



Educational  
Choice:  
What Is It,  
Who Has It,  
Who Wants It

John Kristof Senior Research Analyst  
Legislator Training Dallas, TX  
September 18, 2023

# The EdChoice Mission

Advancing educational  
freedom and choice for all  
as a pathway to successful  
lives and a stronger  
society.





# School Choice: What Is It?



# Types of Private Educational Choice Programs

## EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (ESAs)

Publicly funded, government-authorized savings account with restricted, but multiple uses for educational purposes.

## TAX CREDIT SCHOLARSHIPS

Taxpayers receive full or partial tax credits when they donate to nonprofits that provide private school scholarships.

## TAX CREDIT ESAs

ESAs funded through tax credit scholarships.

## SCHOOL VOUCHERS

Pays partial or full tuition for their child's private school

## REFUNDABLE TAX CREDITS

State income tax relief for approved educational expenses. Parents receive up to the full credit even if its value exceeds what they owe the state in taxes.

## INDIVIDUAL TAX CREDITS/DEDUCTIONS

Income tax relief for approved educational expenses.



# Types of Private Educational Choice Programs

## EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (ESAs)

Publicly funded, government-authorized savings account with restricted, but multiple uses for educational purposes.

## TAX CREDIT SCHOLARSHIPS

Taxpayers receive full or partial tax credits when they donate to nonprofits that provide private school scholarships.

## TAX CREDIT ESAs

ESAs funded through tax credit scholarships.

## SCHOOL VOUCHERS

Pays partial or full tuition for their child's private school

## REFUNDABLE TAX CREDITS

State income tax relief for approved educational expenses. Parents receive up to the full credit even if its value exceeds what they owe the state in taxes.

## INDIVIDUAL TAX CREDITS/DEDUCTIONS

Income tax relief for approved educational expenses.

# Types of Private Educational Choice Programs

## EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (ESAs)

Publicly funded, government-authorized savings account with restricted, but multiple uses for educational purposes.

## TAX CREDIT SCHOLARSHIPS

Taxpayers receive full or partial tax credits when they donate to nonprofits that provide private school scholarships.

## TAX CREDIT ESAs

ESAs funded through tax credit scholarships.

## SCHOOL VOUCHERS

Pays partial or full tuition for their child's private school

## REFUNDABLE TAX CREDITS

State income tax relief for approved educational expenses. Parents receive up to the full credit even if its value exceeds what they owe the state in taxes.

## INDIVIDUAL TAX CREDITS/DEDUCTIONS

Income tax relief for approved educational expenses.

# Types of Private Educational Choice Programs

## EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (ESAs)

Publicly funded, government-authorized savings account with restricted, but multiple uses for educational purposes.

## TAX CREDIT SCHOLARSHIPS

Taxpayers receive full or partial tax credits when they donate to nonprofits that provide private school scholarships.

## TAX CREDIT ESAs

ESAs funded through tax credit scholarships.

## SCHOOL VOUCHERS

Pays partial or full tuition for their child's private school

## REFUNDABLE TAX CREDITS

State income tax relief for approved educational expenses. Parents receive up to the full credit even if its value exceeds what they owe the state in taxes.

## INDIVIDUAL TAX CREDITS/DEDUCTIONS

Income tax relief for approved educational expenses.



# Types of Private Educational Choice Programs

## EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (ESAs)

Publicly funded, government-authorized savings account with restricted, but multiple uses for educational purposes.

## TAX CREDIT SCHOLARSHIPS

Taxpayers receive full or partial tax credits when they donate to nonprofits that provide private school scholarships.

## TAX CREDIT ESAs

ESAs funded through tax credit scholarships.

## SCHOOL VOUCHERS

Pays partial or full tuition for their child's private school

## REFUNDABLE TAX CREDITS

State income tax relief for approved educational expenses. Parents receive up to the full credit even if its value exceeds what they owe the state in taxes.

## INDIVIDUAL TAX CREDITS/DEDUCTIONS

Income tax relief for approved educational expenses.

# Types of Private Educational Choice Programs

## EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (ESAs)

Publicly funded, government-authorized savings account with restricted, but multiple uses for educational purposes.

## TAX CREDIT SCHOLARSHIPS

Taxpayers receive full or partial tax credits when they donate to nonprofits that provide private school scholarships.

## TAX CREDIT ESAs

ESAs funded through tax credit scholarships.

## SCHOOL VOUCHERS

Pays partial or full tuition for their child's private school

## REFUNDABLE TAX CREDITS

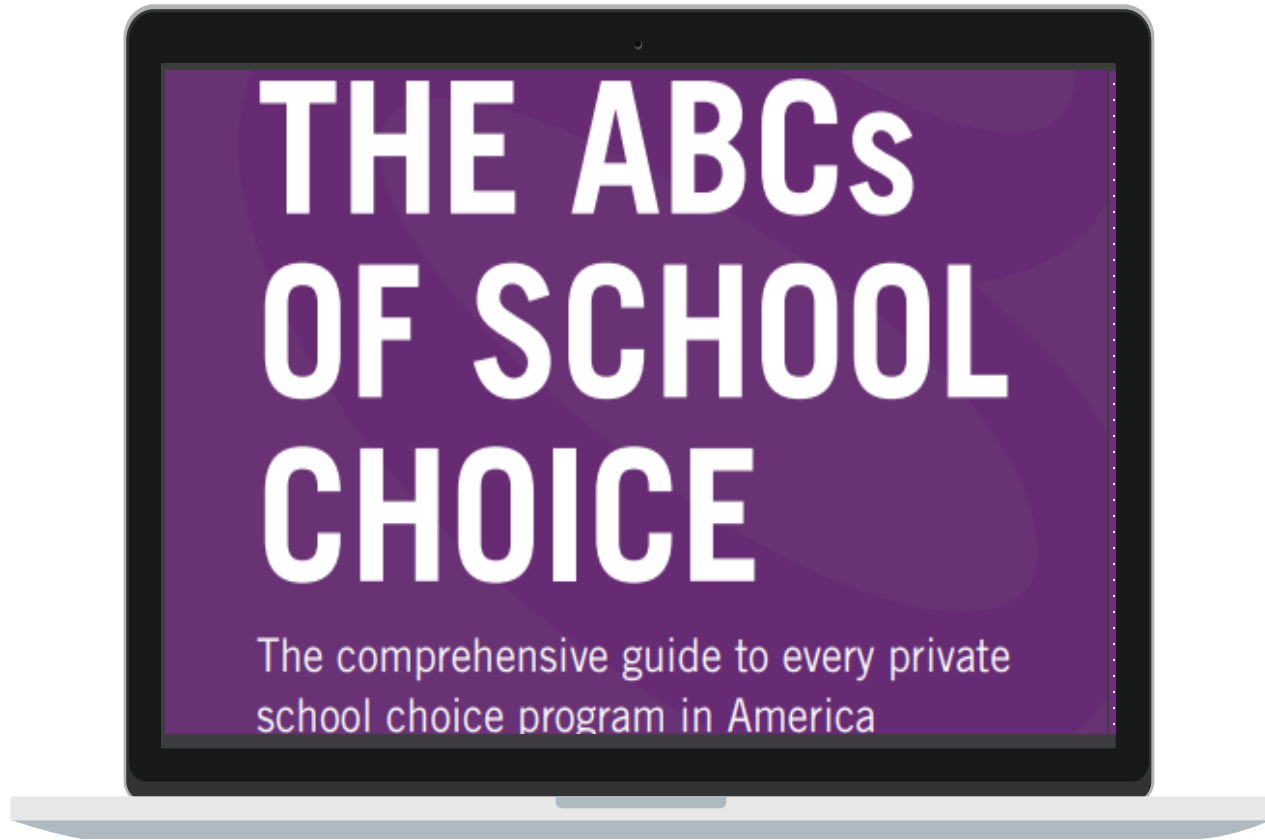
State income tax relief for approved educational expenses. Parents receive up to the full credit even if its value exceeds what they owe the state in taxes.

