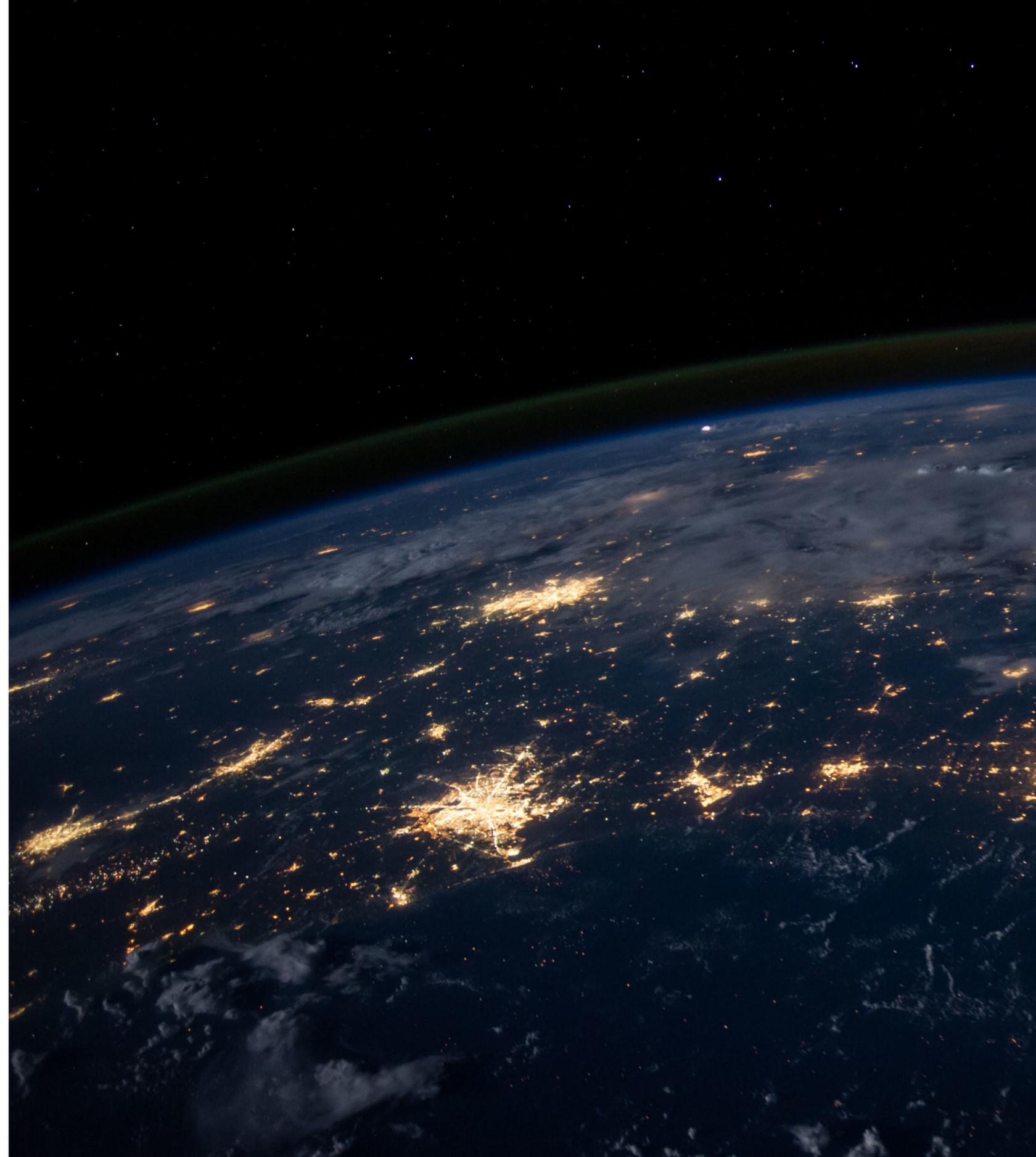




Walton Family Foundation

School Funding Survey

N = 2,049 registered voters nationwide
Field Dates: March 21-23, 2023



Key Findings



Key Findings: Appetite for Reform

- **Voters believe that we should re-think how we educate students.** They believe that we can expect more from schools and should hold leaders accountable for getting us there. At a high level, they express a desire to see big change.
- **Voters want schools to get the basics right.** This can have advantages for reform advocates who can champion the importance of doing better at teaching students math and reading, but also creates sympathy for the idea that we need more resources to get these basics right before shaking things up.
- **At the same time, there is greater friction around specific change.** While enrichment programs, career pathways and individualized learning find strong support, other big structural reforms like changing the school calendar meet more resistance.
- **Define the future we want as one focused on meeting students where they are and helping them on a clear path to success.** The clear support for re-thinking education becomes softer when we frame the status quo as “old”; “new” doesn't necessarily mean better. At the same time, better connecting students with a bright future.



