

Overview

A **small loss in confidence in the public schools**, alongside strong support for a slate of education priorities, are highlights gleaned from the 57th annual PDK Poll. Strong support for **career and technical education programs, addressing teacher shortages, improving teacher pay, providing security to keep students and teachers safe, and inclusion initiatives** lead as priorities for school leaders and policy makers.

Conducted annually since 1969, the *PDK Poll on Public Attitudes Toward Public Education* (formerly the Gallup/PDK Poll) delves into a range of education-related topics. These are a few highlights from this year's poll:

- **Parents are interested in access to public education funding for the purposes of sending their children to private or religious schools.** 59% of parents in the 2025 PDK Poll would send their child to a non-public school if at least partial funding was provided. This is up from 56% in support of using public funding to open families up to private options in 2020.
- **The public interest in charter and lab schools remains steady from recent past polls,** with 46% supporting funding these types of schools. Support for funding charter schools was 68% in the 2013 PDK Poll. Interestingly, support for charters across political ideologies was similar, but support from Black families was strongest.
- **Nearly two-thirds of Americans agree that teacher salaries are inadequate.** 64% believe that teacher pay is too low—an urgent signal for states and districts facing teacher shortages and morale concerns. This belief was championed by Democrats (73% believing pay is too low) and less by Republicans (39% believing pay is too low).
- **A majority of U.S. adults support limiting cell phone use during the school day.** 46% percent prefer phones be allowed only during lunch and breaks, while 40% support a full-day ban. Only 11% favor unrestricted use—highlighting strong public support for setting boundaries on technology in the classroom.

- **Despite recent political proposals, 66% of U.S. adults oppose eliminating the federal education department.** Most Americans (65%) believe the department's elimination would have a negative impact on public education.

The survey was produced by [The Wason Center for Civic Leadership at Christopher Newport University](#) for PDK International, with data collected **June 21-30, 2025**, in English, among a representative, random national sample of 1,005 adults.

Analysis

Eroding Confidence in Public Schools?

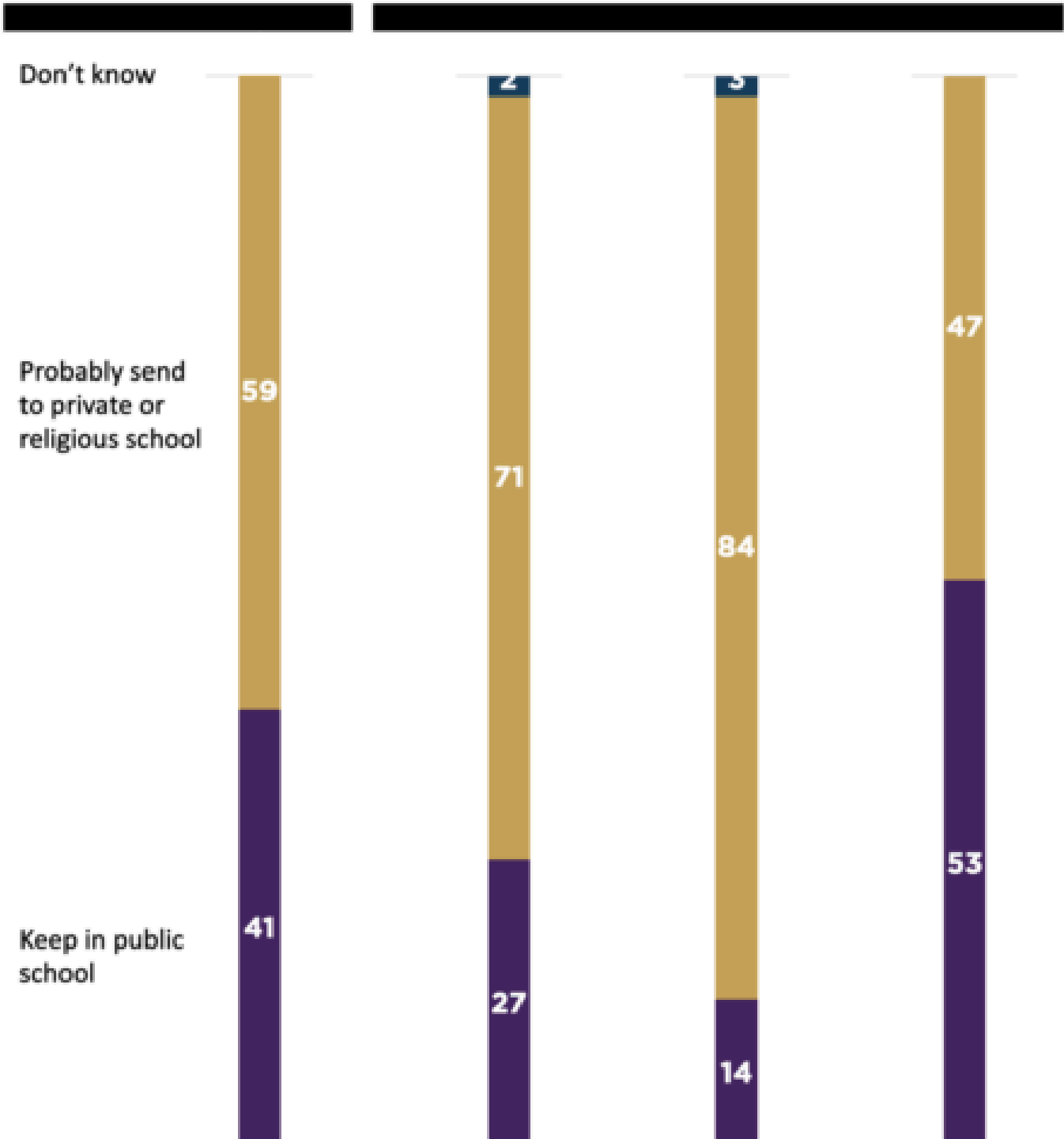
Between our 1998 and 2005 polls, we asked the American public about their **support for using public funds to provide access to private schools for children**. Our results showed a range of support, between 33-44%. We asked the question again in 2007, including religious schools, where 50% of parents supported using public funding. In 2020, 56% of parents (and 53% of the general public) supported the use of public funds for private schools and 50% of parents supported the use of public funds for religious schools.