## INDIVIDUAL TAX CREDITS/DEDUCTIONS

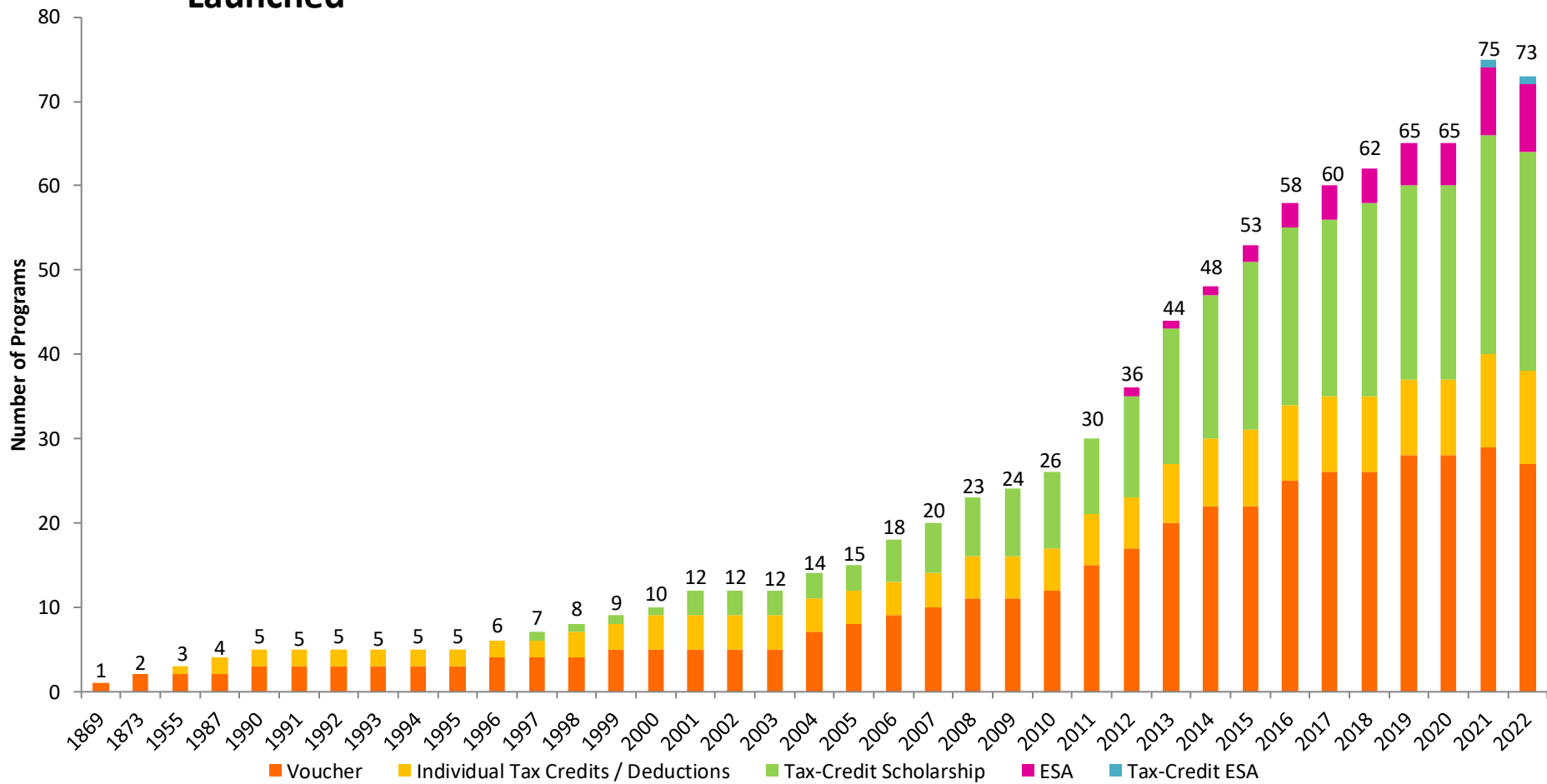
Income tax relief for approved educational expenses.

