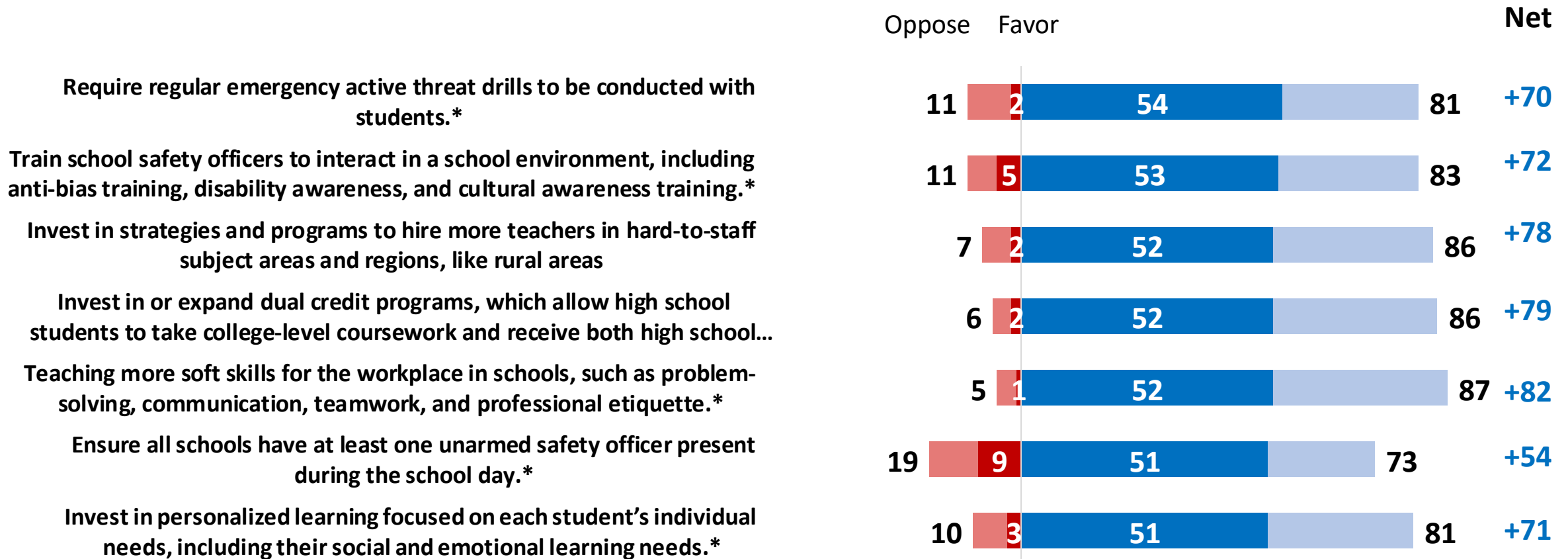
Favor – not so strongly  
 Favor – strongly  
 Oppose – not so strongly  
 Oppose – strongly