Key Findings: ESSER Funds In Schools

- **Few voters have heard much about ESSER funds.** Those who have are generally positive about what they have seen, but this is very much not on voters' - or parents' - radar, and only one-in-five think there has been a funding increase that has improved the local schools.
- **Voters see ESSER as an opportunity to make some of the changes they want.** They see changes that directly support learning and student needs as better uses of ESSER funding than upgrading athletic facilities or spending more money on administrators.
- **Lack of funding isn't an adequate excuse for failure, but more funding also doesn't necessarily guarantee success.** Voters want accountability for how the money is spent and think some progress should be possible and expected, but they aren't banking on ESSER completely saving K-12 education in the US. Many are sympathetic to the idea that we will need more funding down the road to continue to build upon this infusion.

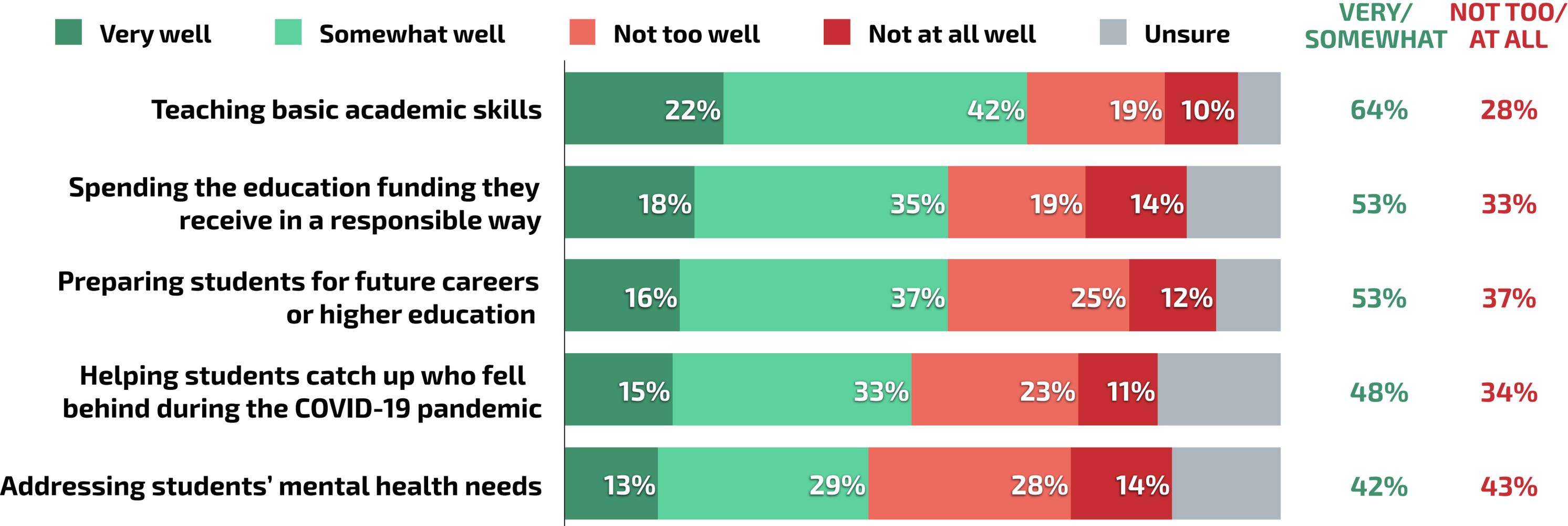


General Views On K-12 Education Reform



While most think their local schools are teaching basic academics well, fewer are confident they are doing a good job addressing learning loss and mental health

