



Equity and Adequacy: Americans Speak on Public School Funding

Key Findings From Surveys and Focus Groups
Conducted May-June 2004



Methodology

- ◆ Survey among 1,309 adults nationwide (including 541 parents and 587 residents of presidential battleground states), conducted May 25-June 2, 2004
- ◆ Survey among 304 education policy-makers, conducted May 25-June 10, 2004
- ◆ Four focus groups (two each in Tampa, Fla., and Columbus, Ohio), conducted May 2004

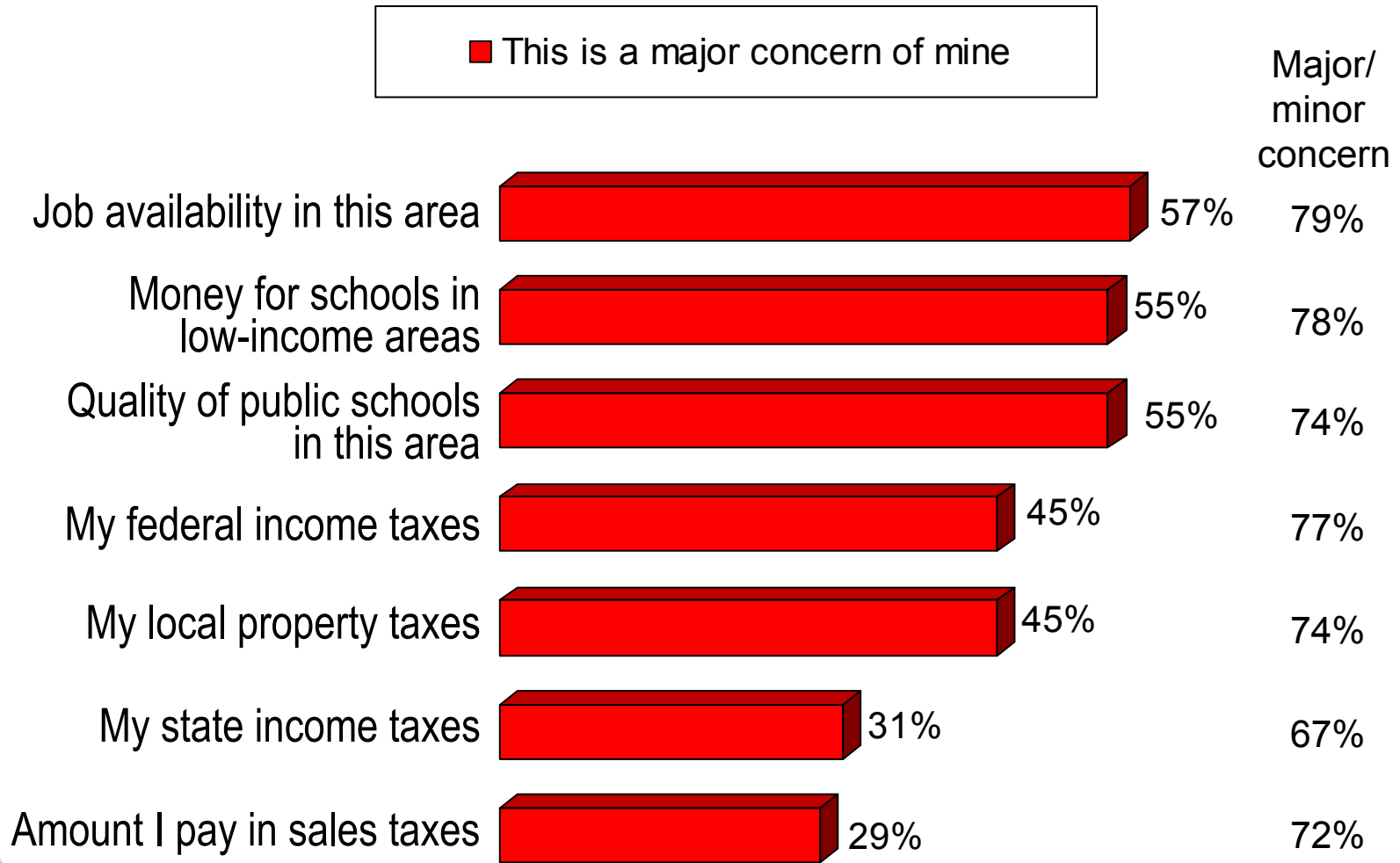


Grading School Quality And No Child Left Behind

*Listening.
Learning.
Leading.*



Quality And Equality Of Schools Are Major Public Concerns





Parents See No Change In School Quality

Spring 2004

Parents' Report Card *My Children's School*

	2004	2002	2001
A	24%	31%	27%
B	43%	39%	38%
C	21%	21%	25%
D	7%	5%	6%
F	3%	3%	3%
GPA	2.8	2.9	2.8



Grades for Nation's Schools Also Remain Unchanged

Spring 2004

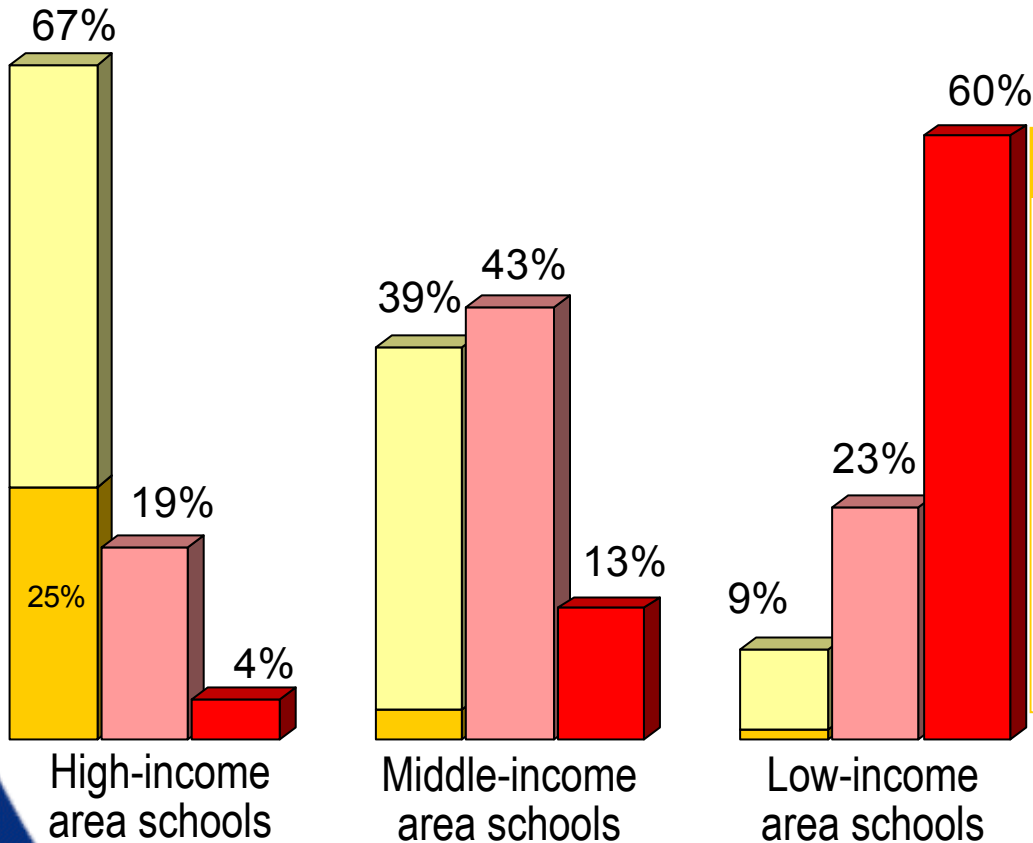
The Public's Report Card *The Nation's Schools*

	----- All adults -----				Parents	
	2004	2003	2002	2001	2004	2001
A	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	8%
B	20%	29%	14%	18%	20%	35%
C	47%	47%	50%	51%	48%	33%
D	15%	13%	21%	16%	14%	13%
F	4%	2%	4%	3%	3%	4%
GPA	2.0	2.2	1.9	2.0	2.0	2.3



Public Believes Where You Live Matters

How good are the schools in these income areas?