\*split sampled



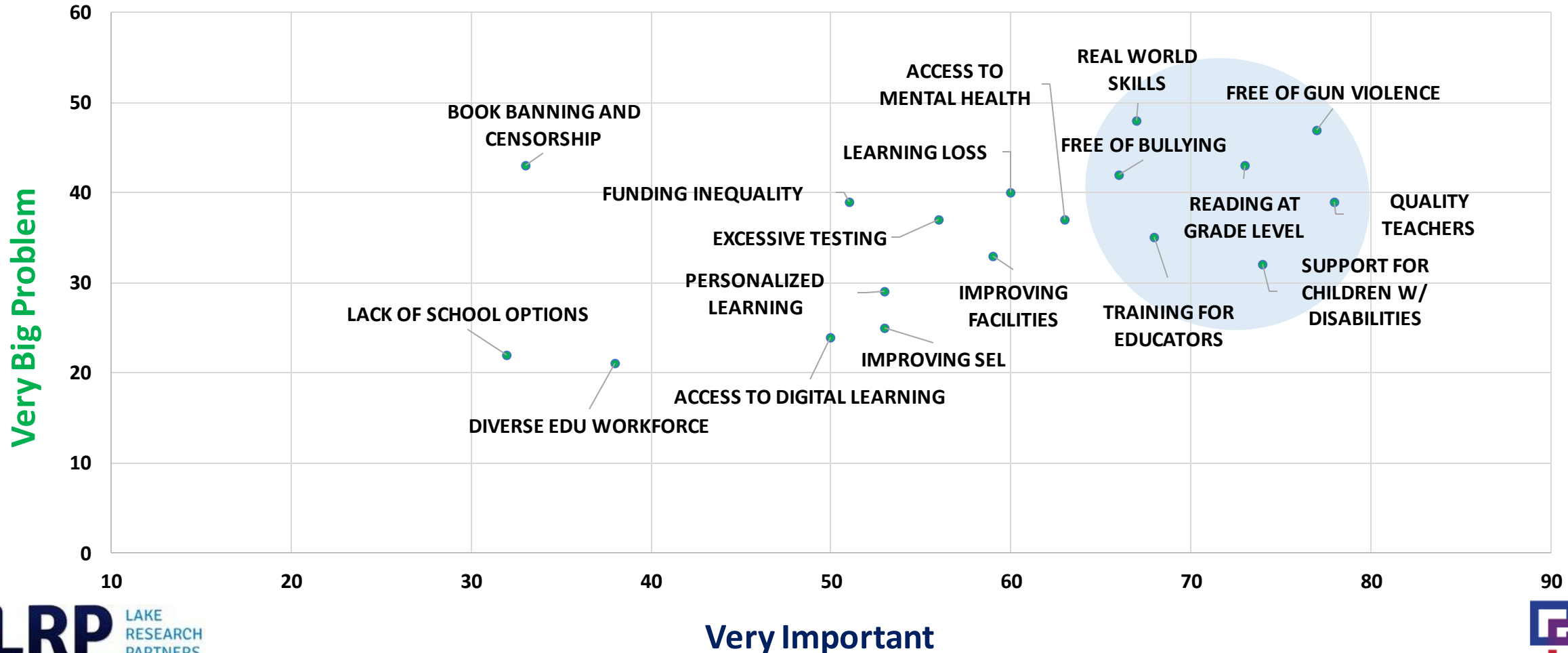
At least half of voters strongly favor proposals about requiring regular emergency active threat drills, training school safety officers, investing in strategies to hire more teachers in hard to staff subjects and in dual credit programs, teaching more soft skills for the workplace in schools, ensuring all schools have at least one unarmed safety officer, and investing in personalized learning.

Now you will see a list of different proposals people say could improve public schools if our public officials and education leaders prioritized them. For each, indicate whether you would favor or oppose the proposal. [SECOND TIER]