Q. Overall, how well do you think K-12 public schools in your local area are currently doing at each of the following?

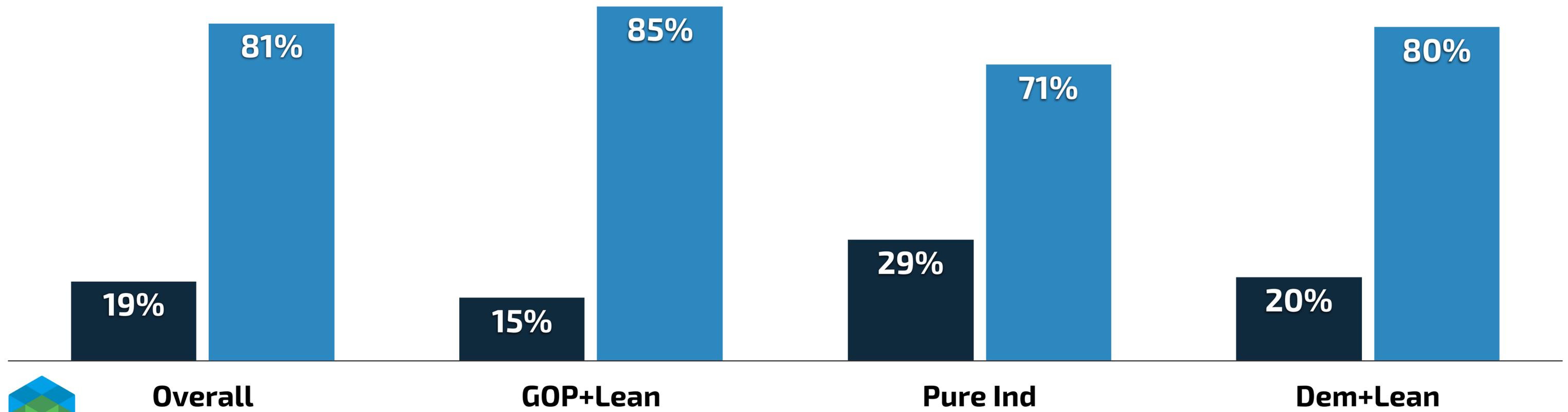


8 in 10 believe we should expect more from public schools

Q. Even if neither one perfectly describes your views, which of the following statements do you agree with more?

■ We can't reasonably expect our public schools to do much better at educating students

■ We should expect more out of our public schools and hold them more accountable for educating students

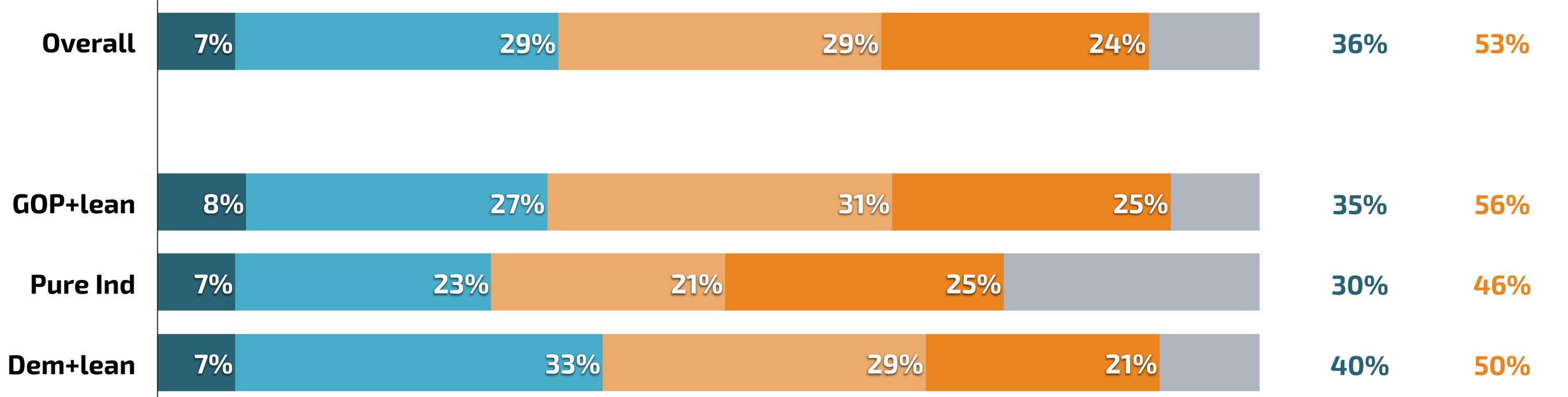


Voters believe most students need help catching up after the COVID-19 pandemic

Q. Thinking about the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning in your local area, do you think . . . ?

- Almost all students are probably back on track by now
- Most students are on track, but a few need help catching up
- A few students are on track, but most need help catching up
- Almost all students probably need help catching up
- Unsure