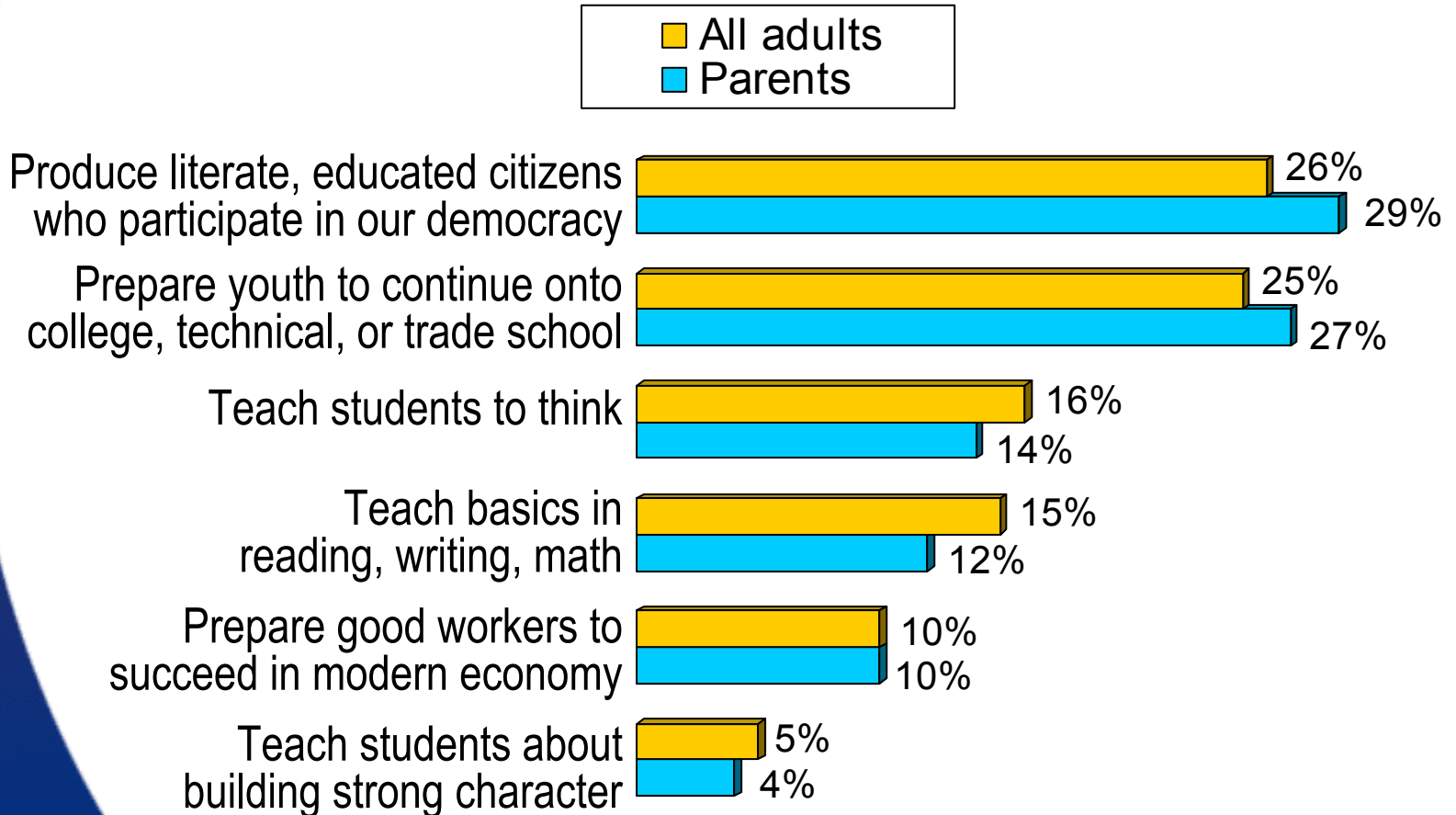
May 2001

	High income area	Middle income area	Low income area
Excellent/good	69%	42%	12%
Fair	19%	41%	26%
Inadequate/in crisis	4%	12%	56%



Education's Job: Teach Citizenship And Prepare for Further Study

Which ONE of these should be the goal of public education?

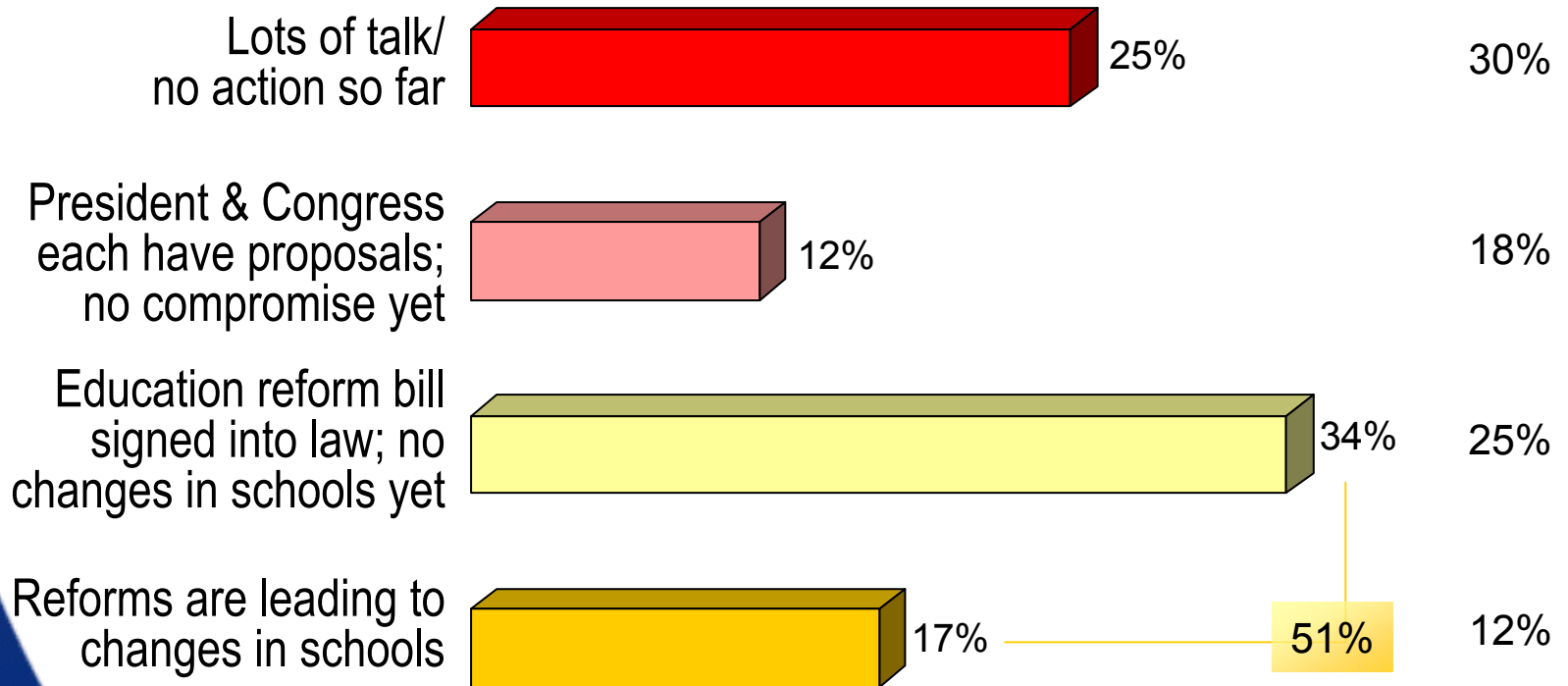




A Majority Now Knows That Education Reform Passed

Where do things stand with education reform at the national level?

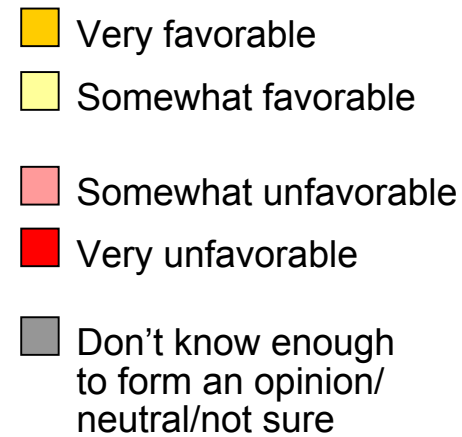
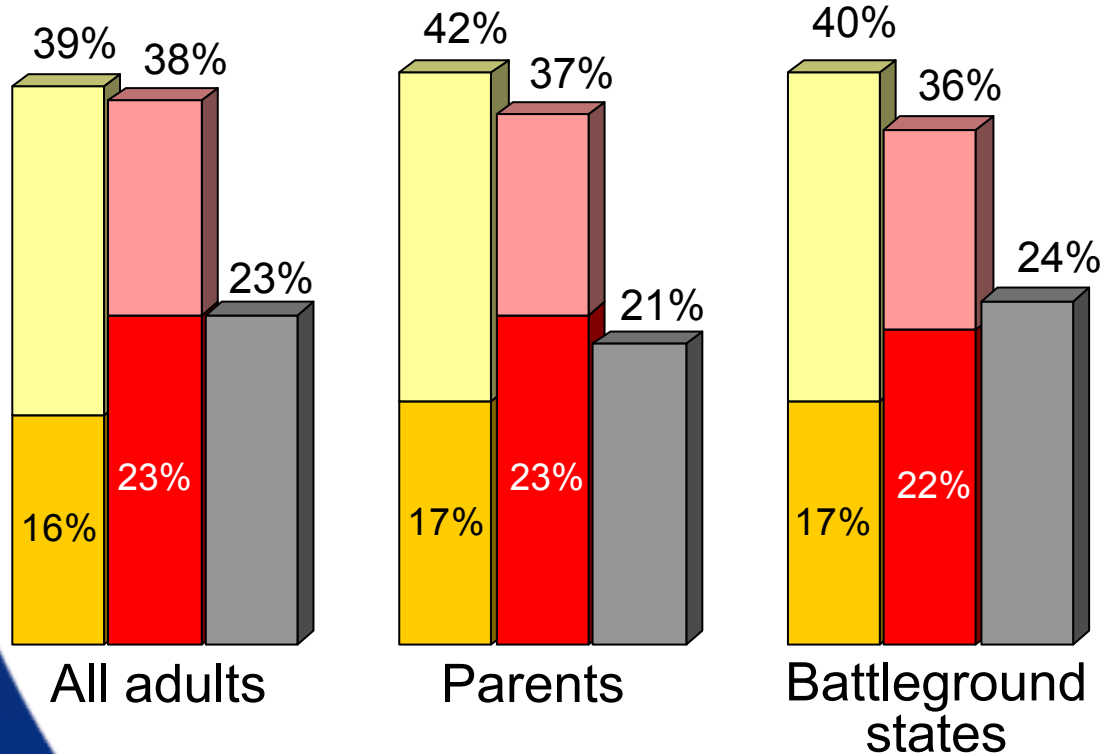
May 2003





Country Is Evenly Split On No Child Left Behind

The No Child Left Behind Act provides federal funds for school districts in poor areas and requires states to set standards for education and to test students each year to determine whether the standards are being met.