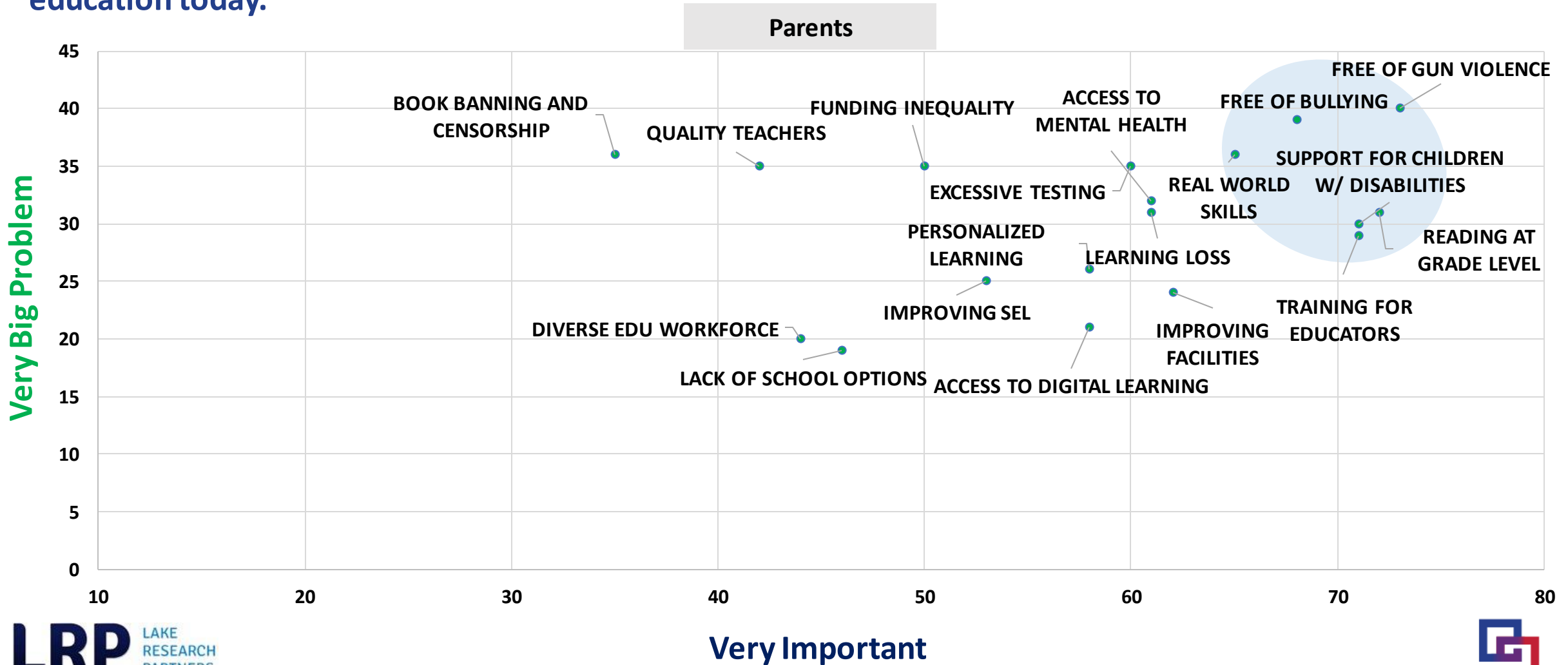
# Education Priorities & Proposals

Ensuring schools are free of guns and other physical violence or bullying, hiring quality teachers, teaching real-world skills, ensuring students are reading at grade level, and supports for children with disabilities are top tier issues voters find both important to address and that they see as very big problems in public education today (highlighted in blue below).



# Education Priorities & Proposals

Parents are even more likely than voters overall to say ensuring schools are free of guns and other physical violence or bullying, teaching real-world skills, ensuring students are reading at grade level, and supports for children with disabilities are top tier issues both important to address and very big problems in public education today.





## Education Priorities & Proposals

**Reactions to policy proposals align with what voters want education leaders to address – job skills, mental health, emergency plans, teacher pay, and transparency. None of the tested proposals receive majority-opposition.**

- Teaching critical skills, increasing job skills and workforce training opportunities, and training educators and other school personnel to identify warning signs and intervention techniques related to mental health are strongly favored proposals. Proposals to implement literacy programs, strengthen school emergency response plans, increasing teacher salaries, and school funding transparency round out the top tier of proposals.
  - *Teaching critical skills for the workplace in schools, such as problem-solving, communication, teamwork, and professional etiquette.\** - 65% strongly favor (88% favor)
  - *Increase job skills and workforce training opportunities in high school, like apprenticeships and internship opportunities.\** - 64% strongly favor (90% favor)
  - *Train educators and other school personnel to identify warning signs and intervention techniques related to mental health.\** - 63% strongly favor (86% favor), 64% of parents strongly favor
  - *Implement evidence-based literacy programs in classrooms to improve student reading levels.\** - 59% strongly favor (86% favor)
  - *Reevaluate and strengthen school emergency response plans, including updating school building infrastructure and security technology.\** - 57% strongly favor (86% favor)
  - *Increasing teacher salaries to be more competitive with industries that require a similar level of education and skillset.\** - 57% strongly favor (81% favor)
  - *Increase school funding transparency by providing easy-to-understand resources on how school funding is spent to the public.\** - 56% strongly favor (86% favor)



### **Voters are concerned about and want to improve school safety. Other findings indicate that book banning is unpopular and personalized learning is a priority among voters and parents.**

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- Three in four voters (75%) believe that guns and other physical violence in schools is a problem. A similar number (73%) believe bullying, including cyber bullying, in schools is a problem. Black voters in particular are more likely to believe these are a problem.
  - More than half (55%) of voters indicated they were likely to support public officials who acknowledged the need to address gun violence and other physical violence in schools, and that our schools needed to be gun-free spaces.
- Banning books and censoring curriculum is largely unpopular, with 7 in 10 voters (68%) and 6 in 10 parents (60%) believing it is a problem.
- 93% of parents believe it is important for public officials and education leaders to promote personalized learning focused on individual needs, and 58% of parents believe it is very important. Voters as a whole agree across party lines, with 90% of Democrats, 90% of Independents, and 79% of Republicans believing that personalized learning is important for public officials and leaders to support.
- Over 6 in 10 voters (61%) and parents (62%) strongly agree that to really succeed, schools need to go beyond just teaching the basics to students.