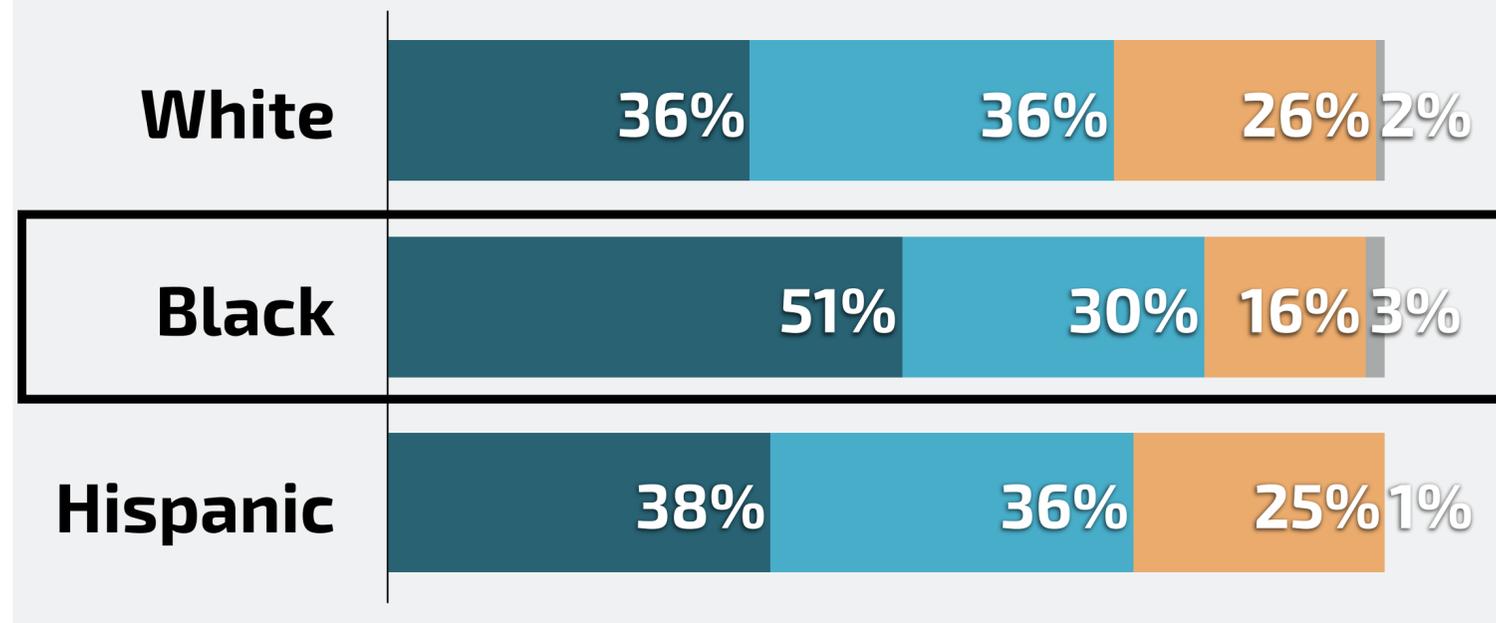
ON TRACK **NEED HELP CATCHING UP**



Black parents are the most worried about the effect of COVID-19 on student learning, but they're the most likely to say students are caught up