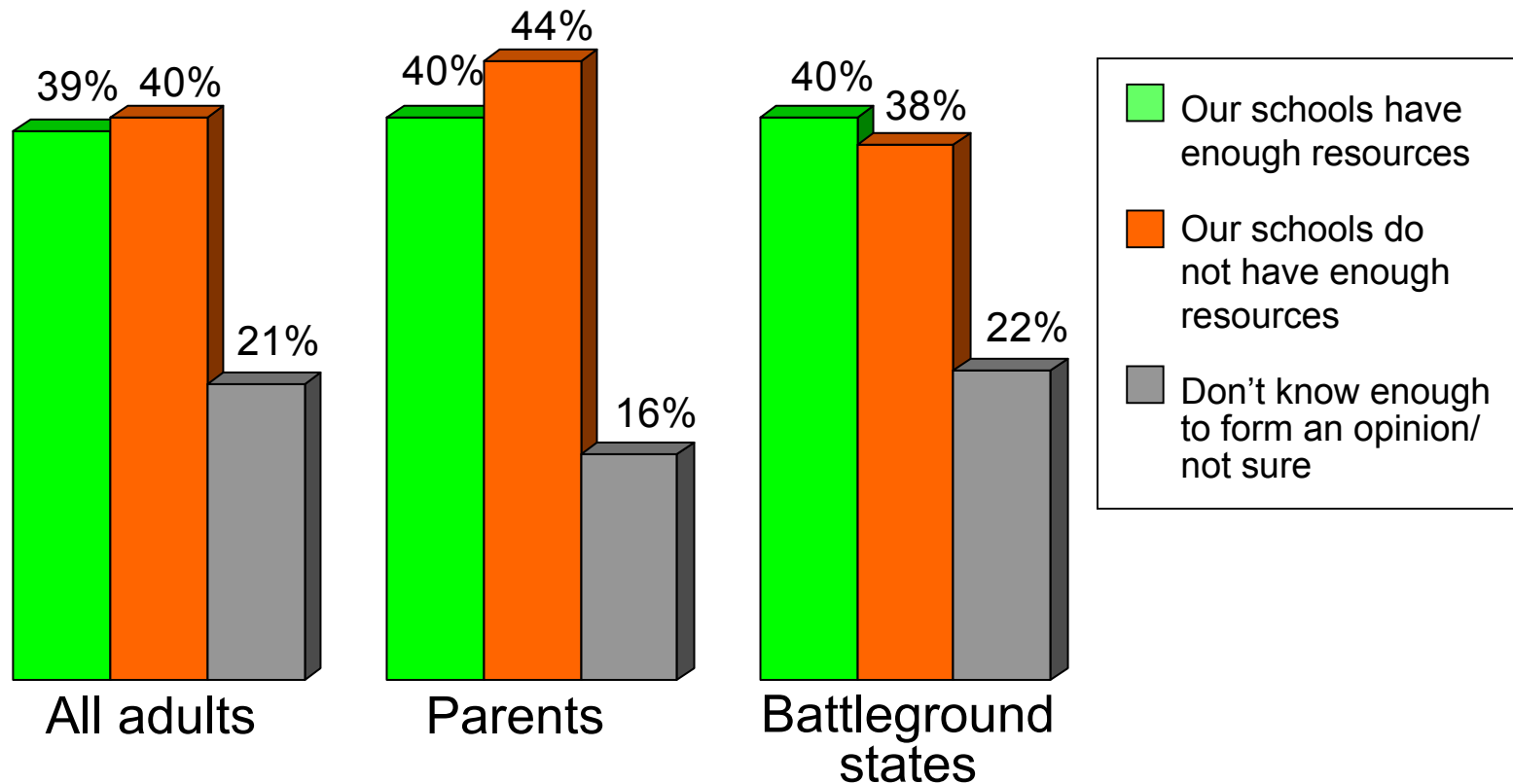
All adults/May 2003

36% favorable
28% unfavorable
36% don't know



Adequate Resources to Meet NCLB Standards?

Do your district's public schools have enough resources to meet the NCLB standards?





What the Public Knows About Education Funding

*Listening.
Learning.
Leading.*



Public Uncertain About Public School Funding/Spending

Federal/state/local government roles in funding public schools

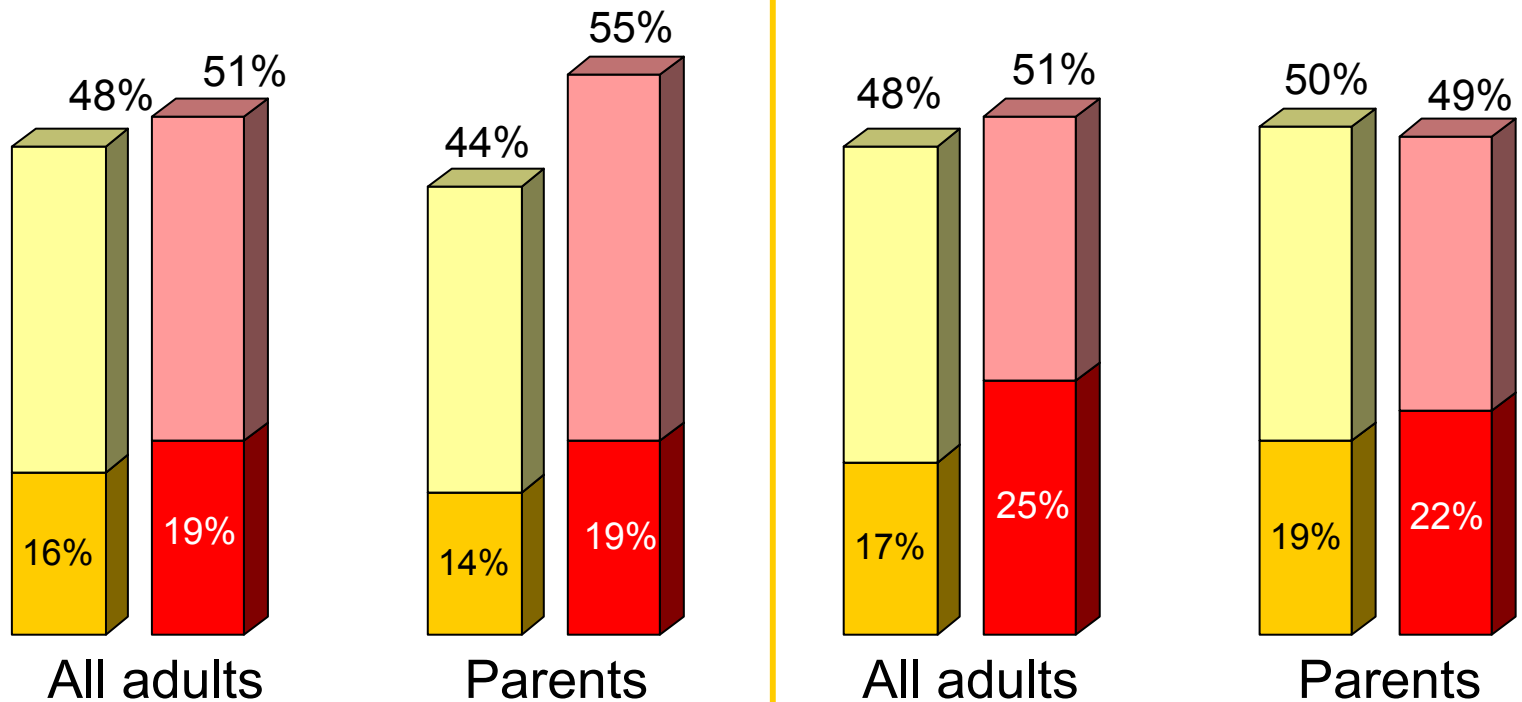
Priorities for spending in my area's public schools

■ Understand very well

■ Don't understand well at all

■ Understand fairly well

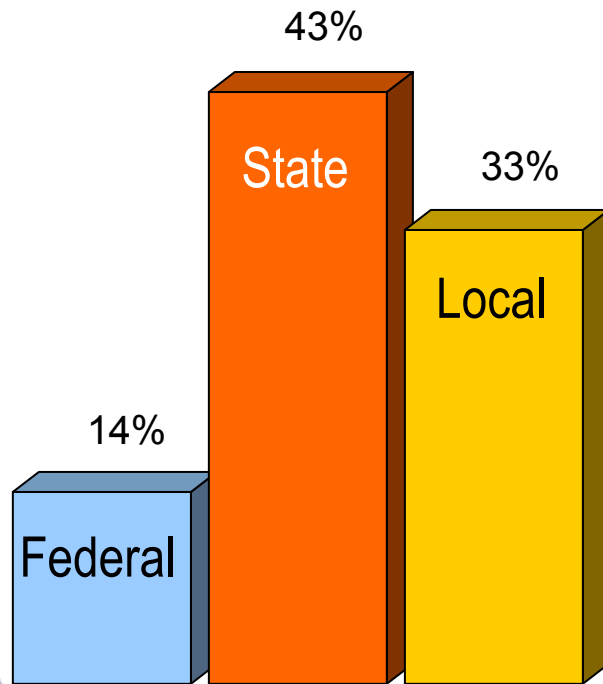
■ Understand just somewhat well



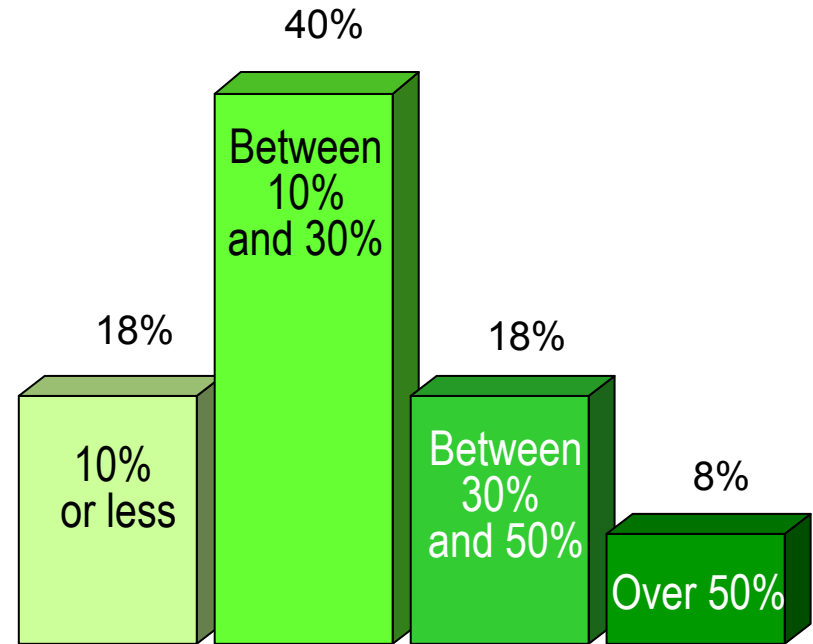


Public Perceptions of Government And Public School Funding

Which level of government provides the largest share of funding for schools in your area?