# School Choice: Who Has It?



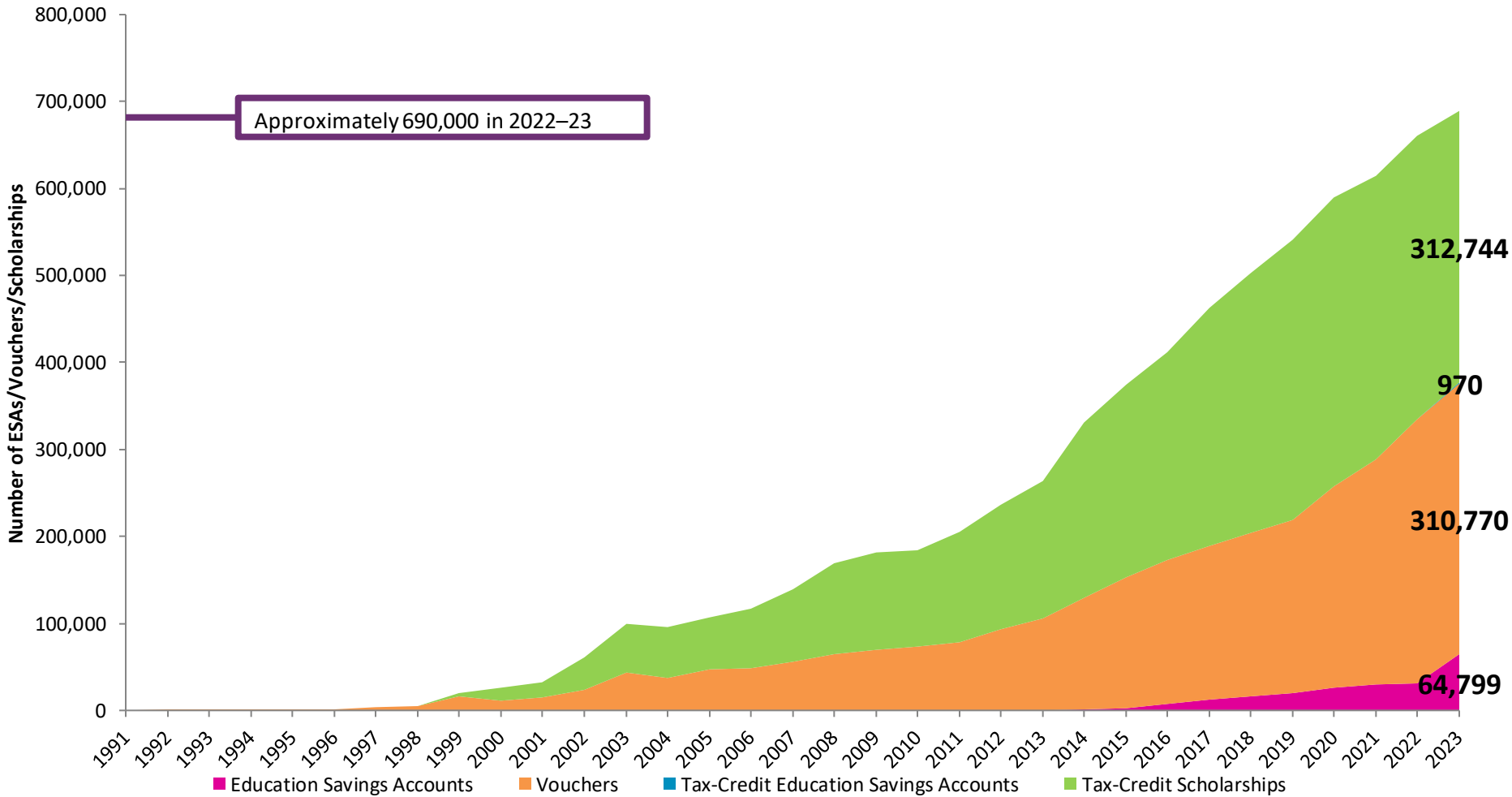


# Number of Currently Enacted Private School Choice Programs by Year Launched





# Number of ESAs, Vouchers, Tax-Credit ESAs, and Tax-Credit Scholarships

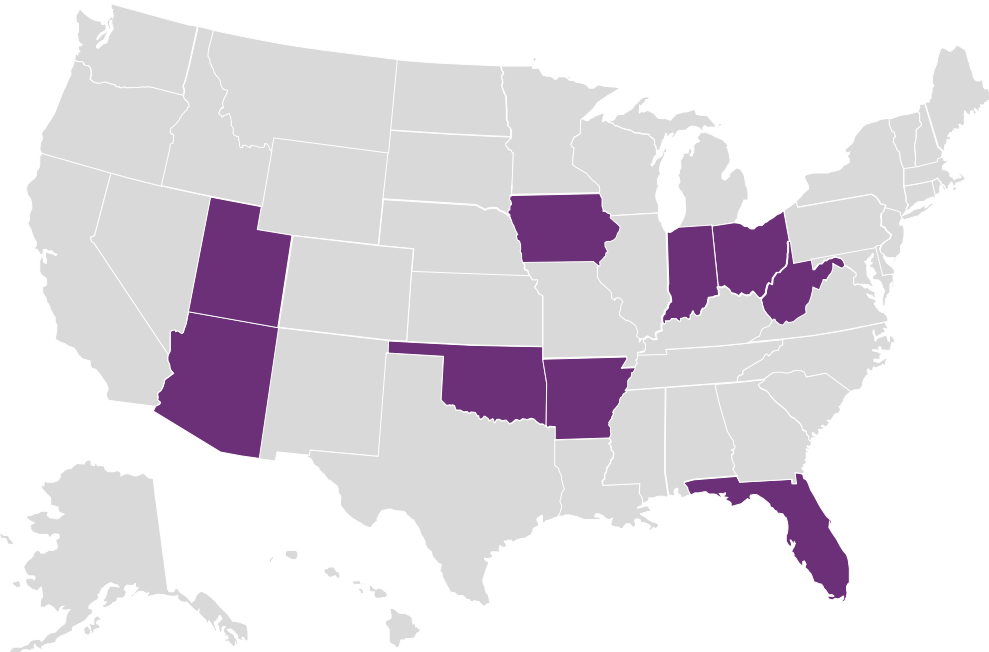


# EdChoice Share

	EdChoice Share Rank	Number of Programs	Private Educational Choice Programs Share (%)	Other Private School Share (%)	Traditional Public School Share (%)	Magnet School Share (%)	Public Charter School Share (%)	Homeschool Share (%)
Wisconsin	2	5	5.6	8.2	77.5	0.2	5.3	3.1
Arizona	4	5	4.9	0.6	72.8		19	2.6
Iowa	9	2	2.4	5.6	89.5		<0.1	2.6
North Carolina	12	3	1.4	5.3	67	8.9	7.3	10
West Virginia	16	1	0.7	4.1	90.8			4.5
Oklahoma	18	2	0.5	4.1	84.4		8.4	2.6
Arkansas	26	2	0.2	4.5	78.9	3.4	8.1	4.9



**Universal  
Private School  
Choice  
Programs  
(August 2023)**



# Indiana Choice Scholarship — Participation by Ethnicity



Ethnicity	Choice Percentages	All Indiana K-12
American Indian	0.1%	0.2%
Black	10%	13%
Asian	4%	3%
Hispanic	19%	14%
White	62%	64%
Multiracial	5%	5%
Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.1%

# Florida Family Empowerment Scholarship – 2021 Participation Demographics



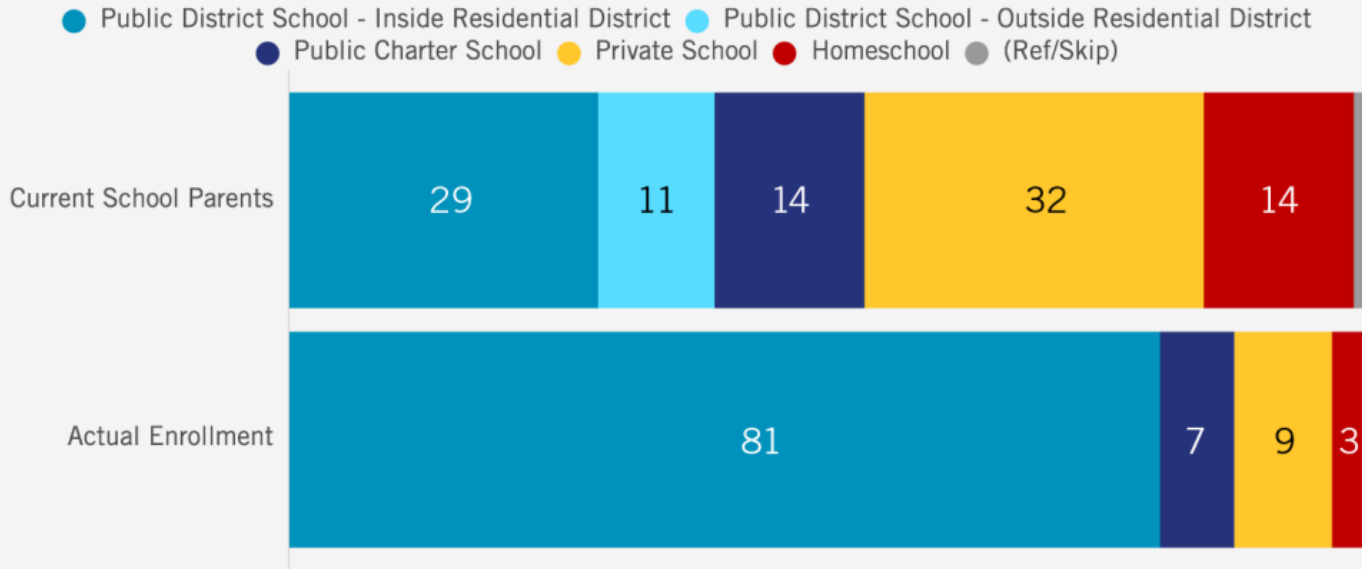
Ethnicity	Participants 2020-21	Eligible non-participants 2020-21
Black	35%	29%
Hispanic	36%	42%
White	25%	64%
ELL	24%	29%
Free/Reduced Lunch	91%	92%
Math Percentile	43%	46%
ELA Percentile	43%	46%