## Including reference to social and emotional learning increased strong favorability across most subgroups.

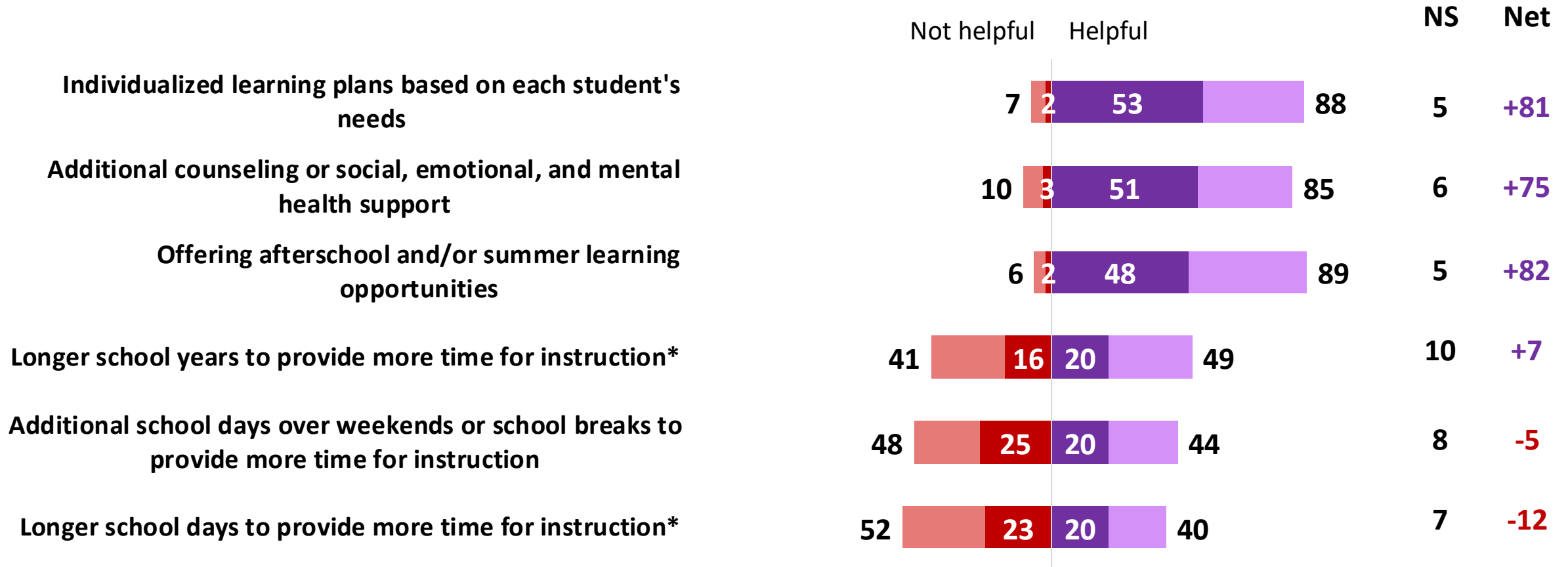
Now you will see a list of different proposals people say could improve public schools if our public officials and education leaders prioritized them. For each, indicate whether you would favor or oppose the proposal.

% Strongly Favor	All Voters	Parent	Non-Parent	White	Black	Latinx	AAPI	Indig.	Dem	Ind	Rep
Invest in personalized learning focused on each student's individual needs, <u>including their social and emotional learning needs.</u> *	51	56	49	48	60	64	48	54	61	49	40
Invest in personalized learning focused on each student's individual learning needs.*	43	43	42	40	67	43	40	52	48	45	36



Voters think individualized learning plans, additional counseling or social, emotional, and mental health support, and offering afterschool and/or summer learning opportunities would be very helpful for students moving forward. Though a plurality thinks longer school years would be helpful, intensity is on the side of those who say this wouldn't be helpful at all. Voters are least likely to think additional school days would be helpful.

How helpful do you think each of the following would be in helping students moving forward?