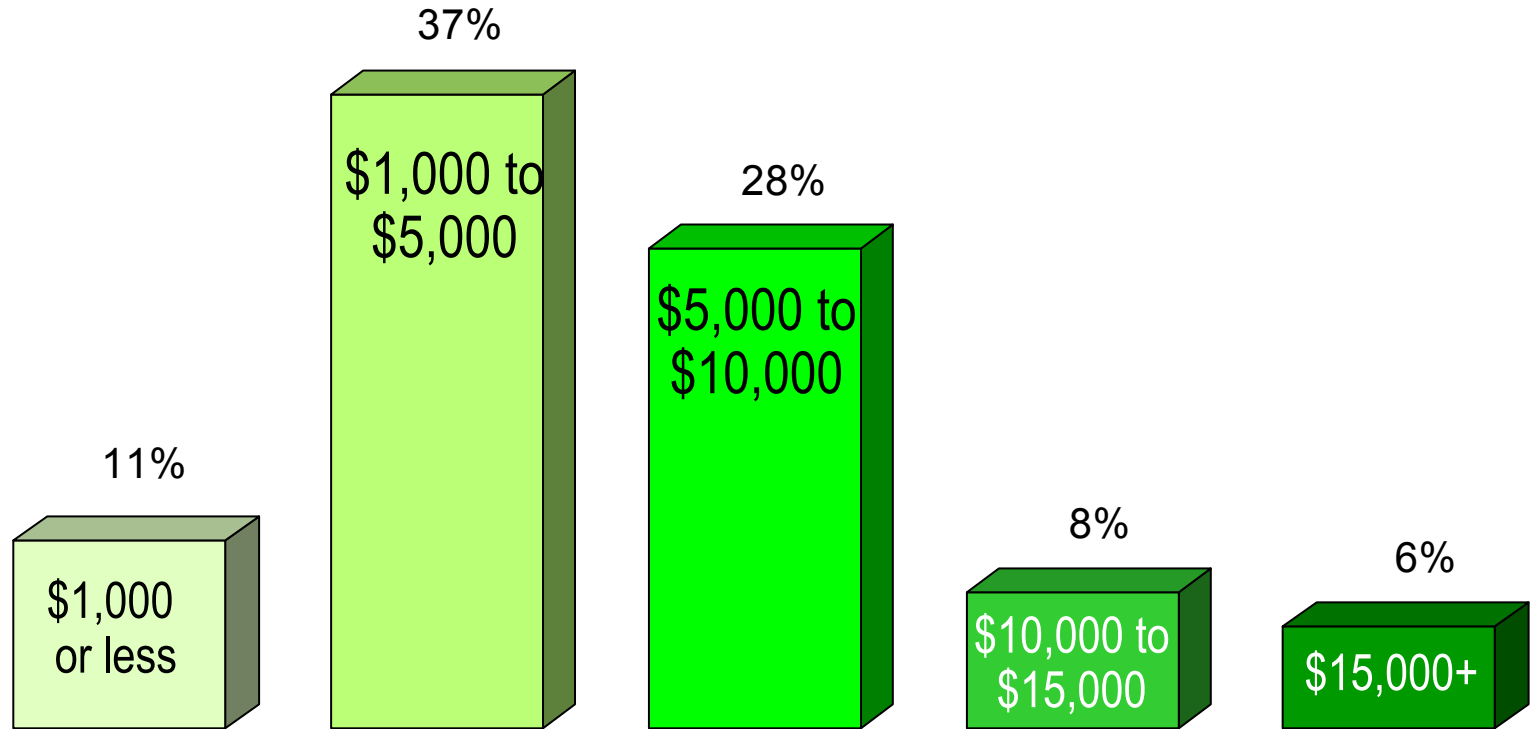
What proportion of funding for your area's schools comes from the federal government?





Public Perceptions of How Much Is Spent per Student

How much do you think is spent on average per student per year in U.S. public schools by government at all levels?





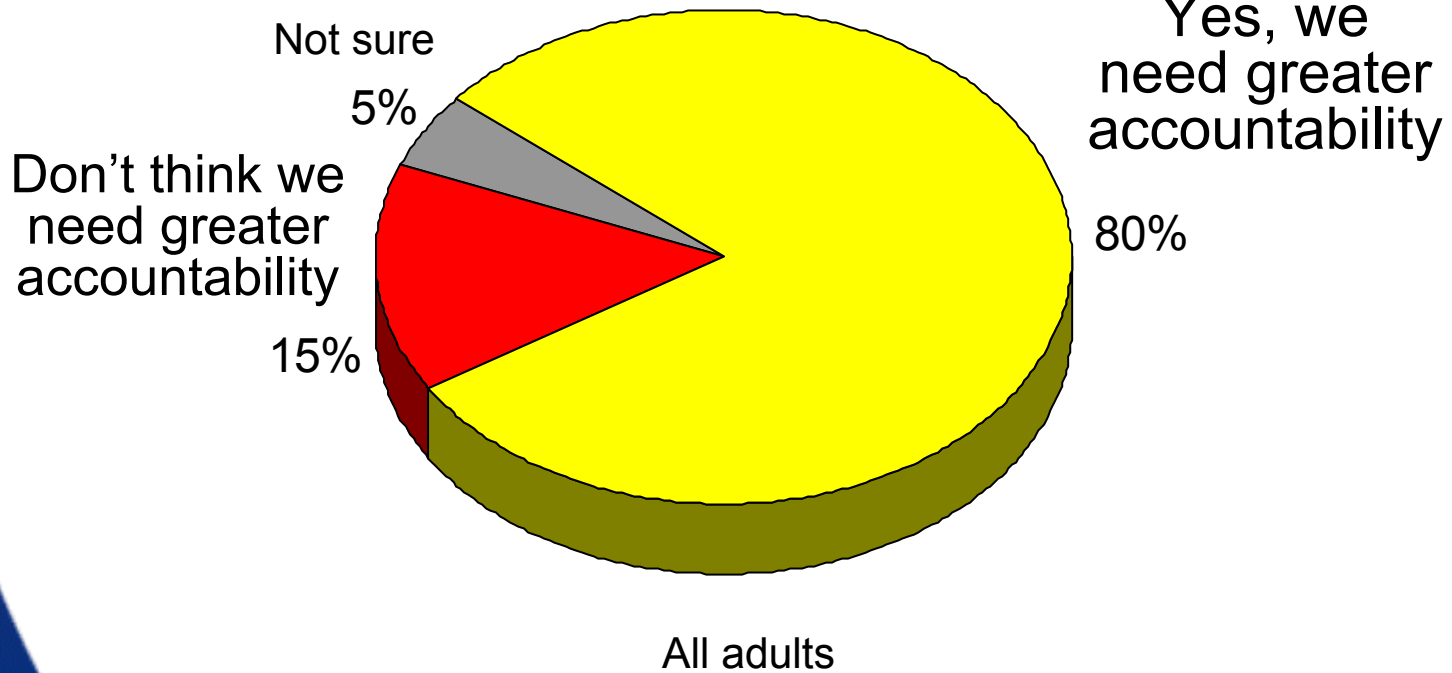
What the Public Believes About Education Funding

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Nearly Everyone Agrees We Need More Accountability

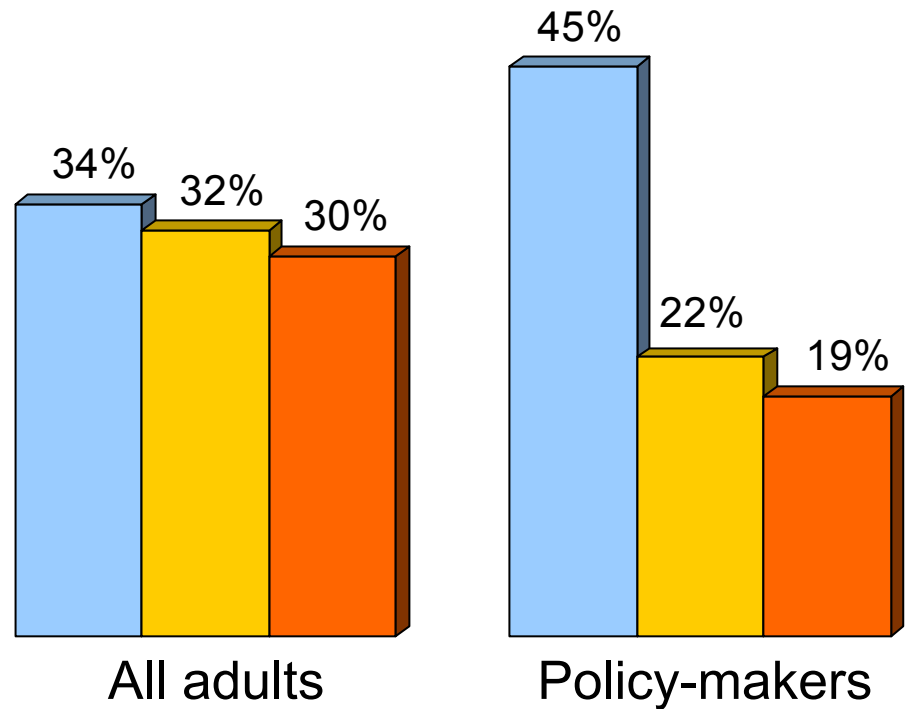
*Do we need greater accountability
when it comes to public schools?*



What Does Accountability Mean?

Which of these phrases comes closest to what you mean by “we need greater accountability”?