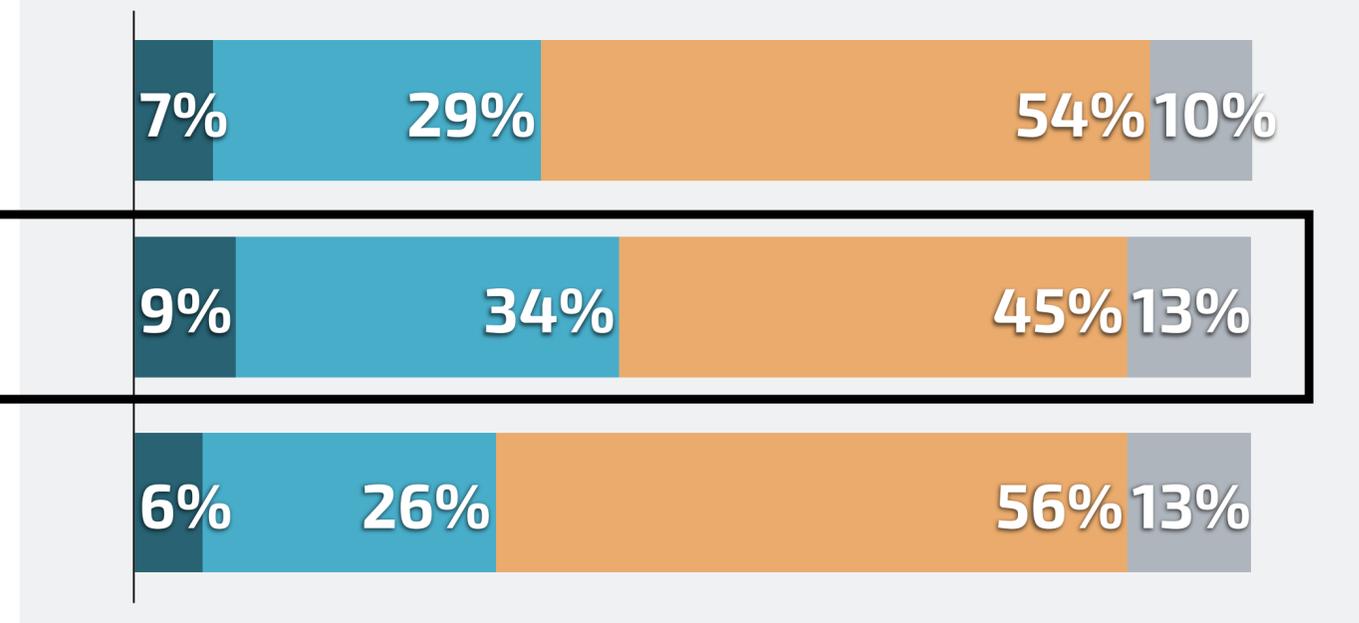
Q. How concerned, if at all, are you personally about each of the following issues in the United States today?
[The COVID-19 pandemic's effect on kids' education]

- Very concerned
- Somewhat concerned
- Not too/Not at all concerned
- Unsure



Q. Thinking about the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning in your local area, do you think . . .?

- Almost All Are On Track
- Most Are On Track
- Most/Almost All Need Help Catching Up
- Unsure



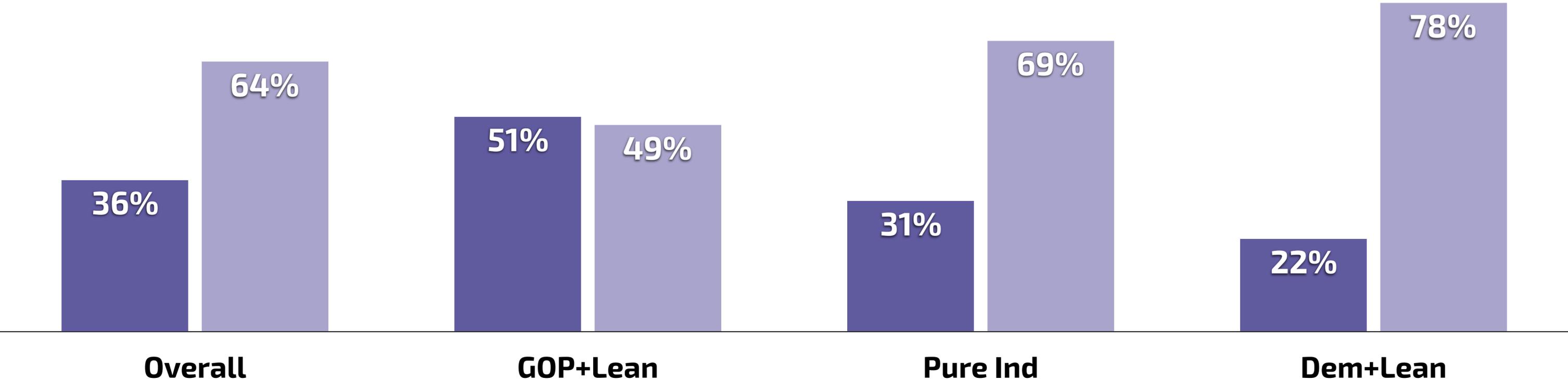
Note: Answers have been consolidated and simplified for clarity.