In this year's poll, **59% of parents supported using public funding so that their child could attend a private or religious school**. Among Republicans, 71% supported the use of public funding to send their child to a non-public school versus 47% of support from Democrats. Independents led in support of using public funding for non-public schools, at 84%.

For over twenty years, we have asked respondents to **grade their community's schools and the nation's public schools with a letter grade (A-D, Failing)**. Among the poll's results from over twenty years of data, the 57th annual poll showed **decreased support for the nation's schools. 43% of respondents gave their own community's schools a letter grade of A or B**, down from 53% in 2013. Only 13% of respondents gave the nation's public schools an A or B rating, down from 26% in 2004.

Public vs. Private & Religious

If you were offered public funds to cover at least a portion of the cost to send your child to a private or religious school instead, do you think you probably would keep them in public school, or would you probably send them to a private school or to a religious school?



Percentage of Americans Giving Schools an A or a B



Looking back to 2004, Americans graded their local schools highest in 2013; Americans rated the public schools highest nationally in 2004, and at 24% in 2016-2017. The fewest number of Americans giving the schools an A/B grade were in 2025, respectively for both local and national schools.

Source: 2004-2025 PDK Polls

PDKPoll

Support for charter schools and lab schools was not as high as in past PDK Polls. This year, **46% of respondents supported funding charters or lab schools**, which typically receive public funding but may have different oversight. Support for charter or lab schools was highest among Democrats (51%), and nearly the same for independents and Republicans (44% and 45%, respectively). [A 2023 Stanford University study highlighted increased performance of charter schools over public schools](#), after past reports of lackluster performance.

The public's approval of charter schools was higher in previous PDK polls. In 2013, for example, support for charters was at 68%. One reason may be that [other programs that give parents money to attend private or religious schools provide a different kind of alternative](#).

Eliminating the Department of Education

President Trump campaigned on eliminating the U.S. Department of Education, which among other things, is tasked with the dispersion of federal funds to states and districts, in addition to providing support for appeals of civil rights violations, of import to some families with students receiving special education services. The Trump administration has discussed giving more supervision of schools to state departments of education as part of the federal closure.

