

Montana Statewide Education Surveys – Takeaways

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Two new polls in Montana by yes. every kid. foundation. find that Montana voters strongly support expanding education freedom in Big Sky Country—empowering families with more options and a greater ability to customize each child’s education to be more amenable to their unique needs.

CHANGE IS NECESSARY

Education across the world has faced unique challenges the last few years, and Montana is no exception. Accordingly, most voters believe K-12 public education in the state has stagnated (38%) or declined (44%) during this time, with only 7% believing it has gotten better. Asked to rate the state’s K-12 school system on an A through F scale, 34% of voters rate it an A or B, 37% rate it a C, and 19% rate it a D or F. This translates to a GPA of 2.2.

Not surprisingly, 80% of Montana voters believe it is *extremely* or *very* important for the next governor to work to improve education in the state.

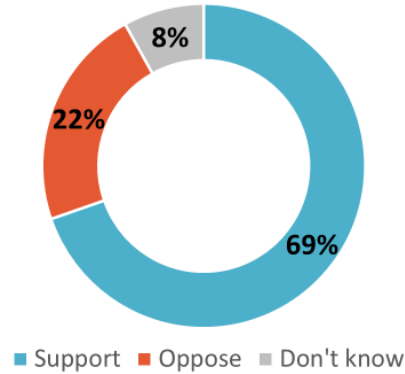
To improve the state’s K-12 system, 59% of voters believe change is necessary, with a majority (51%) saying the state should focus on rethinking how it educates students, coming up with new ways to teach children moving forward, rather than trying to recreate the status quo of the past.

Large majorities of key demographic subgroups across party (62% of Republicans, 61% of Democrats, 57% of unaffiliated/independent voters), gender (62% of females, 56% of males), age (65% of 18-44 year olds, 54% of those 45 or older), and geography (61% of urban voters, 63% of suburban voters, 58% of rural voters, 61% of voters in the Missoula DMA, 61% of voters in the Billings DMA, and 63% of voters in the Great Falls DMA) believe change is necessary.

FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF IN EDUCATION FREEDOM

Sixty percent of Montana voters support school choice, with a plurality (38%) *strongly* in support. Only one-quarter oppose. Views are being driven by a strong belief that families should have more choices in how their children receive an education—69% support more flexibility and options, 22% oppose.

“Do you support oppose allowing for more flexibility in k-12 education and giving families more choices in how their child receives an education?”



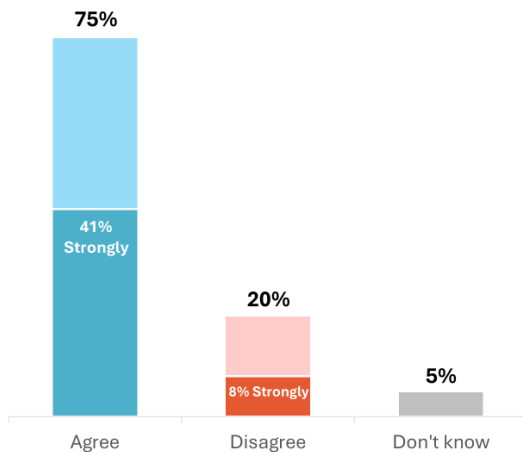
Voters clearly want more education freedom in Montana. A candidate for Superintendent of Public Instruction who supports expanding school choice in the state and giving families more options and flexibility to educate their children is more likely to win support from nearly half of voters (44%) overall, including one-in-four (25%) voters who are much more likely to vote for them. Only 24% of voters say they would be less likely to vote for such a candidate. Furthermore, a candidate for Superintendent of Public Instruction who supports expanding school choice in the state receives majority support from Republicans (64%), parents (54%), non-college educated voters (53%), voters ages 55-64 (52%), and rural voters (52%).

OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

More than 9-in-10 (92%) Montana voters support giving every child in Montana the ability to attend the public school in the state that best meets their needs (72% *strongly* support), including with every major demographic subgroup.

The public school system is such an important part of the state’s fabric that 75% of voters believe that all students – including private school and homeschooling students – should have access to a public school on a course-by-course basis for instruction, electives, sports, and clubs. Forty-one percent *strongly* agree. By significant margins, majorities of all major demographic subgroups agree.

“Do you agree or disagree that all students, including private school and homeschooling students, should be able to attend a public school on a course-by-course basis for instruction, electives, sports, or clubs?”