# School Choice: Who Wants It?

# SCHOOL TYPE PREFERENCE VS. ENROLLMENT, 2023

There is a substantial disconnect between parents' schooling preferences and actual enrollment patterns. More than 70 percent of parents would choose a type of school other than their local public district school.

*% of Respondents*



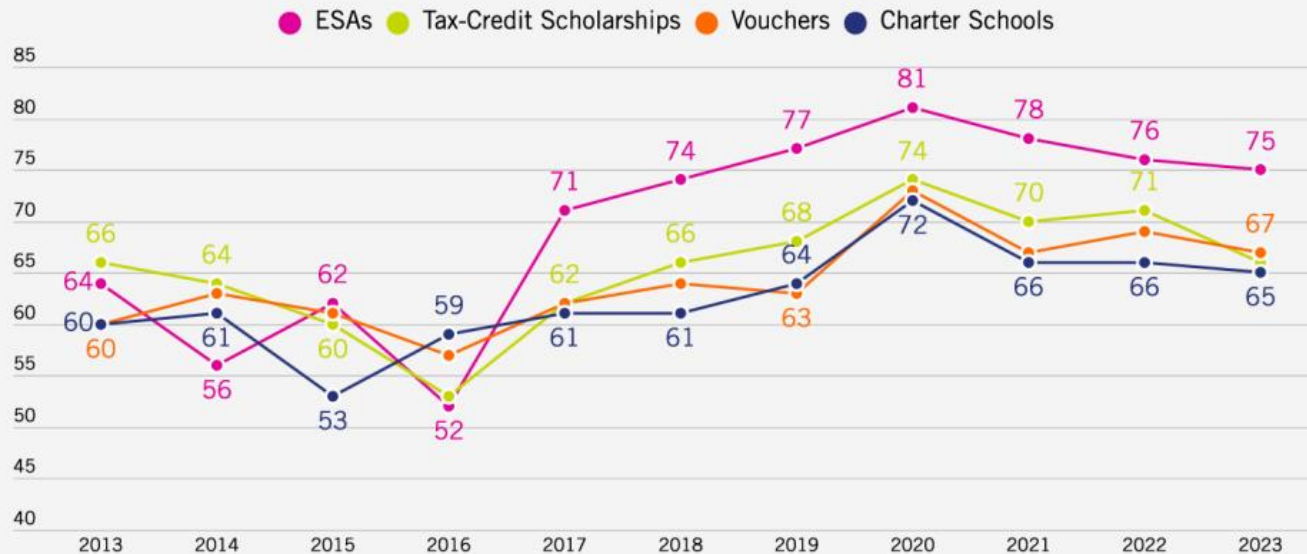
*Notes:* The percentages in this chart reflect a composite that averages split samples' responses to two slightly different versions of this question. Responses within parentheses were volunteered: "Ref" means "Refusal." For the online survey, the respondent was permitted to skip the question. NCES does not split out inter- and intra-district choice.

*Sources:* Authors' calculations; Drew Catt and Manasa Swaminathan, January 23, 2023, *2023 EdChoice Share: Where Are America's Students Educated?*, EdChoice; *2023 Schooling in America Survey* (conducted April 18–May 2, 2023), Q13

# PUBLIC FAVORABILITY OF K-12 CHOICE POLICIES, 2013-2023

At least two-thirds of Americans support four types of educational choice policies. But levels decreased slightly since last year.