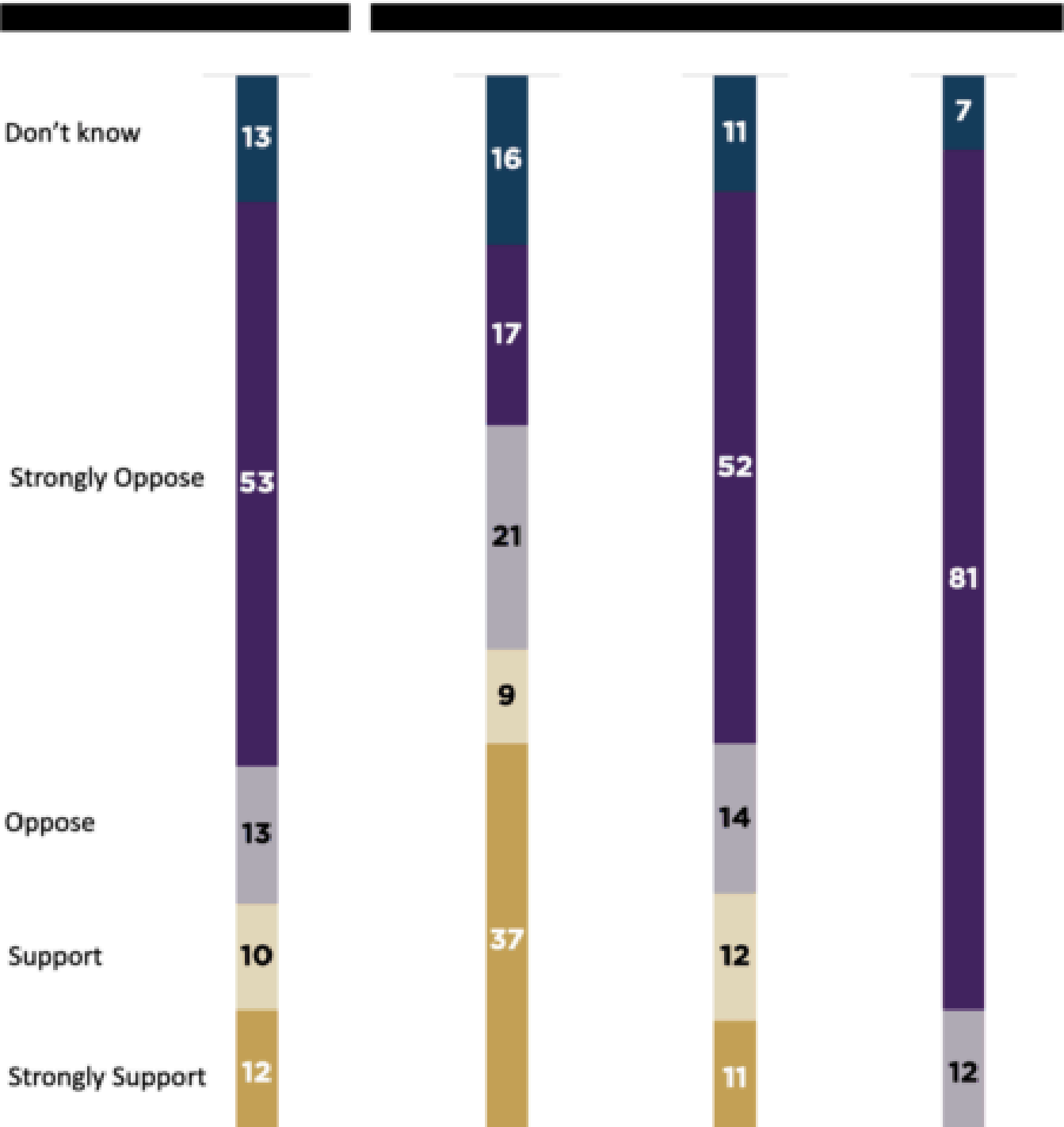
Only **12% of respondents strongly support the elimination of the U.S. Department of Education**, with **66% opposing or strongly opposing closure**. Interestingly, 34% of male respondents supported the agency's elimination, versus 9% of female respondents. Attitudes different along political lines, with 46% of Republicans strongly supporting or supporting elimination of the department, versus 23% of independents, and 0% of Democrats.

Among our respondents, **19% believed eliminating the department would have a positive impact** on public education, with **65% believing the opposite**. 6% of respondents thought that eliminating the department would have no impact.



Elimination of Dept. of Ed.

Do you support President Trump’s plan to
eliminate the U.S. Department of Education?



Impact on Elimination of Dept. of Ed.

If the U.S. Department of Education were to be eliminated, do you think this would have a positive impact on public schools, a negative impact, or no impact?