A large majority of voters believe we should rethink education rather than just go “back to the way things were”, but GOP is divided

Q. Even if neither one perfectly describes your views, which of the following statements do you agree with more?

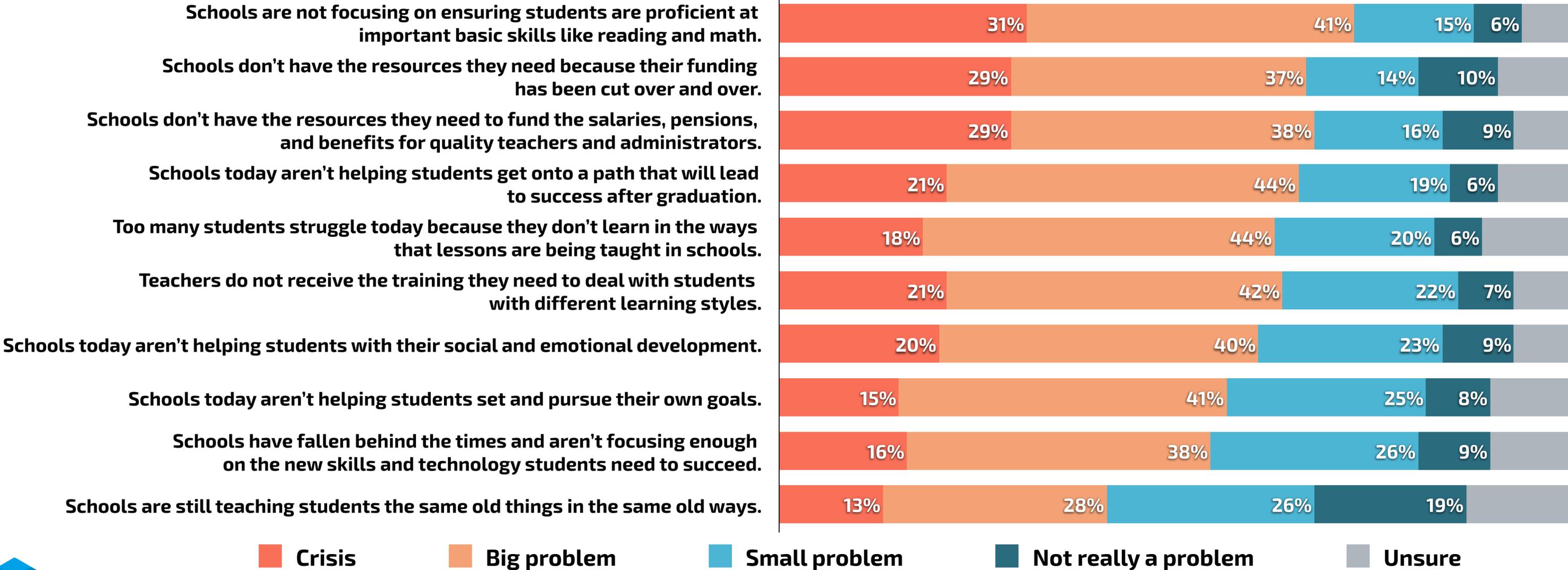
■ Schools should be focused on trying to get back to the way things were before the COVID-19 crisis

■ Schools should be focused on rethinking how we educate students, coming up with new ways to teach children moving forward as a result of the COVID-19 crisis