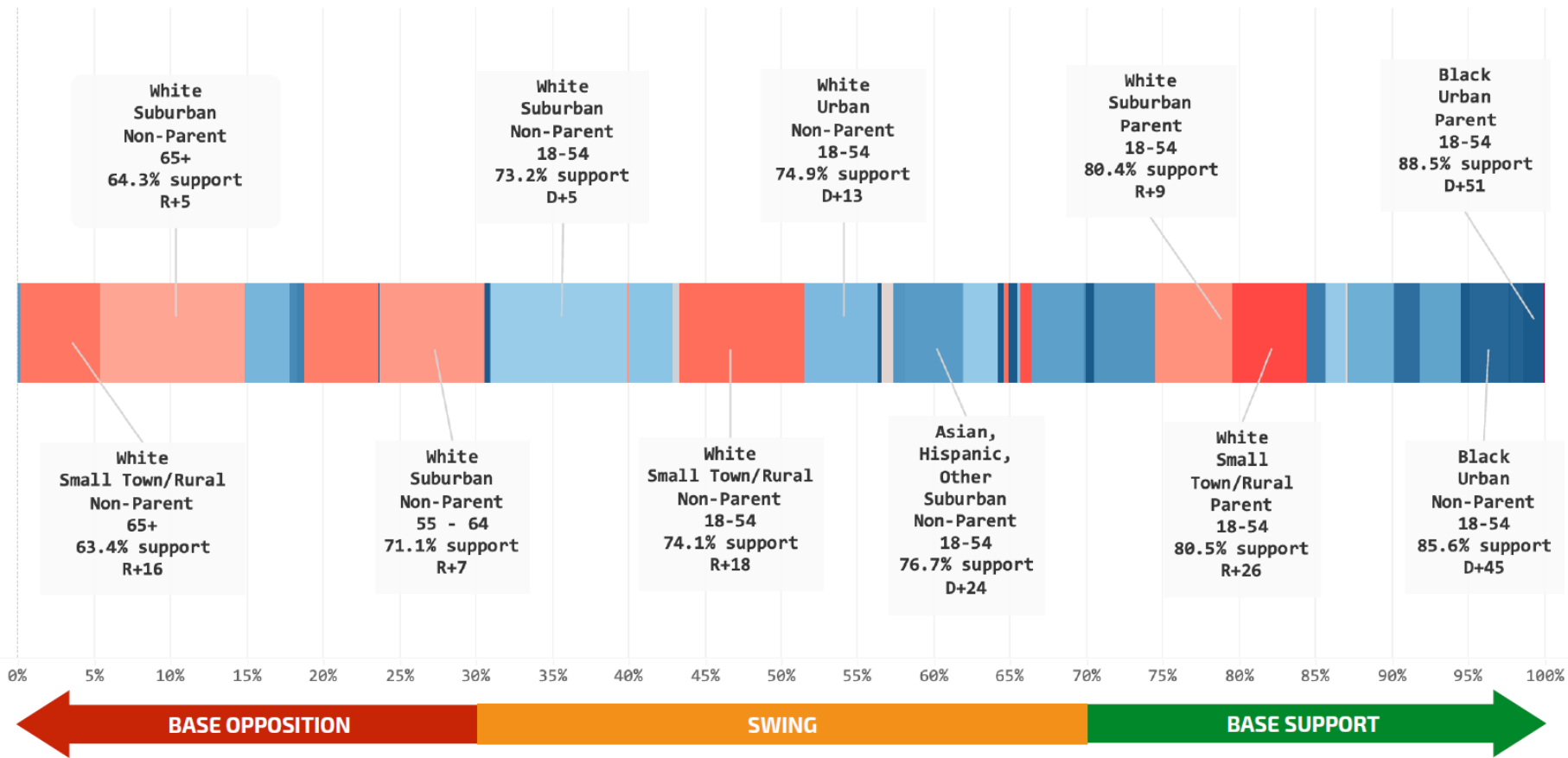
*% of General Population*



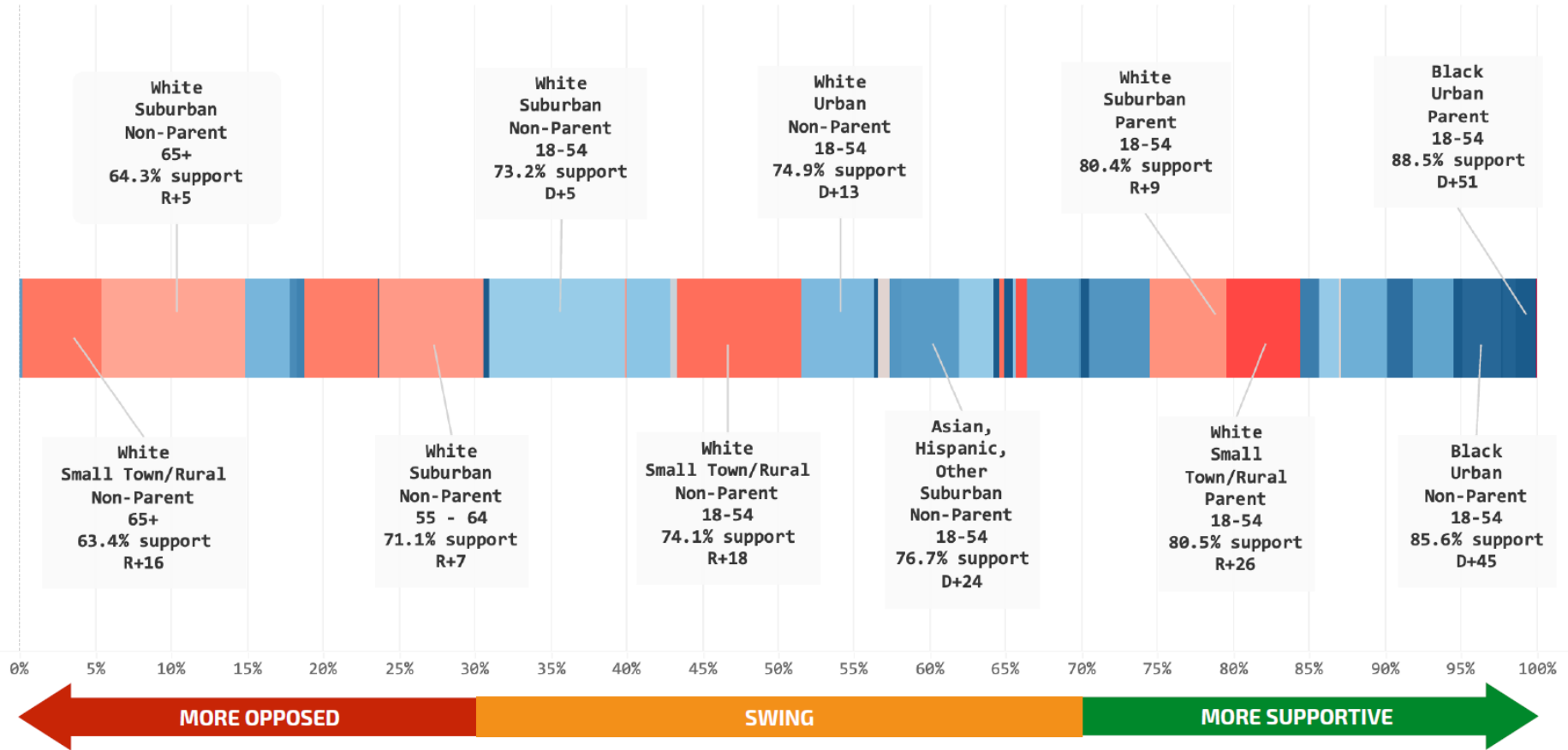
*Notes:* From 2013–2015 we slightly changed question wording to more accurately reflect the features of an education savings account (ESA) program and to avoid the inclusion of potentially loaded words or limiting ESA uses. Phone-only survey results shown for 2013–2017. Mixed-mode results (online and phone) shown for 2018–2023.

*Sources:* EdChoice, *2023 Schooling in America Survey* (conducted April 18–May 2, 2023), Q17, Q19, Q21, and Q25; EdChoice, *Schooling in America Survey*, 2016–2022; Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, *Schooling in America Survey*, 2013–2015

# Base and Swing Audiences: School Vouchers



# Base and Swing Audiences: Charter Schools





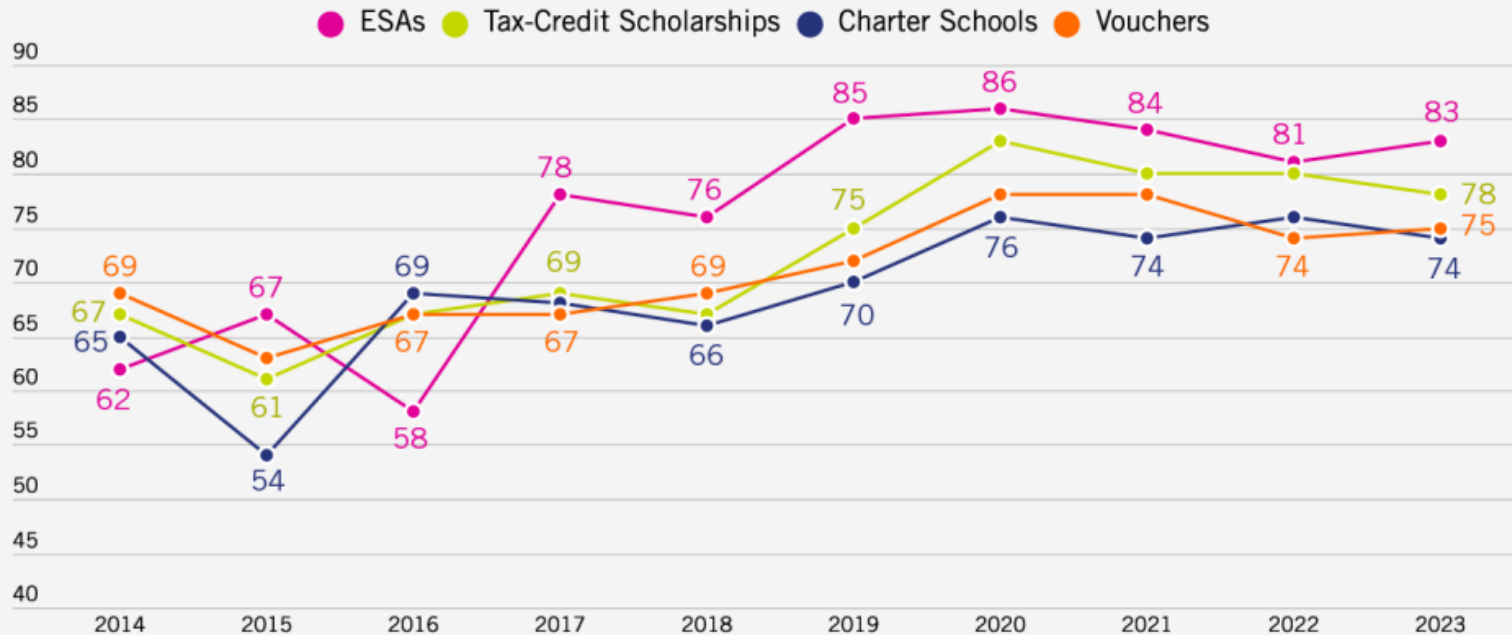
# Support Heatmap: ESAs (Description)