National Total

Republicans

Independents

Democrats

Source: 2025 PDK Poll. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

PDK Poll

Teacher Salaries

School districts depend upon a combination of state, local, and federal funds to support their budgets. Personnel salaries are among the largest component of a school district's budget. The [National Education Association's report on educator pay](#) (2025) reports a national average starting salary for new teachers of \$46,526 and an average national teacher salary of \$72,030. They report that despite record-level increases in some states, that "teacher pay has failed to keep up with inflation over the past decade." The effect on teacher salaries is that teachers are making "5% less than they did ten years ago."

The 2018 PDK Poll revealed that 66% of the American public thought that teacher salaries were too low. In this year's poll, that number shrunk to 64%, with 20% feeling that teacher salaries were "just about right" and only 1% believing that salaries are too high.

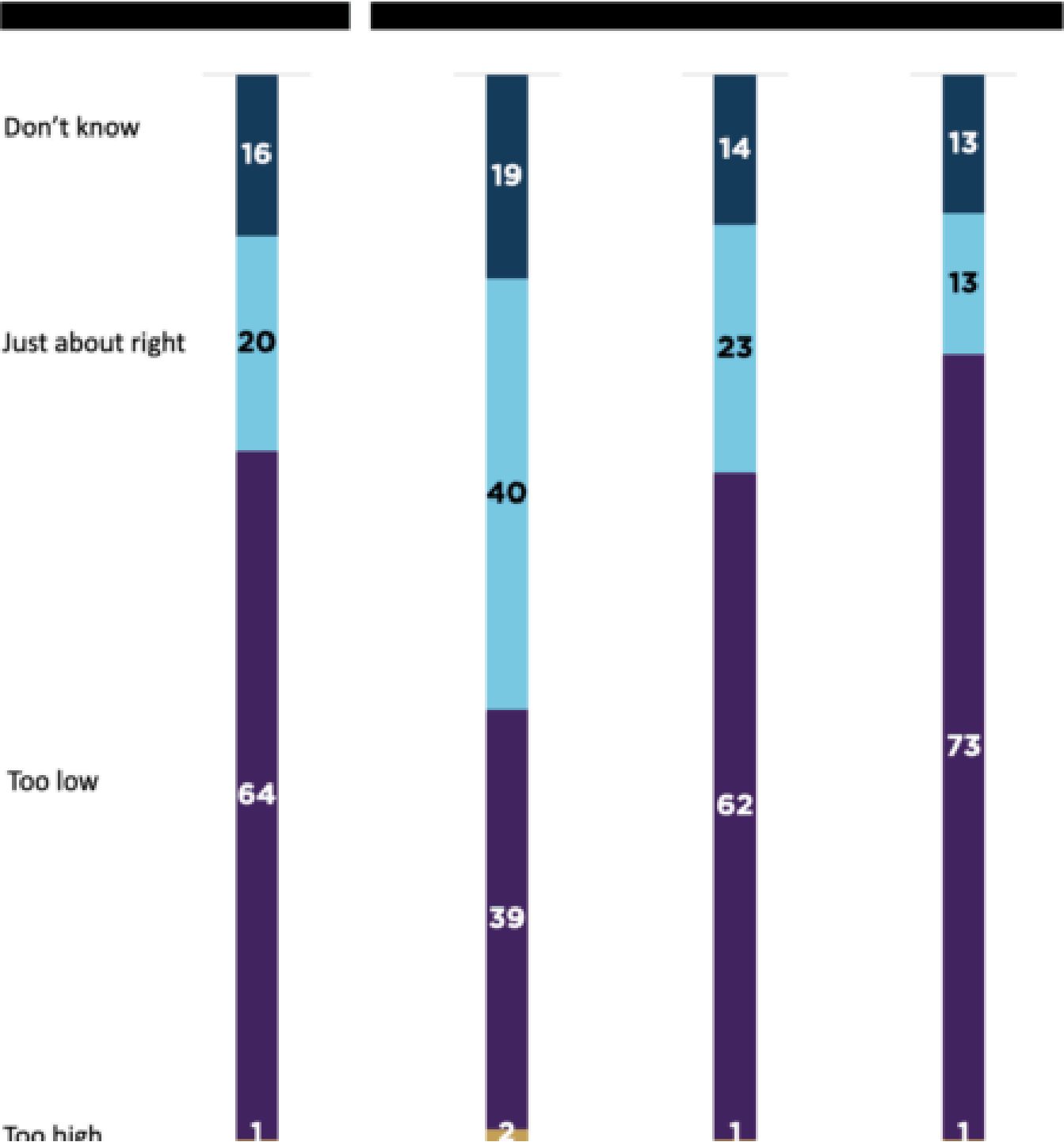
Using 2024 data, [World Population Review](#) reports the average teacher starting salary by state ranges between \$58,409 (California) and \$42,492 (Mississippi). The differences in pay between states has a relationship to different regional costs of living, but a [2018 report suggests there are other factors to explain the differences](#). For comparison, the [World Population Review also publishes a livable wage chart](#) by state, highlighting the minimum salary for a single adult with no children. The livable wage is defined as "the income required to cover basic family needs without reliance on outside assistance."