- Higher standards for student learning, and testing to ensure that the standards are being met
- Tighter controls on how education dollars are spent, and less waste
- Teachers and administrators who listen to parents and follow through to ensure that their concerns are addressed

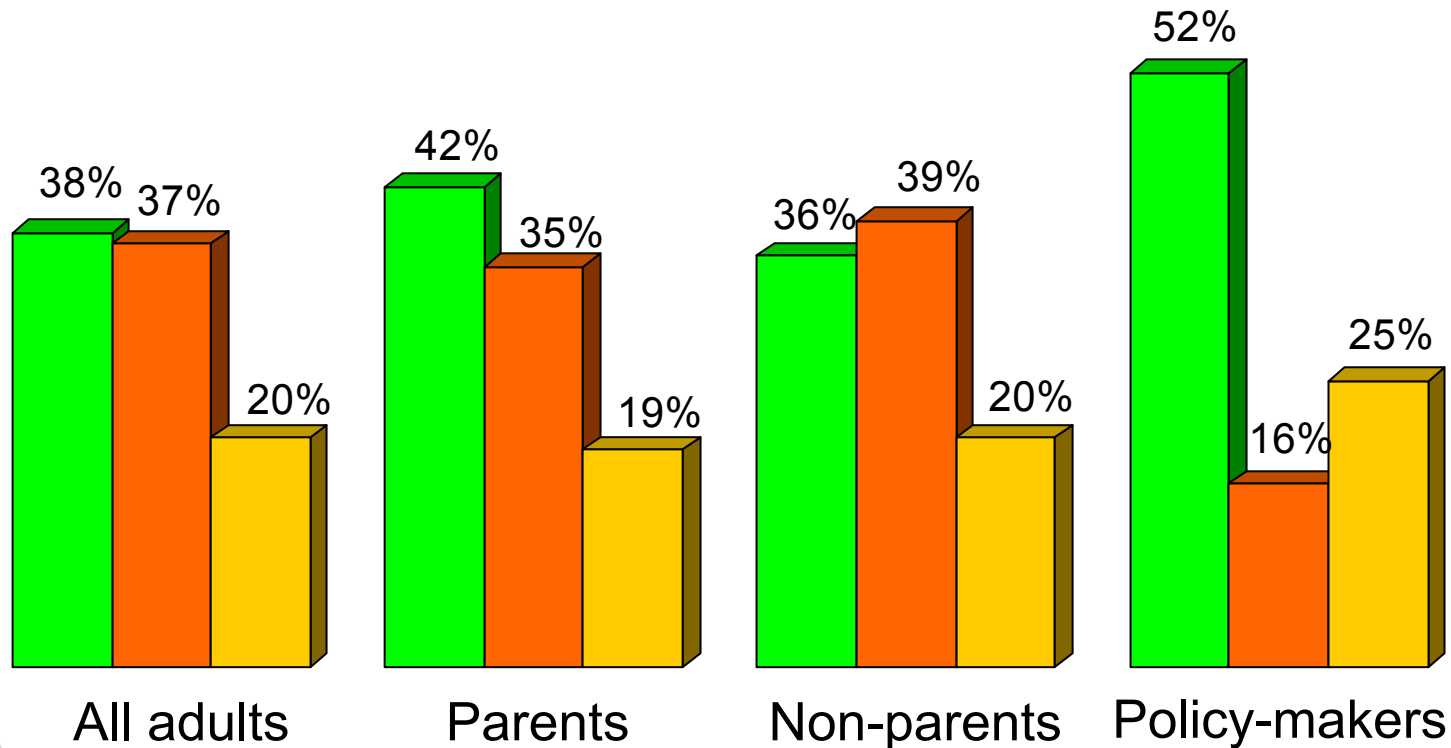




Public Divided Over Source Of Problems Facing Education

The biggest problem facing public education right now is:

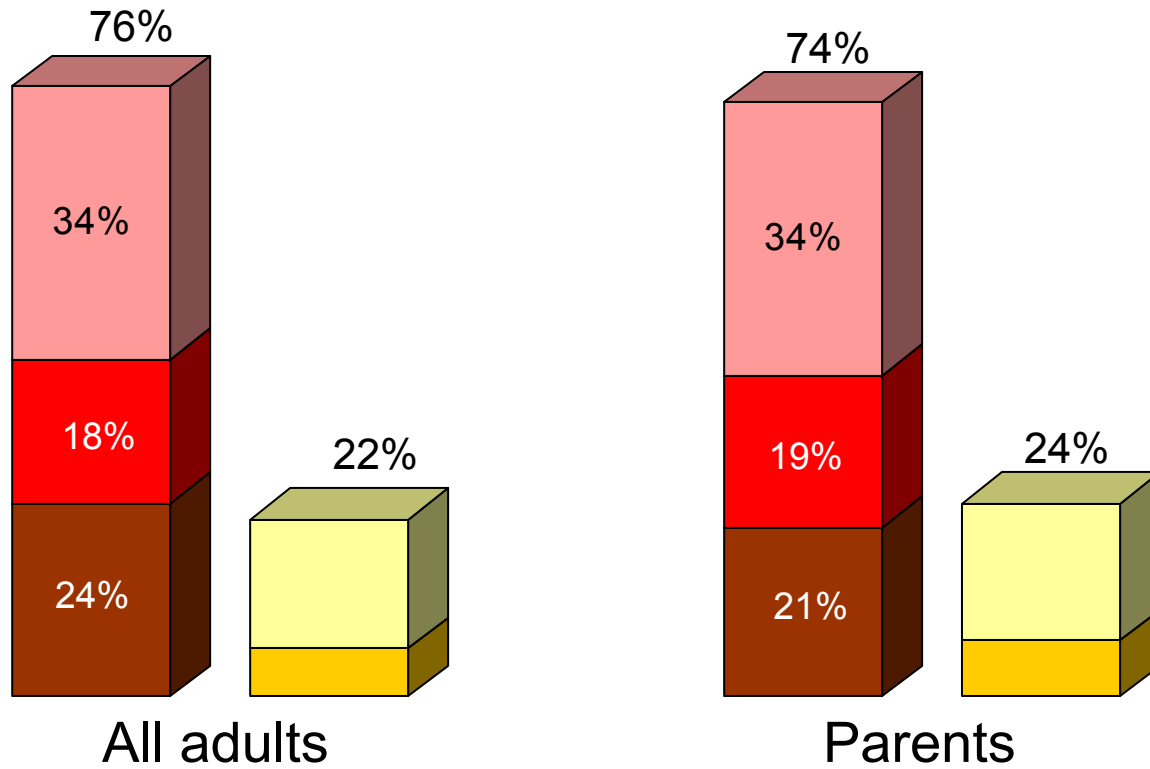
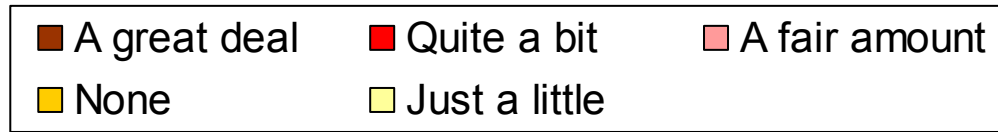
■ Inadequate funding ■ Wasteful/inefficient spending ■ Inequality in spending





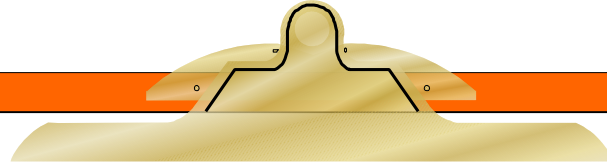
Most Believe Money Is Wasted

How much of the money dedicated to education is wasted?





Few Believe Money Is Wasted In Classrooms

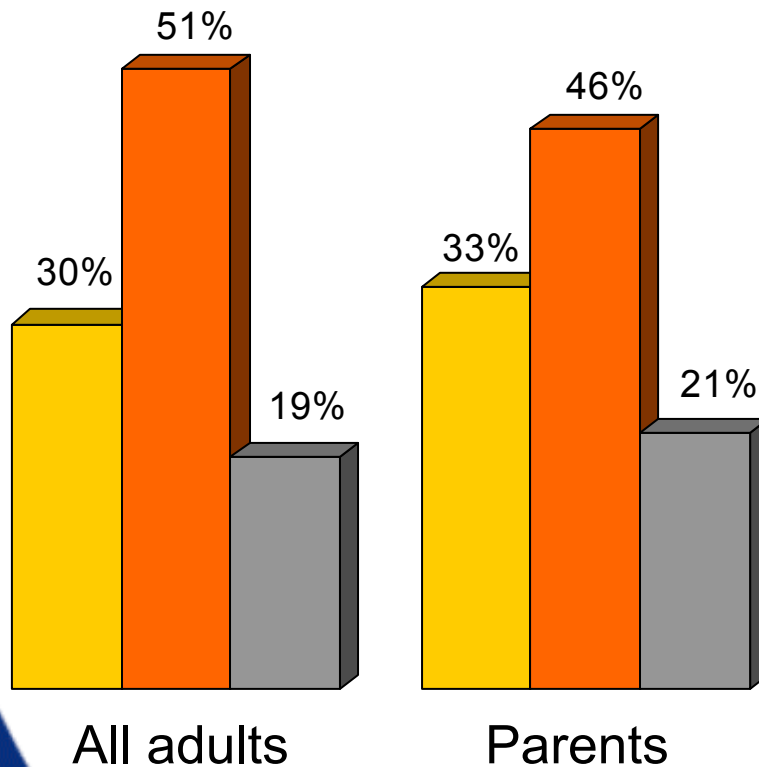


*When you say “money is wasted in schools,”
what do you have in mind?*

	All adults	Parents
Teacher salaries/benefits	7%	4%
Transportation/food service/ janitorial	7%	7%
Materials/supplies/facilities	11%	12%
State/federal mandates	38%	43%
Admin salaries/benefits	46%	44%

The Problem Is More Than Money

To the extent that our nation's public schools have problems, what do you think is causing the problems ?