			Democrat			Independent			Republican				
			18-54	55 - 64	65+	18-54	55 - 64	65+	18-54	55 - 64	65+		
Black	Non-College	Parent	Urban	90.1%	90.1%	87.2%	89.7%	89.7%	86.8%	89.6%	89.6%	86.6%	
			Suburban	89.6%	89.6%	86.6%	89.2%	89.2%	86.2%	89.1%	89.1%	86.0%	
			Small Town	88.7%	88.7%	85.4%	88.3%	88.3%	85.0%	88.1%	88.1%	84.8%	
	Non-Parent		Urban	88.5%	88.5%	85.2%	88.1%	88.1%	84.8%	88.0%	88.0%	84.6%	
			Suburban	88.0%	88.0%	84.6%	87.6%	87.6%	84.1%	87.4%	87.4%	83.9%	
			Small Town	86.9%	86.9%	83.3%	86.5%	86.5%	82.8%	86.3%	86.3%	82.6%	
	College	Parent	Urban	88.8%	88.8%	85.6%	88.5%	88.5%	85.2%	88.3%	88.3%	85.0%	
			Suburban	88.3%	88.3%	85.0%	87.9%	87.9%	84.5%	87.8%	87.8%	84.3%	
			Small Town	87.3%	87.3%	83.7%	86.9%	86.9%	83.2%	86.7%	86.7%	83.0%	
		Non-Parent		Urban	87.1%	87.1%	83.5%	86.7%	86.7%	83.0%	86.5%	86.5%	82.8%
				Suburban	86.5%	86.5%	82.8%	86.1%	86.1%	82.3%	85.9%	85.9%	82.1%
				Small Town	85.4%	85.4%	81.4%	84.9%	84.9%	80.8%	84.7%	84.7%	80.6%
Asian, Hispanic, Other	Non-College	Parent	Urban	90.1%	90.1%	87.3%	89.8%	89.8%	86.8%	89.7%	89.7%	86.7%	
			Suburban	89.7%	89.7%	86.7%	89.3%	89.3%	86.2%	89.2%	89.2%	86.1%	
			Small Town	88.7%	88.7%	85.5%	88.4%	88.4%	85.1%	88.2%	88.2%	84.9%	
	Non-Parent		Urban	88.6%	88.6%	85.3%	88.2%	88.2%	84.9%	88.1%	88.1%	84.7%	
			Suburban	88.0%	88.0%	84.7%	87.6%	87.6%	84.2%	87.5%	87.5%	84.0%	
			Small Town	87.0%	87.0%	83.4%	86.6%	86.6%	82.9%	86.4%	86.4%	82.7%	
	College	Parent	Urban	88.9%	88.9%	85.7%	88.5%	88.5%	85.3%	88.4%	88.4%	85.1%	
			Suburban	88.4%	88.4%	85.1%	88.0%	88.0%	84.6%	87.9%	87.9%	84.4%	
			Small Town	87.4%	87.4%	83.8%	87.0%	87.0%	83.3%	86.8%	86.8%	83.1%	
		Non-Parent		Urban	87.2%	87.2%	83.6%	86.8%	86.8%	83.1%	86.6%	86.6%	82.9%
				Suburban	86.6%	86.6%	82.9%	86.2%	86.2%	82.4%	86.0%	86.0%	82.2%
				Small Town	85.4%	85.4%	81.5%	85.0%	85.0%	81.0%	84.8%	84.8%	80.7%
White	Non-College	Parent	Urban	90.5%	90.5%	87.7%	90.2%	90.2%	87.3%	90.0%	90.0%	87.2%	
			Suburban	90.0%	90.0%	87.1%	89.7%	89.7%	86.7%	89.6%	89.6%	86.6%	
			Small Town	89.1%	89.1%	86.0%	88.8%	88.8%	85.6%	88.6%	88.6%	85.4%	
	Non-Parent		Urban	89.0%	89.0%	85.8%	88.6%	88.6%	85.4%	88.5%	88.5%	85.2%	
			Suburban	88.5%	88.5%	85.2%	88.1%	88.1%	84.7%	87.9%	87.9%	84.6%	
			Small Town	87.5%	87.5%	83.9%	87.0%	87.0%	83.5%	86.9%	86.9%	83.3%	
	College	Parent	Urban	89.3%	89.3%	86.2%	88.9%	88.9%	85.8%	88.8%	88.8%	85.6%	
			Suburban	88.8%	88.8%	85.6%	88.4%	88.4%	85.2%	88.3%	88.3%	85.0%	
			Small Town	87.8%	87.8%	84.4%	87.4%	87.4%	83.9%	87.3%	87.3%	83.7%	
		Non-Parent		Urban	87.6%	87.6%	84.2%	87.2%	87.2%	83.7%	87.1%	87.1%	83.5%
				Suburban	87.1%	87.1%	83.5%	86.7%	86.7%	83.0%	86.5%	86.5%	82.8%
				Small Town	86.0%	86.0%	82.1%	85.5%	85.5%	81.6%	85.3%	85.3%	81.4%

# PARENT FAVORABILITY OF K-12 CHOICE POLICIES, 2014-2023

Education savings accounts (ESAs) remain parents' most popular educational choice policy for the seventh consecutive year.