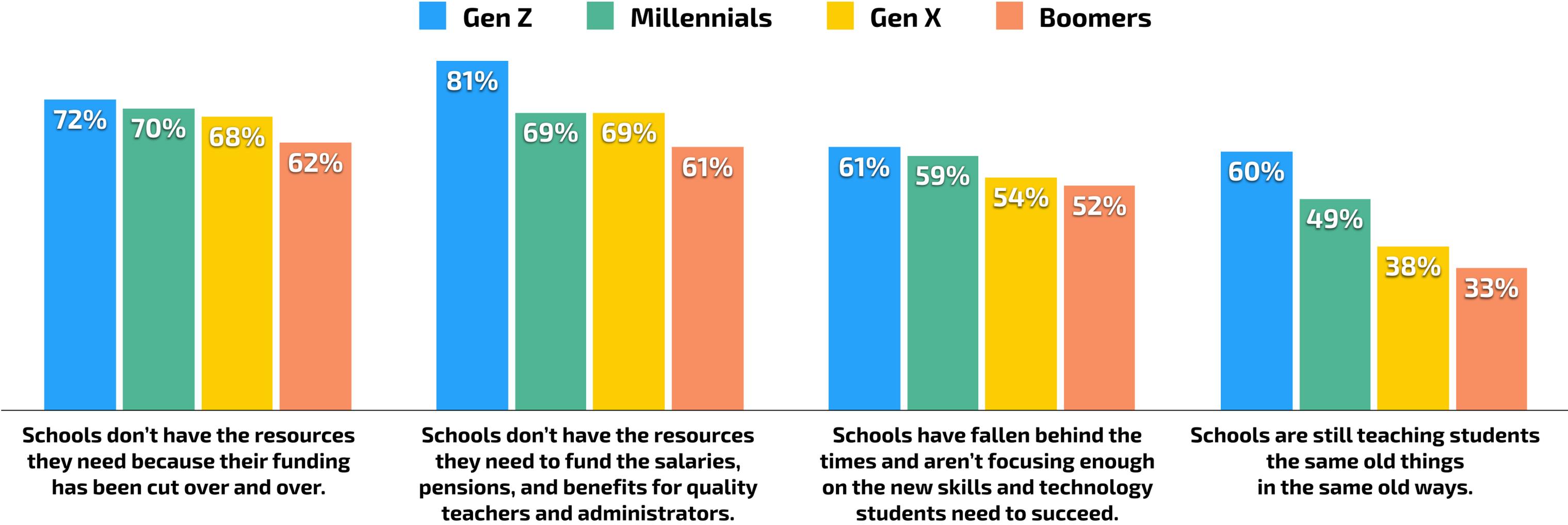
When it comes to K-12 education issues, fundamentals and resources—not revolution—are at the top of voters' minds

Q. Now you will see a series of statements about our public schools today. For each one, please indicate if you think this is a crisis, a big problem, a small problem, or not really a problem at all.



Younger generations more likely than older to see “old ways” as a big problem, but funding concerns rank higher for all voters

Q. Now you will see a series of statements about our public schools today. For each one, please indicate if you think this is a crisis, a big problem, a small problem, or not really a problem at all.