- Biggest problems have to do with money: low teacher salaries, too few teachers, overcrowded classes, inadequate supplies/facilities, and other issues of inadequate funding

- Biggest problems are not about money; rather they have to do with lack of parental involvement, lack of discipline, ineffective teachers and administrators, and inappropriate curriculum

- Depends, some of both, neither, not sure



Emerging Public Discussion On School Funding

*Listening.
Learning.
Leading.*



Equity Or Adequacy?

What should be state government's role in providing money to schools/determining spending per child?

Equalize the amount of money spent per student, so schools in poorer areas have as many resources as wealthy



Direct money where it is needed most, so students with special needs or in poorly performing schools get adequate education



States shouldn't make efforts to direct school funding; leave these decisions to local districts





What Is Equitable Funding?

If you had to choose, which education finance approach would you prefer?

System in which the same amount of money is spent on each student



System in which low-income students or special-needs students can receive more money



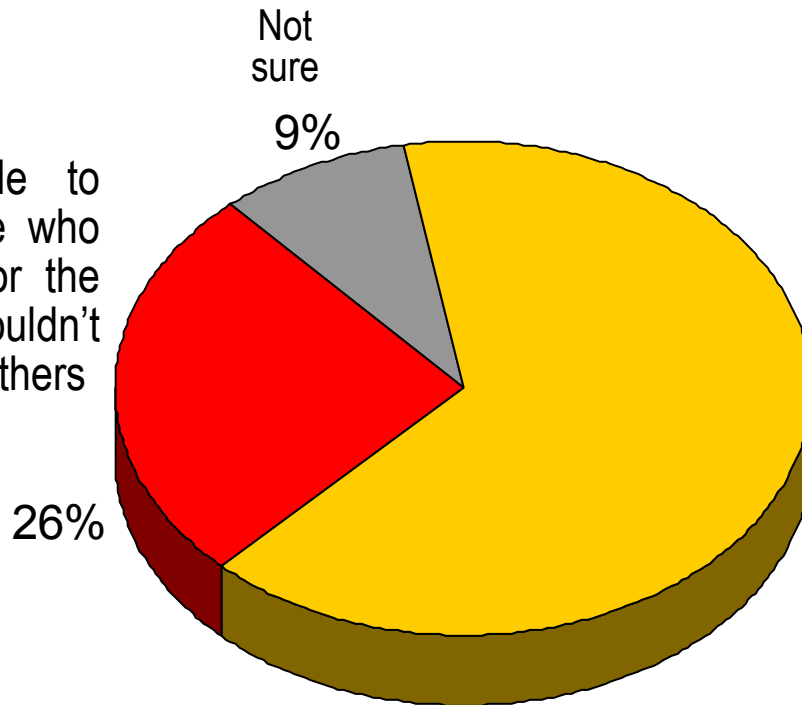
	Parents	Battleground states	Policy-makers
Same amount of money spent on each student	46%	44%	33%
Low-income or special-needs students can receive more	51%	51%	58%



On Public School Funding, Fairness Prevails

Is it appropriate to allocate tax revenues raised in other areas to schools in low-income areas?

Not appropriate:
All schools struggle to raise money, people who move to an area for the good schools shouldn't have to pay to help others



It is appropriate:
The fair thing to do, and everyone benefits from an education system that provides a quality education for all

68% of policy-makers support allocating tax revenues raised in other areas to schools in low-income areas.



By Narrow Margin, Public Prefers State Revenue Over Local

Policy-makers

Should increase funding from state, even if it increases taxes: provides more equitable/stable funding for all, especially schools in low-income areas, decreases pressure to raise local taxes



Should NOT increase state taxes to fund education, even if it means no additional funding: taxes are high enough, too much waste in system, local schools should be a local concern



Local taxes are a good way to fund public schools, because it gives local citizens control over their own school system



Local taxes are NOT a good way to fund public schools, because inequalities in local wealth create inequalities in school funding





Policy-makers Prefer State Or Federal Tax Increase Over Local

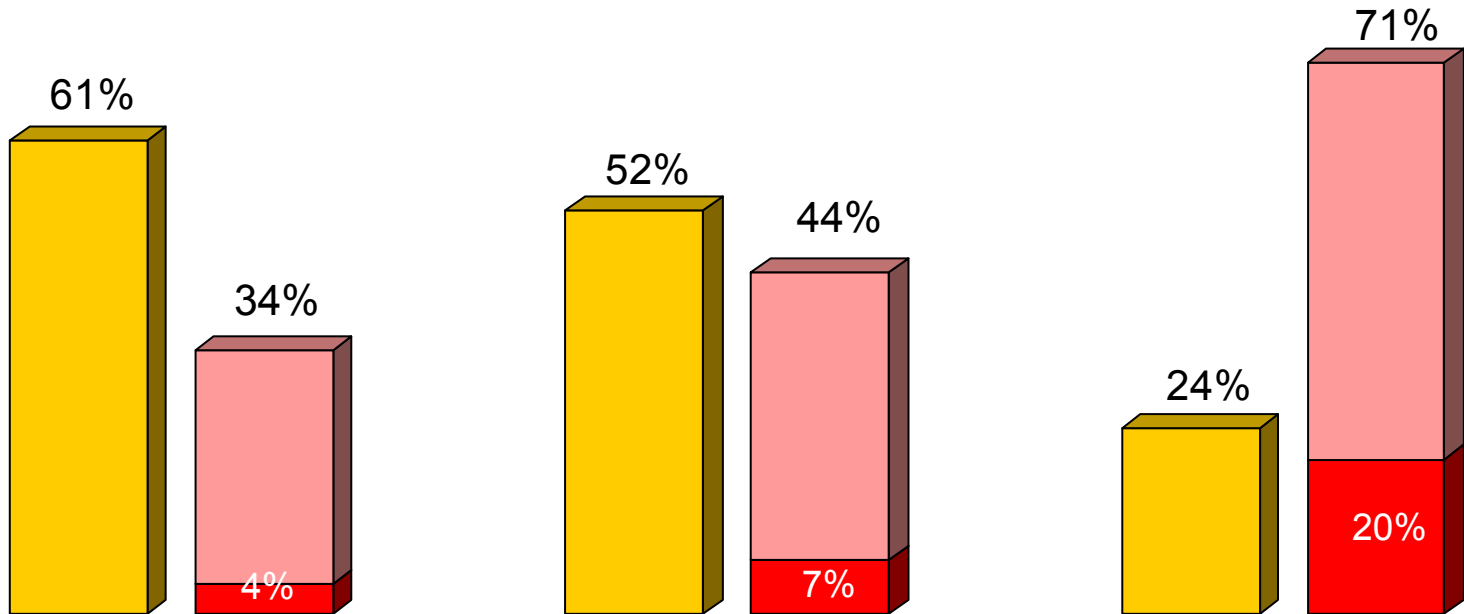
Should the share of money for education that is raised through these taxes be increased?