*% of Current School Parents*



# Split-sample question: Universal vs. Targeted ESAs



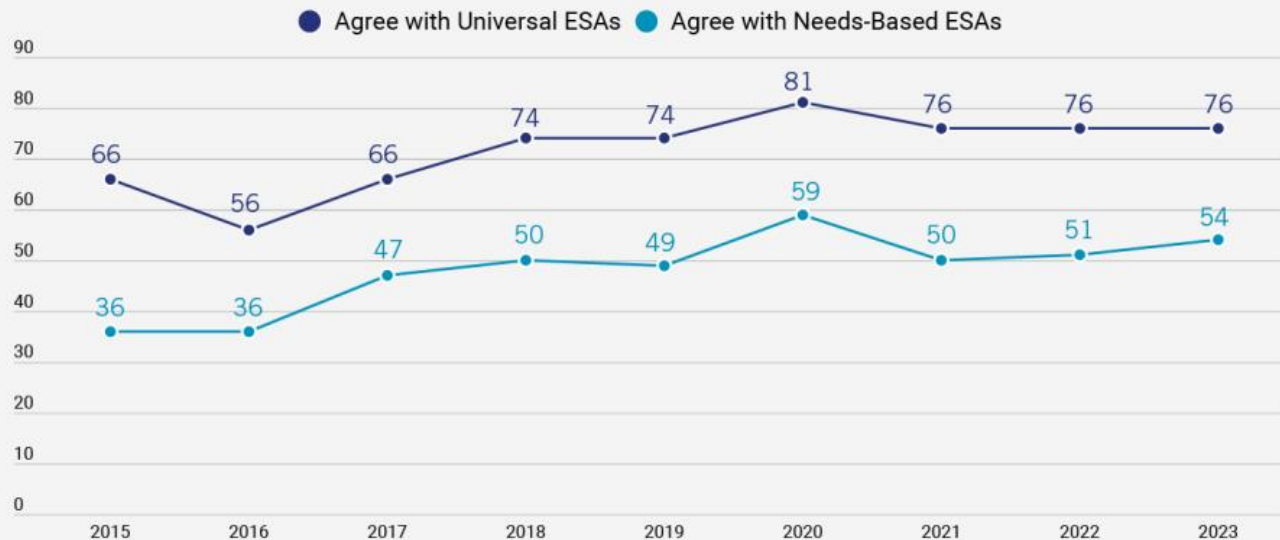
“Some people believe that ESAs should be available to all families, regardless of incomes and special needs. Do you agree or disagree with that statement?”

“Some people believe that ESAs should only be available to families based on financial need. Do you agree or disagree with that statement?”

# UNIVERSAL VS. NEEDS-BASED EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (ESAs), 2015-2023

More than three-fourths of the public support universal ESAs—a similar result to what we have observed in recent years.

*% of General Population by split sample*



*Notes:* Phone-only survey results shown for 2015–2017. Mixed-mode results (online and phone) shown for 2018–2023. Volunteered responses not shown nor skips reflected in this chart.

*Sources:* EdChoice, *2023 Schooling in America Survey* (conducted April 18–May 2, 2023), Q24; EdChoice, *Schooling in America Survey*, 2016–2022; Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, *Schooling in America Survey*, 2015

## PARENTS' REASONS FOR CHOOSING A SCHOOL

Charter school and homeschool parents were most likely to name a safe environment as a top-three factor in choosing a school.

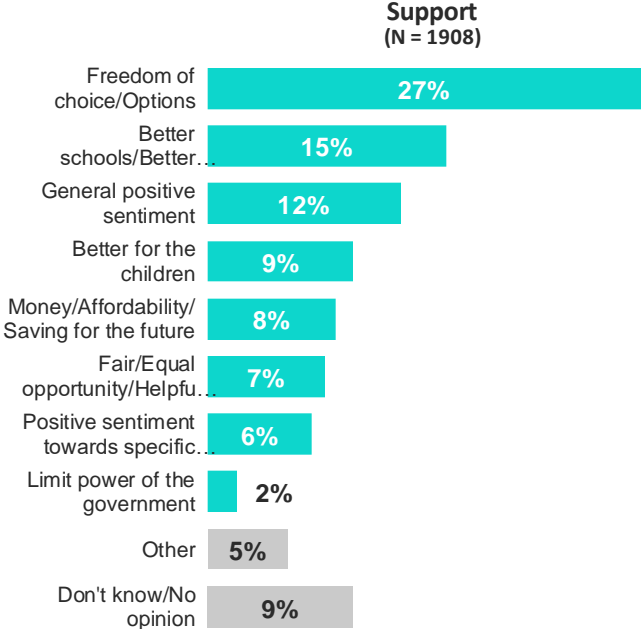
*% of Current School Parents Providing Ranking 1, 2, or 3 By Experience with School Type*

Factors	Public District School	Public Charter School	Private School	Homeschool
Location/Close to Home or Work	37%	29%	22%	23%
Socialization/Peers/Other Kids	32%	20%	16%	16%
Our Assigned District/Neighborhood School	29%	13%	13%	12%
Safe Environment	27%	35%	28%	47%
Academic Quality or Reputation	24%	33%	30%	26%
Extracurricular Activities	22%	22%	20%	15%
Diversity	18%	17%	14%	12%
Structure, Discipline	16%	19%	24%	20%
Morals/Character/Values Instruction	15%	26%	32%	26%
School Size	14%	20%	17%	11%
Individual/One-on-One Attention	14%	15%	19%	29%
Class Size	13%	16%	18%	10%
Test Scores	10%	16%	16%	13%
Religious Environment/Instruction	7%	10%	17%	14%

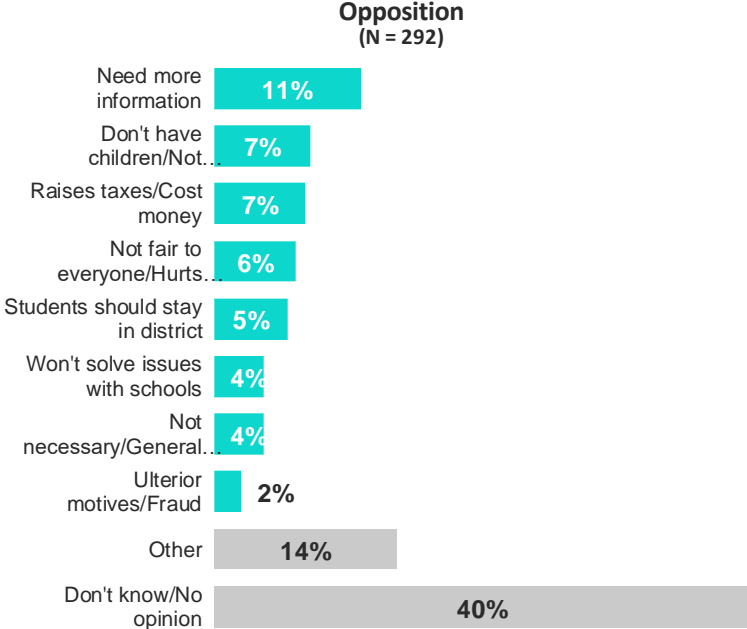
*Note: For more information about school type subgroup samples, see the full report at [EdChoice.org/SlAdashboard](https://EdChoice.org/SlAdashboard).  
Source: EdChoice, 2023 Schooling in America Survey (conducted April 18–May 2, 2023), Q5-B*

# Those who support school choice policies point to the importance of choice as well as the need for access to better schools/education. Those who oppose school choice policies say they need more information, are not interested, or feel they are unfair.