It is important to note that our question asked respondents to consider teacher pay as it relates *within their community*, and that the regional breakdown of respondents was collected by region and not by state: 24% reported living in the West, 39% in the South, 17% in the Northeast, and 20% in the Midwest.

Across political ideologies, Democrats led in the belief that teacher salaries are too low (73%) versus 62% for independents and 39% for Republicans. 92% of our respondents believed addressing teacher pay is an important issue.

Teacher Salaries

Do you think the salaries for teachers in your community are too high, too low, or just about right?



National Total

Republicans

Independents

Democrats

Source: 2025 PDK Poll. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

PDK Poll



Cell Phone Policies and AI in the Schools

[According to a May 2025 report](#), twenty-one states have instituted statewide policies or policy mandates around cell phone access in public schools. In this year's poll, we wanted to see how the American public felt about access to cell phones in schools.

A **complete ban** on cellphone use throughout the school was supported by **40% of respondents**; **46% supported access to cellphones outside of classroom activities such as during lunch or in-between classes**. 11% of respondents do not support a cellphone ban, especially if use of the device helps students academically. Nevertheless, **86% of Americans support some kind of cellphone restriction for students during the school day**.

In the 2024 PDK Poll, we asked all respondents about their support for the use of artificial intelligence in education. **This year's support for AI waned**, most significantly for the purpose of assisting teachers in the creation of lesson plans.

Providing access to student data to AI software, including student grades, assessment data, or other personal information **was not supported by 68% of parent respondents**.

		👍	Strongly Support	Support	Oppose	Strongly Oppose	👎
To prepare lesson plans for teachers to review and use	2025	49%	12%	37%	29%	14%	43%
	2024	62	12	50	24	12	36
To tutor students via interactive computer applications	2025	60	17	43	11	18	29
	2024	65	13	52	22	11	33
To have student practice taking standardized tests	2025	54	17	37	20	20	40
	2024	64	12	52	24	11	35
For students to use in preparing their homework	2025	38	8	30	23	34	57
	2024	43	9	34	37	18	55

Source: 2025 PDK Poll; Skipped responses not tallied above



What uses of AI do you support in public education? Source: 2024-2025 PDK Polls. Skipped/not-answered responses are not tallied. Source: 2025 PDK Poll.



Do parents have a voice?

When we asked those who identified as parents if they are satisfied with the amount of say they have in their child’s education, **70% reported being satisfied** (30% very satisfied and 40% somewhat satisfied). However, disparities in satisfaction emerge along political lines and whether or not their children attend a private or public school. 78% of parents represented in this year’s survey had children in public schools, versus 5% in private, and 1% reported their children being homeschooled.

What is important to the American public in 2025?

In this year's poll, many of the potential education priorities listed garnered strong support. Among the highest priorities are initiatives to make students feel like they belong as part of the school community, career and technical education programs, addressing teacher shortages, and improving teacher pay. The most support was given to **providing security measures to keep both students and teachers safe in America's schools.**



There was the least amount of consensus around support for DEI programming or initiatives: **61% of U.S. adults say diversity, inclusion, and equity initiatives are either very important (49%) or somewhat important (12%).** 89% of Democrats said it is very/somewhat important compared to 22% of Republicans and 62% of independents.