■ Should be increased ■ Should be decreased ■ Should be kept the same

Federal taxes

State taxes

Local taxes





Public Does Not Endorse Any Increased Funding Burden

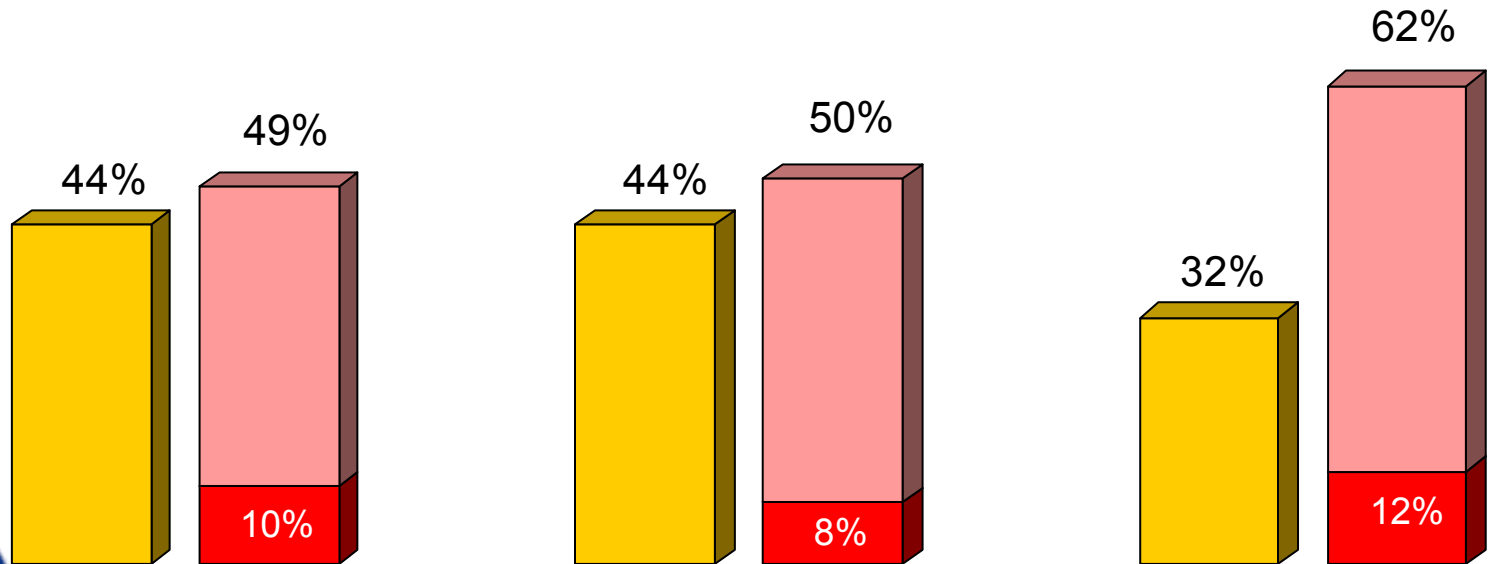
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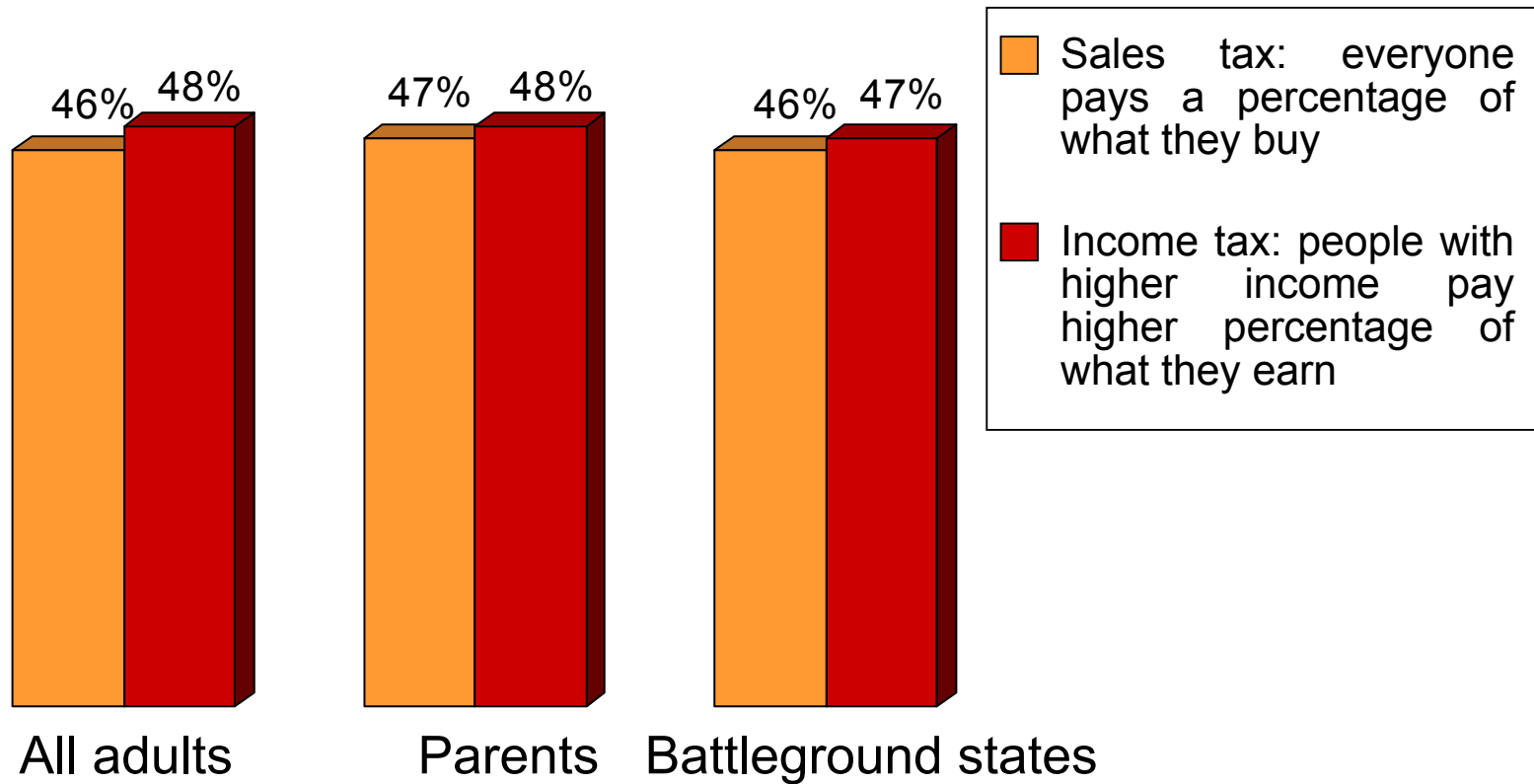
Local taxes





Public Split on Best Way To Raise Education Funds

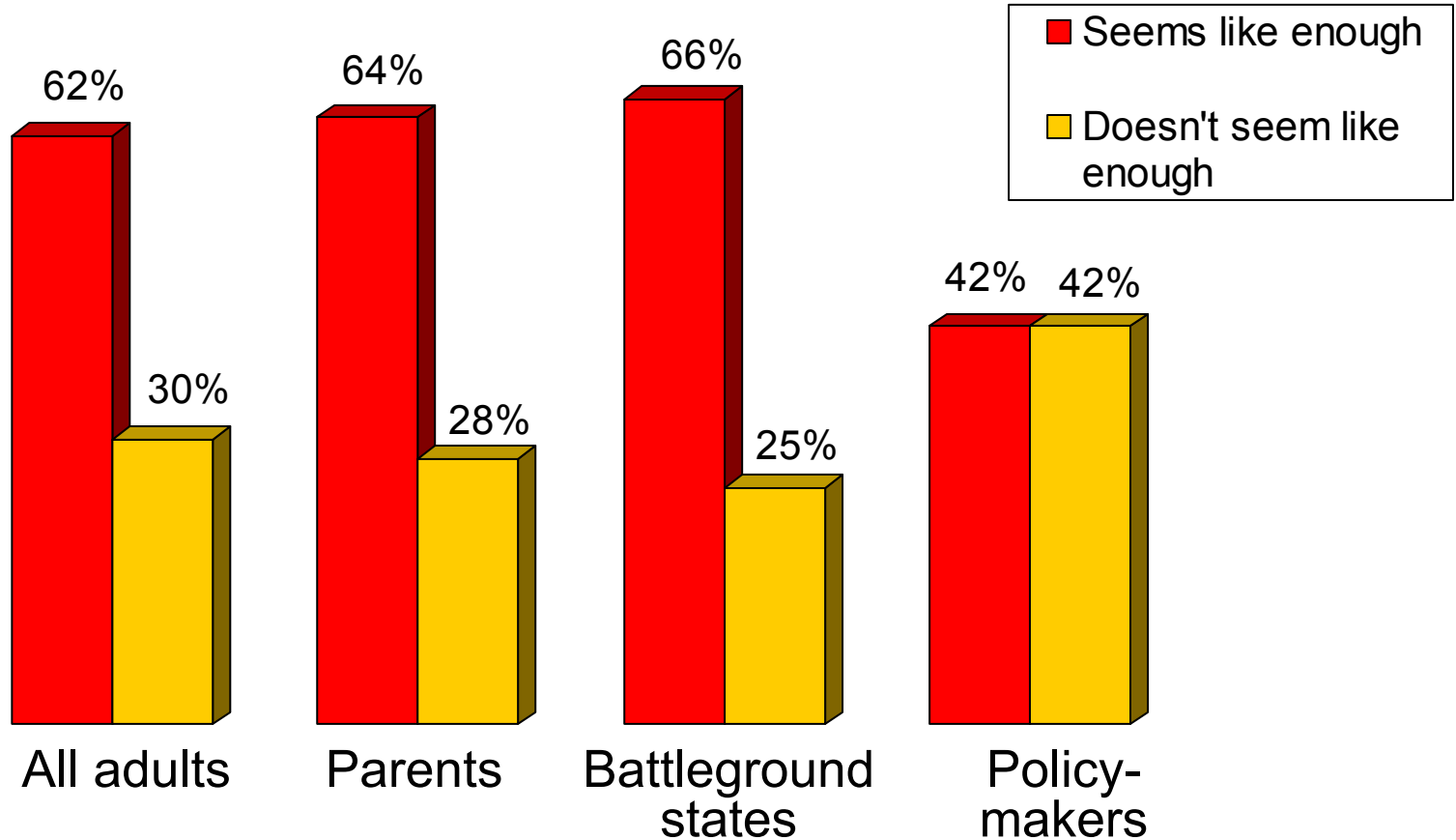
Which is the better way to raise funds for public education?





Public Thinks Current Spending *SHOULD* Be Enough

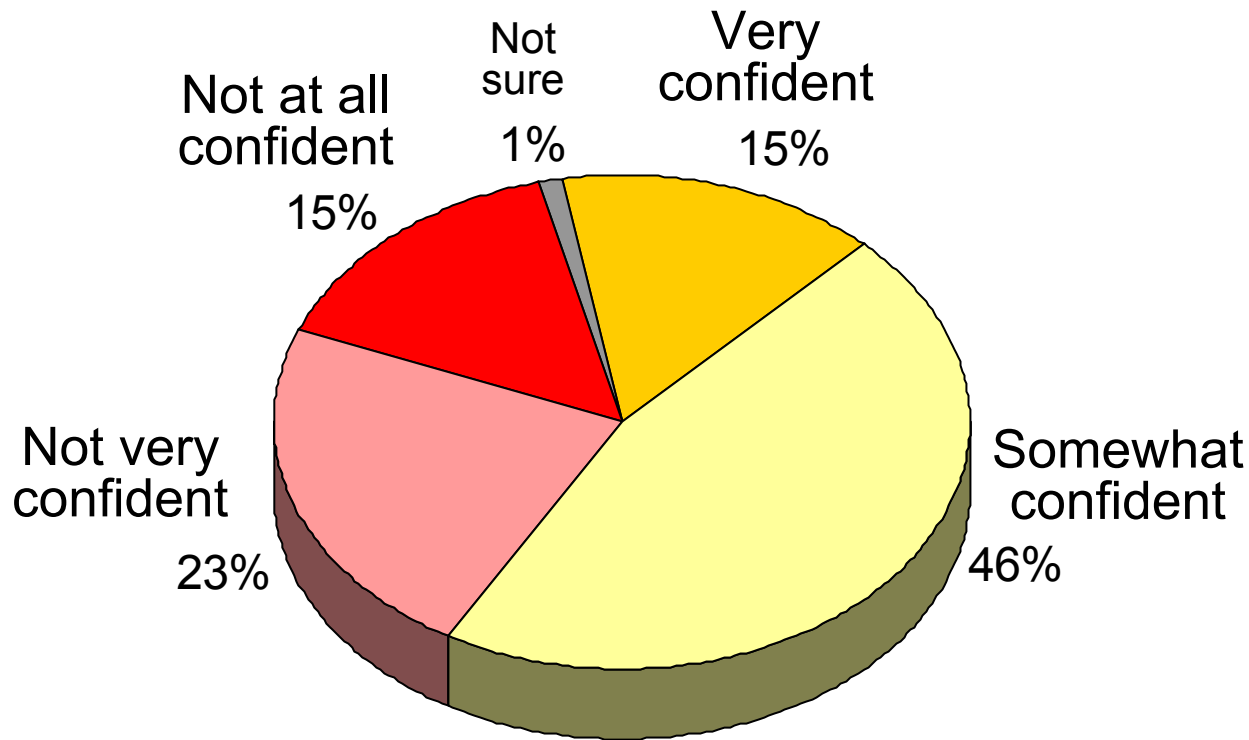
Latest U.S. Dept. of Ed. estimate is \$7,000 to \$9,000 spent per student per year: Is this enough to provide adequate education?