- Education savings accounts (ESAs), school vouchers, public charter schools, and open enrollment are often called “school choice” policies in K-12 education. In a few words or a short phrase, why did you express support for at least one of these policies



Education savings accounts (ESAs), school vouchers, public charter schools, and open enrollment are often called “school choice” policies in K-12 education. In a few words or a short phrase, why did you express opposition for all of these policies?

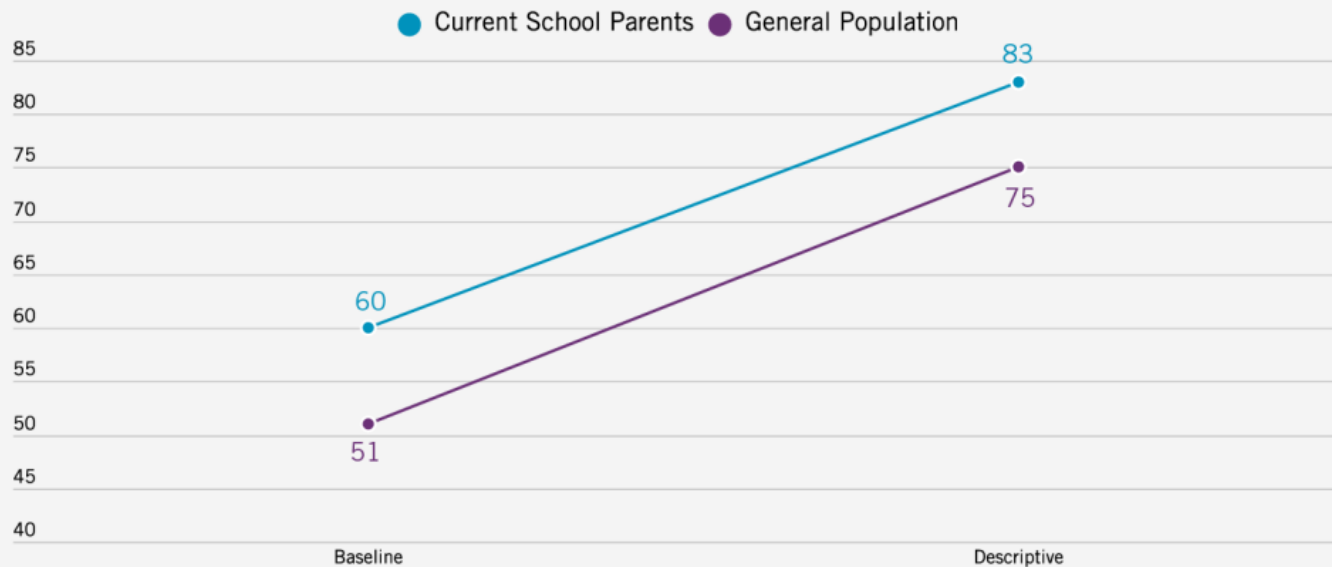


Source: Survey conducted March 15, 2022 – March 19, 2022, among U.S. adults

# EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (ESA) FAVORABILITY - WITHOUT VS. WITH DESCRIPTION, 2023

When given a description of ESAs, support increased by 23 points for both parents and the general population.

*% of Respondents replying "strongly or somewhat favor"*



The following data reflect results from the most recent monthly General Population or quarterly Teachers survey.

## K-12 Education in America

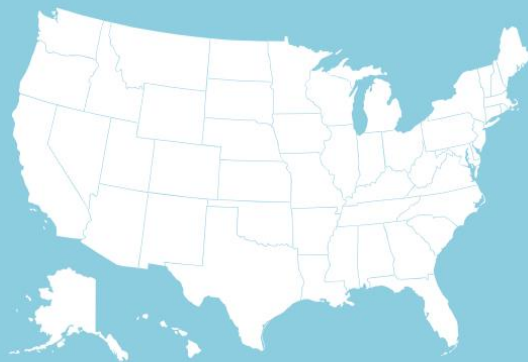
Discover the latest insights and trends about K-12 education ecosystems, based on our survey research.

[Access Reports Here](#)

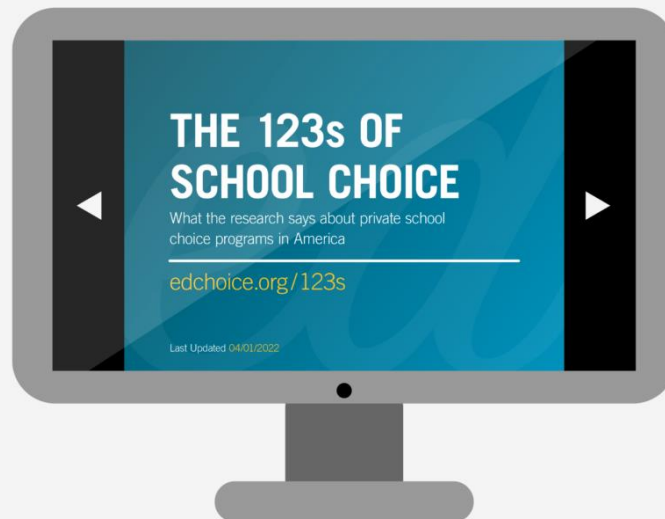
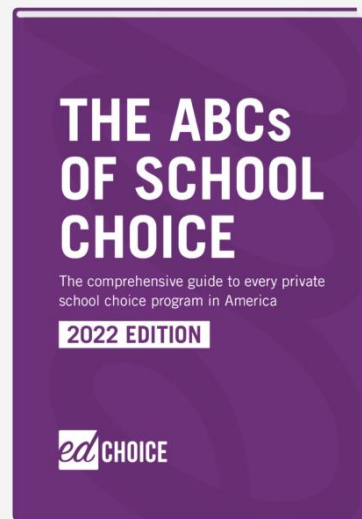
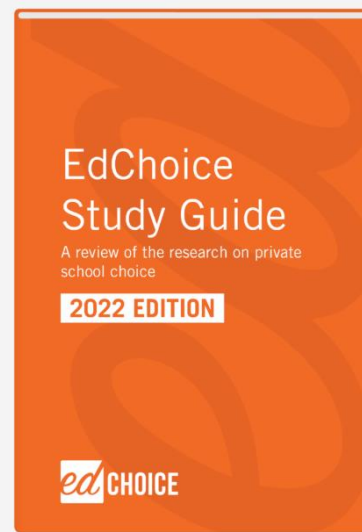
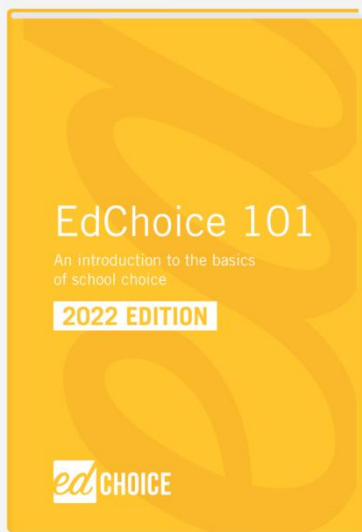
Learn more about your state's views and preferences on important K-12 education topics.

CHOOSE A STATE TO LEARN MORE

Select a state 







# What questions do you have?

CONNECT

John Kristof

[john@edchoice.org](mailto:john@edchoice.org)

[@jmkristof](https://twitter.com/jmkristof)