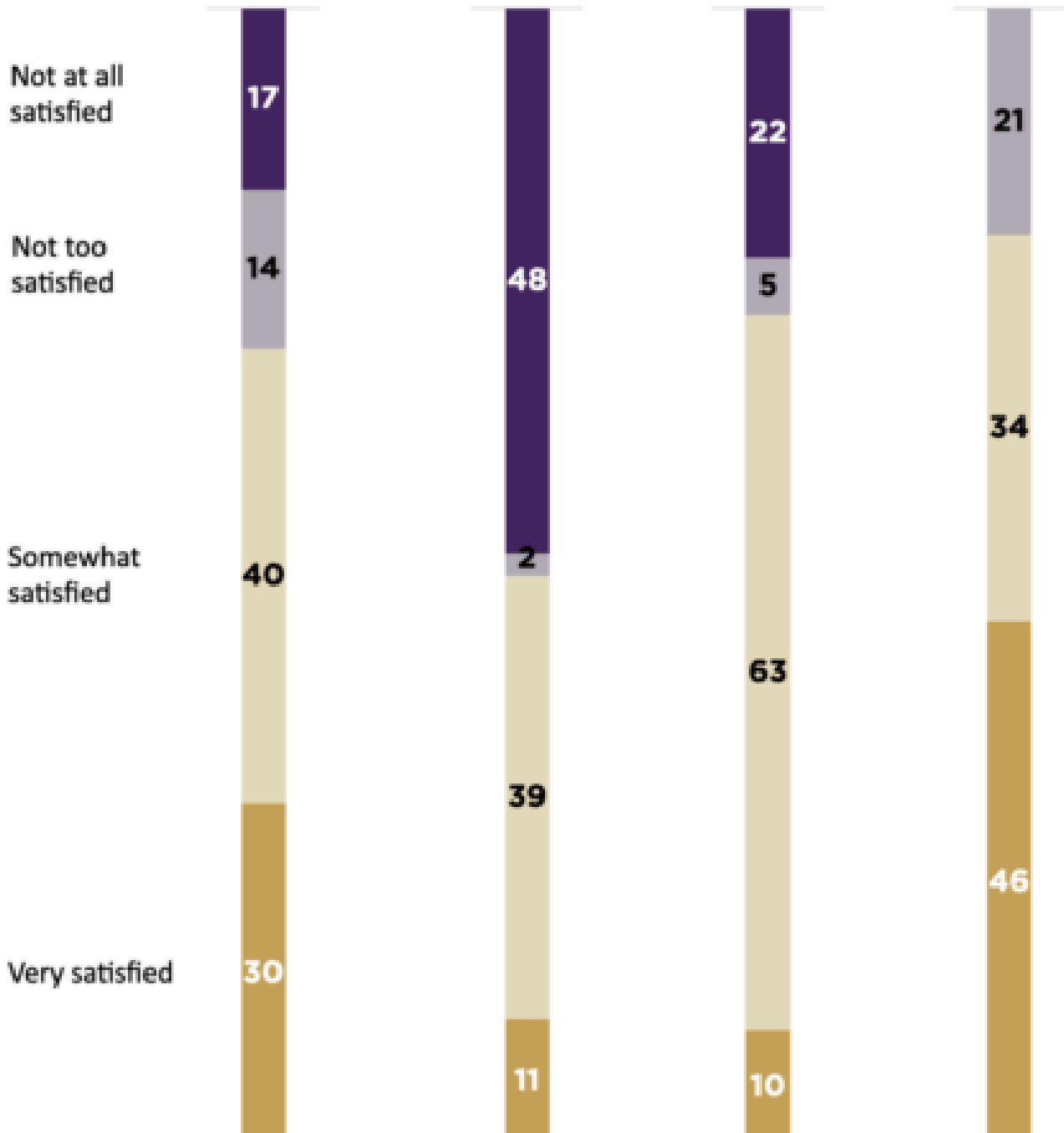
	Very/Somewhat Important	Very/Not at all important
Providing security measures to keep students and teachers safe	99%	0%
Initiatives to make students feel like they belong as part of the school community	98	3
Addressing teacher shortages	97	1
Providing CTE programs	97	3
Improving teacher pay	92	7
Educating students about technology, such as AI and responsible social media use	84	16
Providing more control to states and individual districts over education policy and funding	82	13
Diversity, inclusion, and equity (DEI) initiatives	61	23