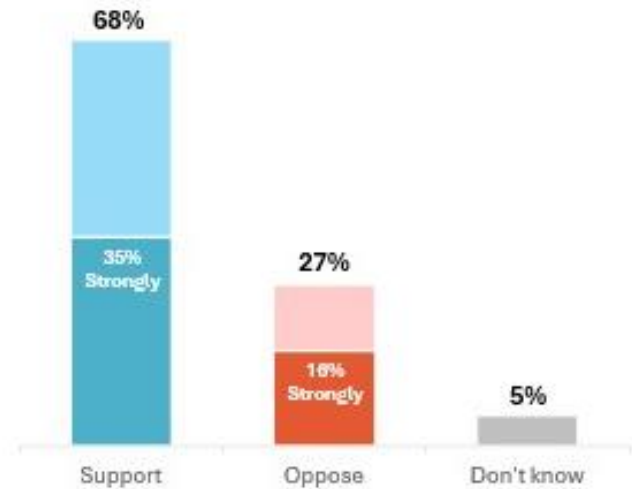
Key Demographics	% Agree (Strongly + Somewhat)
Party: Republican	79%
Party: Democrat	68%
Party: Unaffiliated/independent	78%
DMA: Missoula	74%
DMA: Billings	74%
DMA: Butte-Bozeman	82%
DMA: Great Falls	75%
Geography: Urban	71%
Geography: Suburban	75%
Geography: Rural	77%
Gender: Male	75%
Gender: Female	75%
K-12 Parent: Yes	84%
K-12 Parent: No	72%
HH Income: Less than \$50,000	78%
HH Income: \$50,000 to \$100,000	74%
HH Income: More than \$100,000	74%

STRONG SUPPORT FOR UNIVERSAL EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS

Nearly seven-in-ten (68%) Montana voters support Education Savings Accounts in Montana. In fact, more voters *strongly* support ESAs (35%) than oppose altogether (27% total oppose). Majority support for ESAs extends across party lines (76% of Republicans, 59% of Democrats, 67% of unaffiliated/independents), gender (68% of females and males), age (75% of 18-44 year olds, 63% of those 45 or older), and geography (65% of urban voters, 71% of suburban voters, 69% of rural voters, 66% of voters in the Missoula and Billings DMAs, 73% of voters in the Butte-Bozeman DMA, and 71% of voters in the Great Falls DMA). Further, 78% of parents support ESAs.

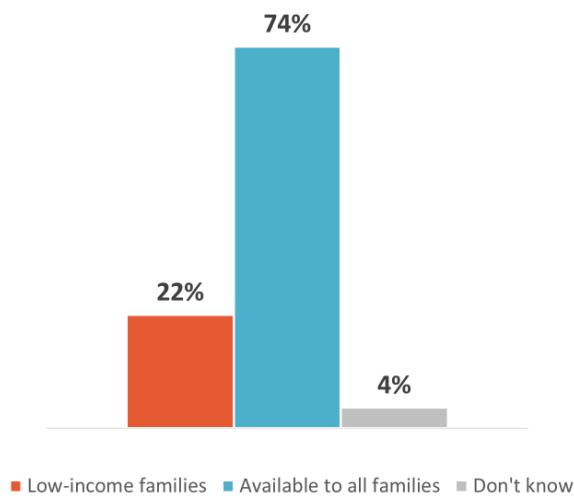
"As you may know, an Education Savings Account, also known as an ESA, allows families to use the state funding that would have gone to their child's public school to instead access the education that best meets their child's needs. Families can spend this money on private school tuition, online education programs, tutoring, curriculum, therapies and other direct education needs of their child.

Knowing this, would you say you support or oppose ESAs?"



Three out of four voters who support ESAs believe they should be made available to all families across the state regardless of income level, while only 22% believe they should be limited to low-income families (4% don't know). This opinion is bolstered by majorities of voters across all demographic audiences. Likewise, 75% of parents and non-parents alike believe ESAs should be available for all families across the state.

"Do you believe Education Savings Accounts in Montana should be limited to low-income families or available to all families across the state?"



Key Demographics	Low-income families	Available to all
Party: Republican	18%	79%
Party: Democrat	32%	66%
Party: Unaffiliated/independent	17%	78%
DMA: Missoula	26%	68%
DMA: Billings	20%	74%
DMA: Butte-Bozeman	20%	80%
DMA: Great Falls	21%	77%
Geography: Urban	28%	66%
Geography: Suburban	20%	77%
Geography: Rural	18%	79%
Gender: Male	17%	79%
Gender: Female	26%	70%
K-12 Parent: Yes	21%	75%
K-12 Parent: No	22%	75%
HH Income: Less than \$50,000	33%	63%
HH Income: \$50,000 to \$100,000	19%	78%
HH Income: More than \$100,000	15%	81%

By a 2:1 advantage, a significant majority of voters believe that if available to all families in the state, ESAs would improve Montana’s education system rather than weaken it (61% improve, 28% weaken). An equal amount (29%) of voters believe universal ESA eligibility would *strongly* improve the state’s overall education system as those who say weaken overall. Audiences most in agreement include Republicans (73%), voters in the Great Falls DMA (68%), non-college educated voters (67%), voters ages 18-44 (67%), parents (67%), and rural voter (66%).

Not only are K-12 parents more optimistic of the impact ESAs will have on their child’s education, but two-thirds would be interested in participating in this program with their children. Interest is shared across the board.

METHODOLOGY

STATEWIDE SURVEY OF 500 REGISTERED VOTERS | MAY 17 TO 20, 2024 | MARGIN OF ERROR = +/- 4.4% | 65% OF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED LIVE ON TELEPHONES, 35% OF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED ONLINE

STATEWIDE SURVEY OF 400 LIKELY VOTERS | SEPTEMBER 4 TO 6, 2024 | MARGIN OF ERROR = +/- 4.9% | 57% OF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED TEXT-TO-WEB, 43% OF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED LIVE ON TELEPHONES