# Education Priorities & Proposals

Across race, region, political party, and geographic area, all subgroups saw a majority of voters believing learning loss is very important for public officials and education leaders to address. Black and Latinx voters in particular respond very strongly to addressing learning loss, improving school facilities, and personalized learning.

Here is a list of different issues related to public education. For each one please indicate how personally important it is that public officials and education leaders address the issue.\*

% Very Important	Total	Age		Race					Region				PID			Area		
		<50	50+	W	B	L	AAPI	NA	NE	MW	S	W	D	I	R	Urban	Subur.	Rural
Access to mental health services	63	67	61	61	69	75	69	63	72	61	60	64	73	77	50	65	62	64
Addressing learning loss	60	55	64	56	77	75	53	69	63	55	58	64	62	61	58	58	63	58
Improving school facilities	59	63	56	56	72	75	66	65	63	56	54	66	66	64	50	60	57	61
Addressing excessive standardized testing	56	56	56	53	71	61	63	67	63	60	52	54	64	67	47	57	57	54
Personalized learning	53	54	53	50	70	70	37	65	55	59	51	49	54	60	52	48	52	61
Improving SEL	53	58	49	49	74	63	51	57	60	55	46	55	60	57	43	51	54	52
Funding inequality	51	54	49	48	66	60	49	53	62	54	45	49	65	54	34	56	45	52
Investing in digital learning resources	50	53	48	47	67	60	58	50	57	50	50	46	60	43	41	53	49	49

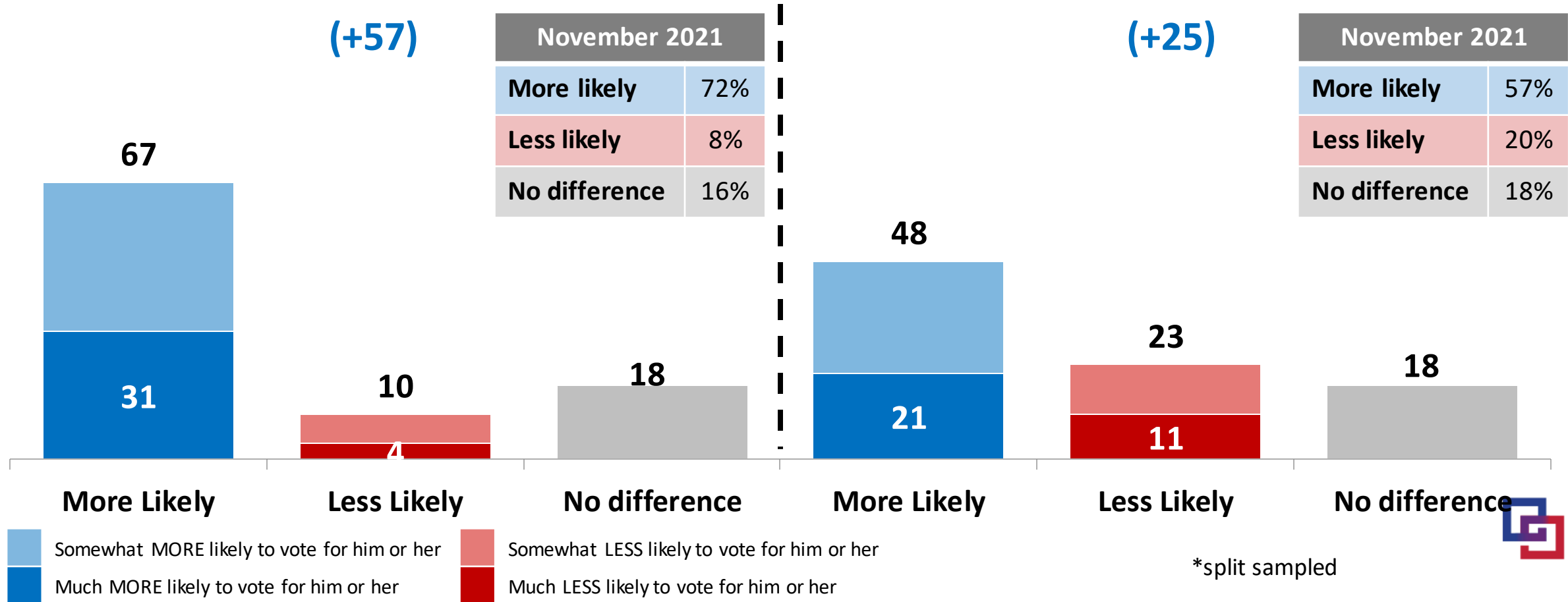


# Education Priorities & Proposals

Voters will reward elected officials who support increased funding for public schools, but they are tax sensitive. While pluralities will still support an elected official who supports increased funding for public schools even if it increase their taxes, nearly a quarter say they are less likely to do so. Majorities across demographic subgroups, including half of Republicans, would be more likely to support an elected official who supported increased funding for public schools.