Source: 2025 PDK Poll; Skipped responses not tallied above

PDKPoll

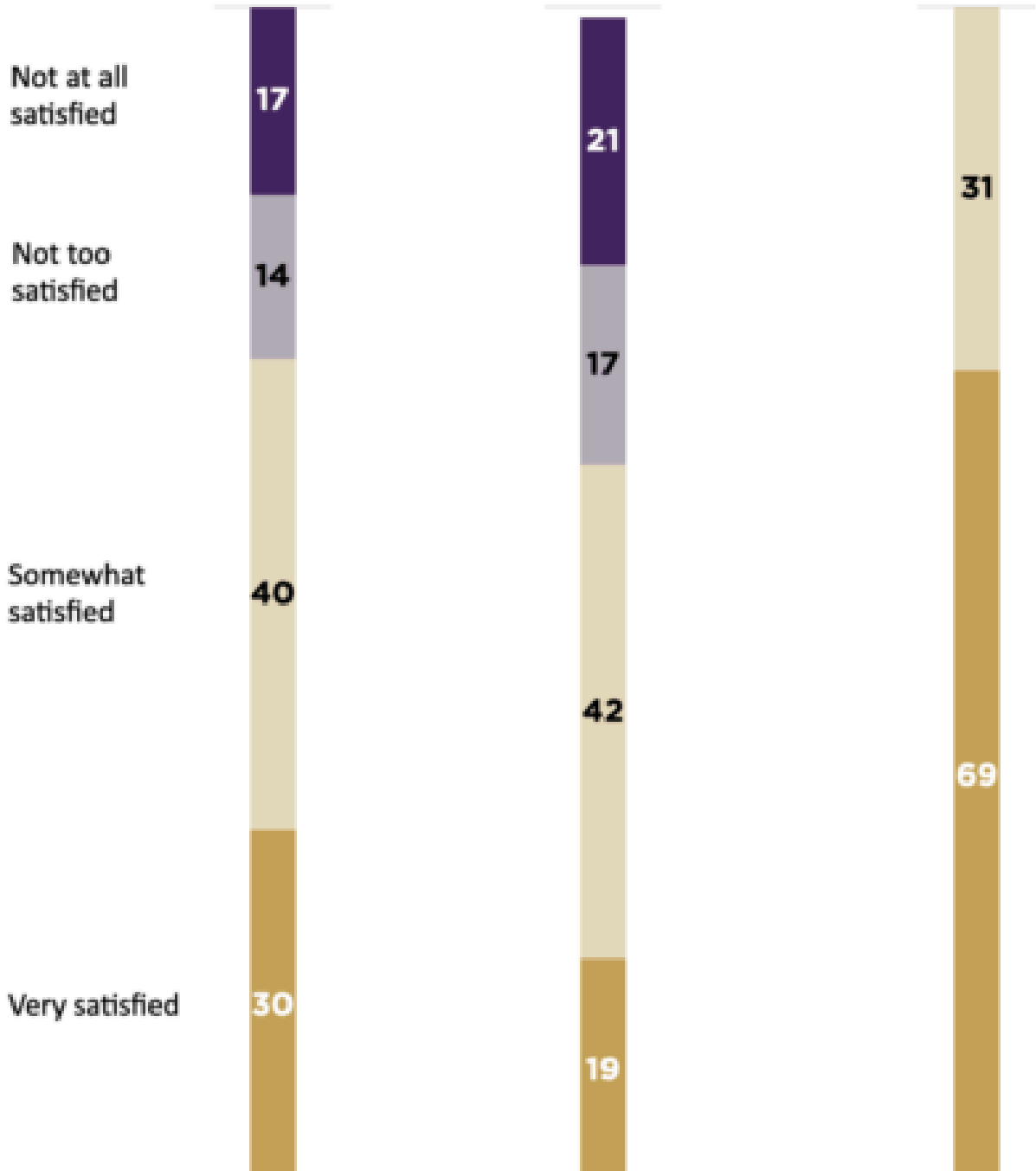
Parent Satisfaction

For parents, how satisfied are you with the amount of say you have in your child’s education?



Parent Satisfaction

For parents, how satisfied are you with the amount of say you have in your child’s education?



National Total

Public School

Private School

Source: 2025 PDK Poll. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.



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About the PDK Poll

The *PDK Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools* has been a steady reflection of U.S. opinion about public education since 1969. PDK produces the annual poll as part of its mission to engage educators and serve schools so every student thrives. The PDK Poll results provide researchers with some of the finest longitudinal data on how the public feels about the nation's schools and education policies. Education policy makers use the poll's findings to inform their decisions, and educators across the country use the results to guide planning and action in their communities. The 2025 PDK Poll was administered by The Wason Center for Civic Leadership.

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