Public Only Somewhat Confident Education Funding=Better Schools

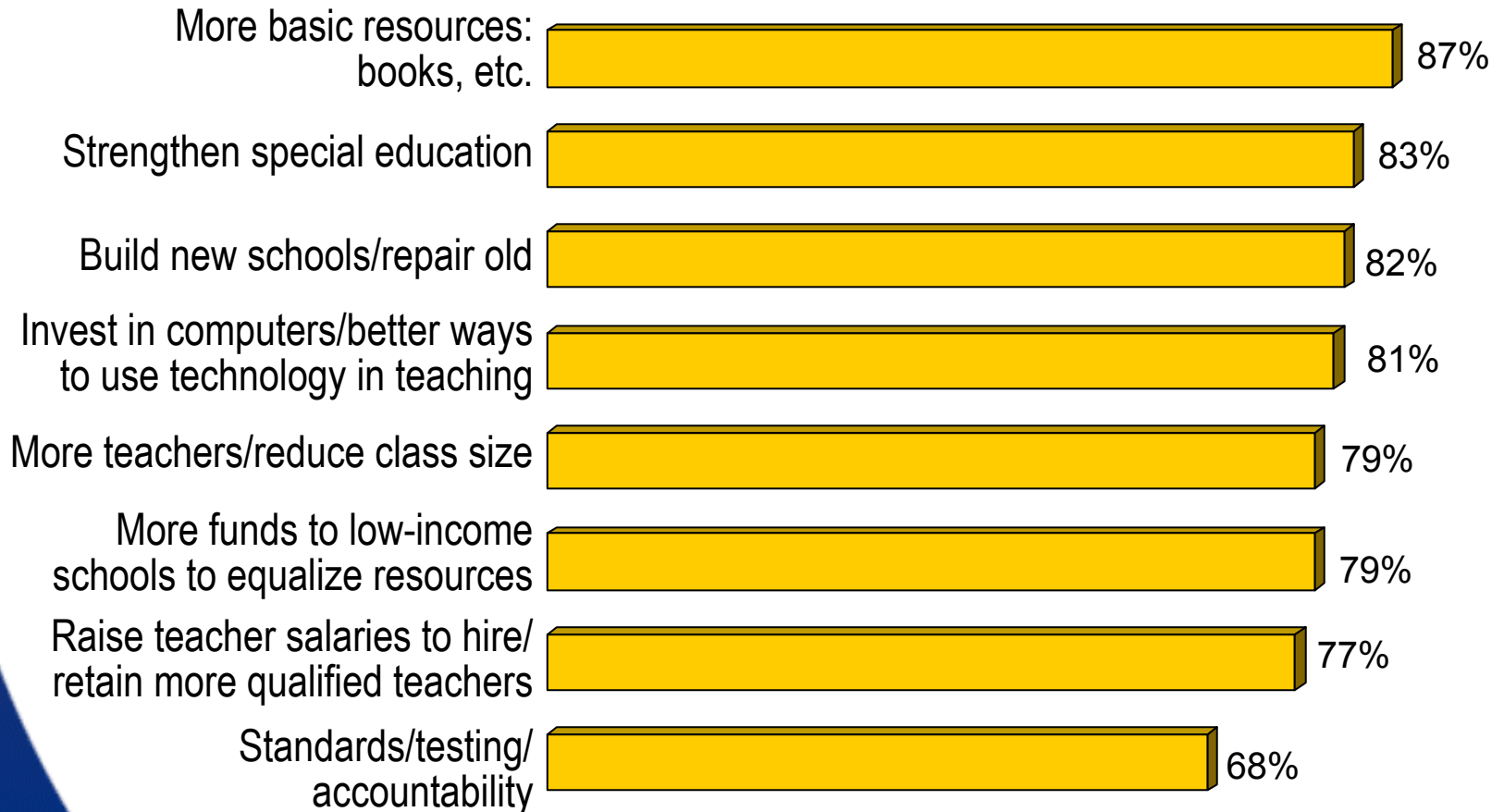
How confident are you that if additional money were spent on education, it would lead to improved school quality?





Public Willing to Spend If It Means Improvement

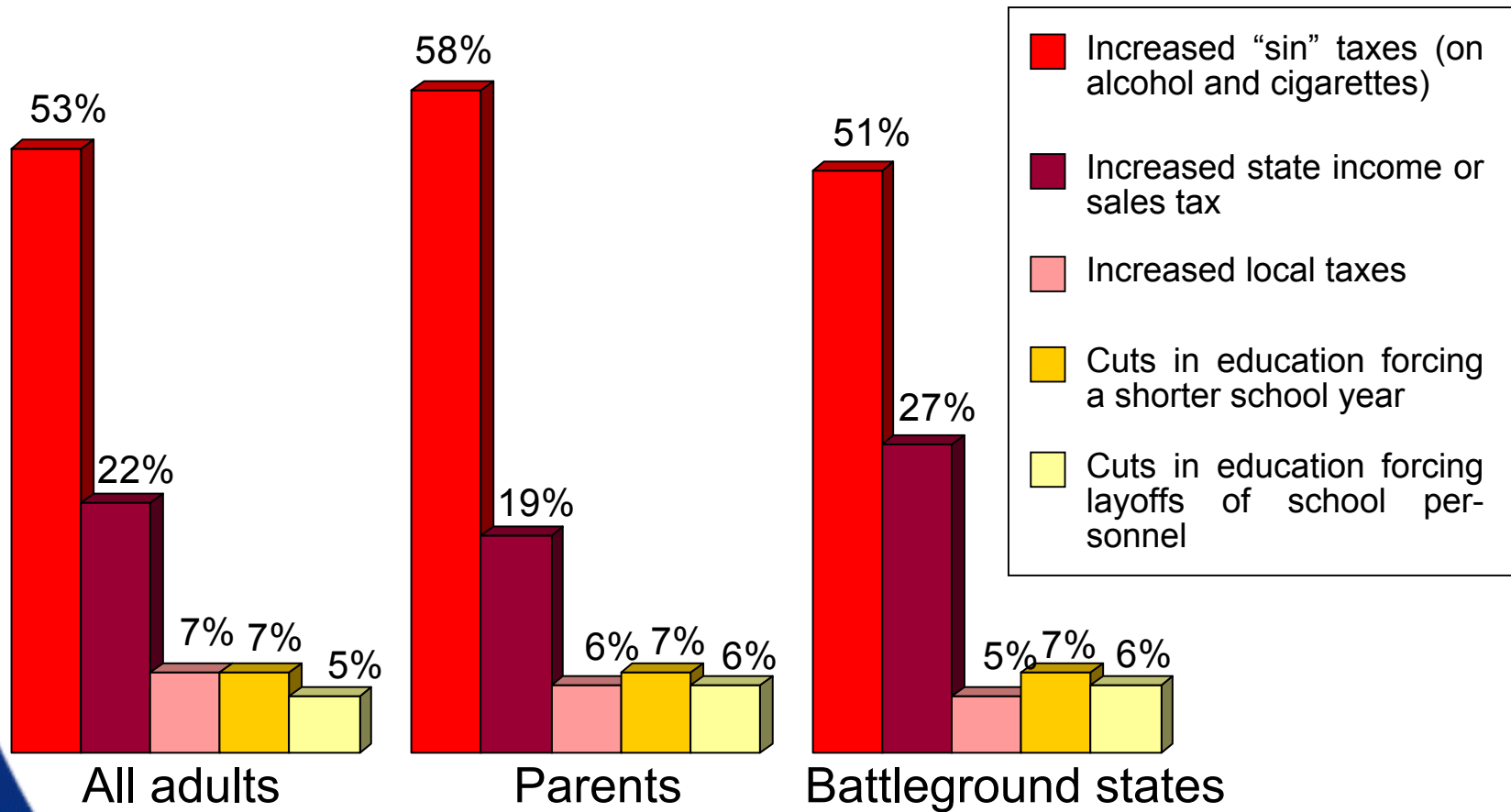
■ This proposal for improving K-12 ed is worth higher costs/more admin oversight





“Sin” Taxes Favored For Deficits

If your state experienced severe budget shortfalls, which would you rather see in addition to belt-tightening?





Summary

- ◆ **School grades are unchanged:** Parents give fairly good grades to their neighborhood schools, but most Americans see schools in low-income areas as inadequate.
- ◆ **The public is split over NCLB:** Real progress in informing Americans has brought awareness of reforms to half, but as many are critical of the reforms as welcome them.
- ◆ **Accountability is in the eye of the beholder:** While there is great demand for education accountability, the public is divided on how it defines accountability.



Summary

- ◆ **Americans want fairness in school funding:** They lean toward a greater role for states in funding education as a way to solve the problem in low-income schools.
- ◆ **Americans are conflicted about how best to ensure fairness in school funding:** Policy differences are driven by conflicting desires within and among individuals not between groups (e.g., parents vs. non-parents). Majorities want greater spending and lower taxes.



Summary

- ◆ **Americans may be willing to pay more for public education,** but only if they gain confidence that money will be targeted to unmet needs and will not be wasted.
- ◆ **Perceived waste limits support for tax hikes:** As with other areas of government spending, the public's view that many education dollars are wasted leads many to challenge any tax increase proposals.