If an elected official supported increased funding for public schools, would that make you more or less likely to vote for him or her or would it not make a difference?\*

If an elected official supported increased funding for public schools, **even if it increases your taxes**, would that make you more or less likely to vote for him or her or would it not make a difference?\*

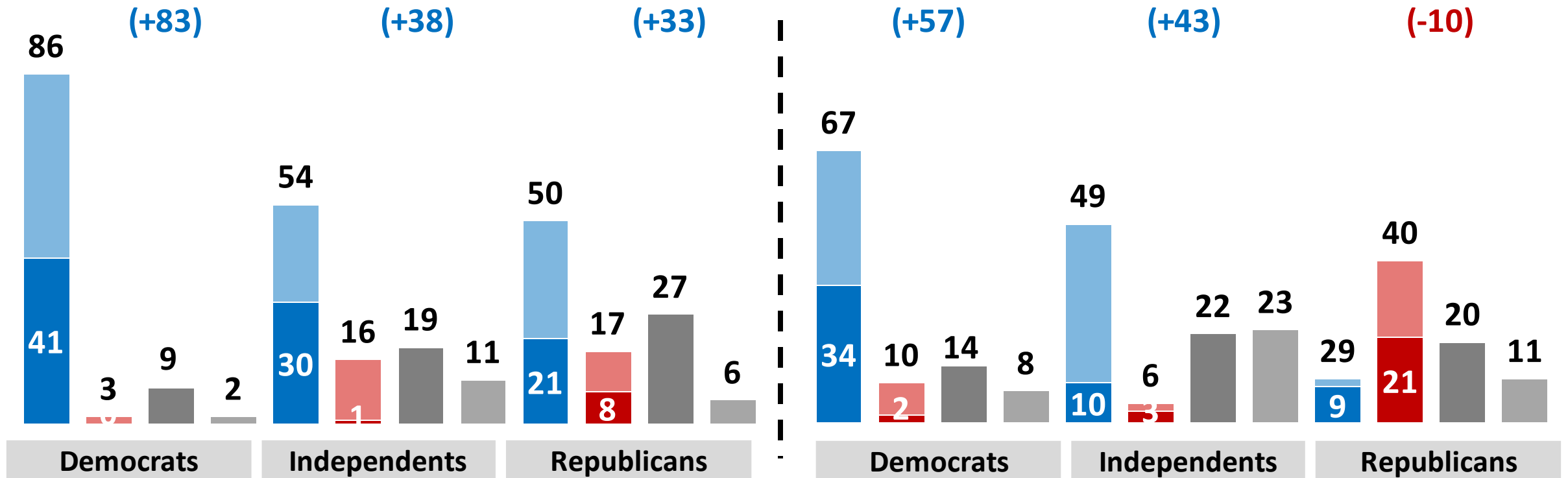


# Education Priorities & Proposals

Across partisan lines, Democrats are much more likely to vote for an elected official if they support increased funding for public schools, regardless of whether the prospect of increased taxes is included. However, even Democrats are tax sensitive. Majorities of Independents and Republicans are also more likely to vote for a candidate who supports increased funding for public schools, but when increased taxes is referenced Republicans turn-net unlikely to vote for this candidate.

If an elected official supported increased funding for public schools, would that make you more or less likely to vote for him or her or would it not make a difference?\*

If an elected official supported increased funding for public schools, **even if it increases your taxes**, would that make you more or less likely to vote for him or her or would it not make a difference?\*



■ Somewhat MORE likely to vote for him or her  
■ Much MORE likely to vote for him or her  
■ Somewhat LESS likely to vote for him or her  
■ Much LESS likely to vote for him or her  
■ Not sure  
■ No difference

\*split sampled



**For more information about our stakeholder engagement initiative and resources from The Hunt Institute, follow our webpage and social media:**

**<https://hunt-institute.org/covid-19-resources/the-covid-constituency/>**