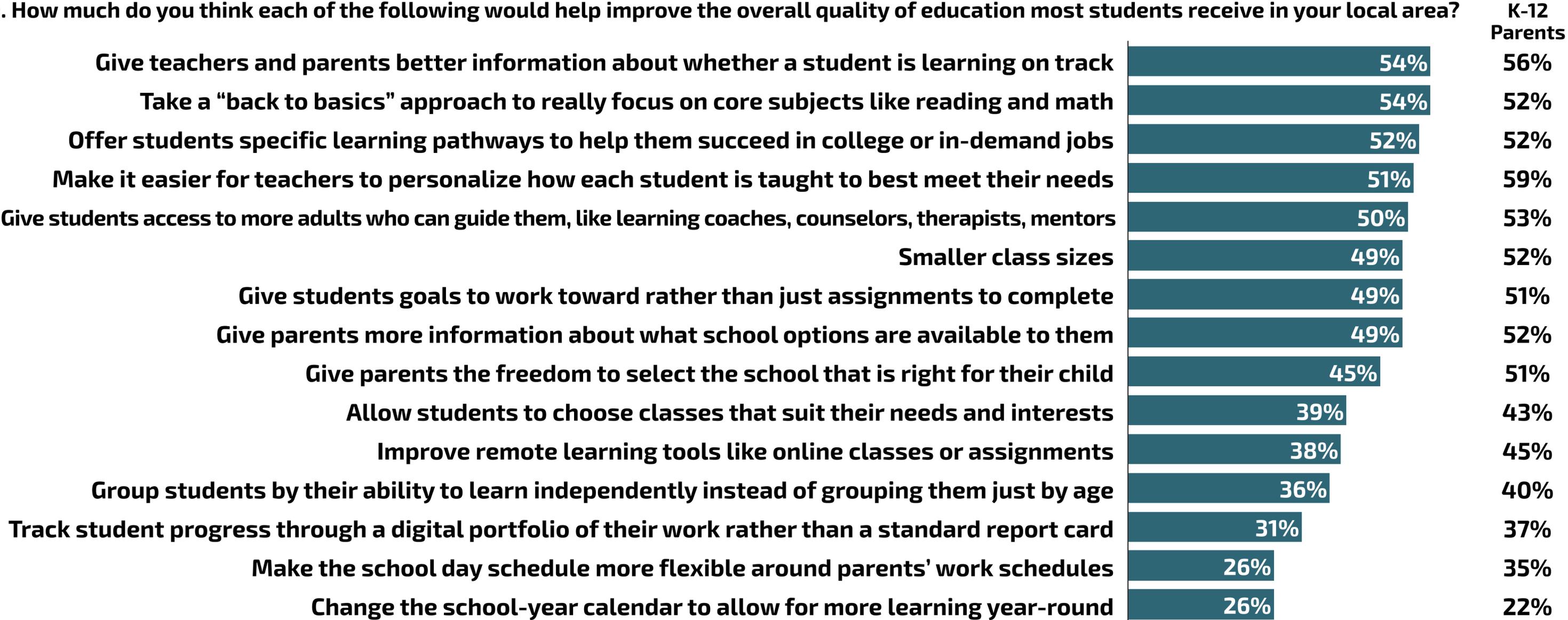


% CRISIS/BIG PROBLEM



Voters think we should meet students where they are at, ensuring they are on track and connecting that track to future success

Q. How much do you think each of the following would help improve the overall quality of education most students receive in your local area?



% WOULD HELP A LOT

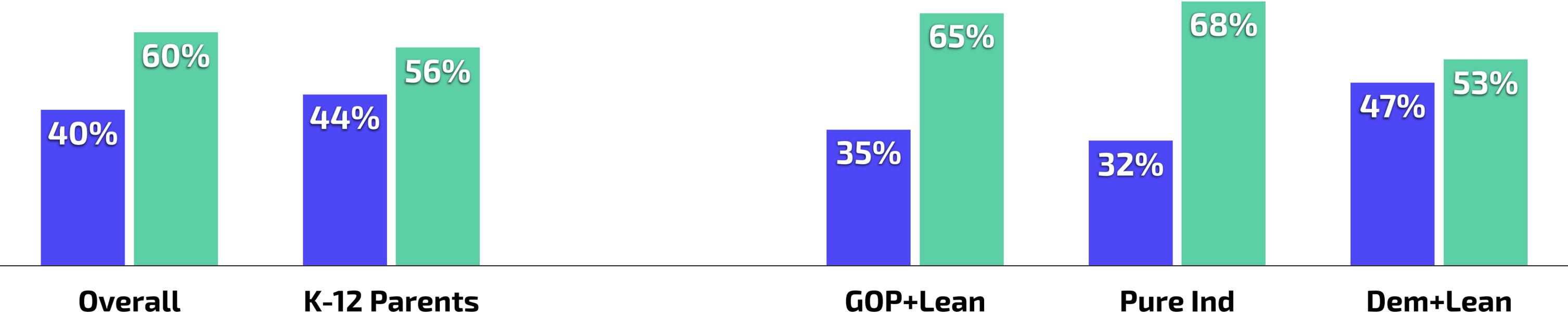


Voters say the biggest problem schools face is how they educate students, and they do not believe funding necessarily means better outcomes

Q. Even if neither one perfectly describes your views, which of the following statements do you agree with more?

■ The biggest problem our schools face is not having enough funding to properly educate students, and that needs to be addressed before considering big changes.

■ The biggest problem our schools face is that they need big changes to how they educate students, and just putting more funding into a broken system doesn't ultimately help students.

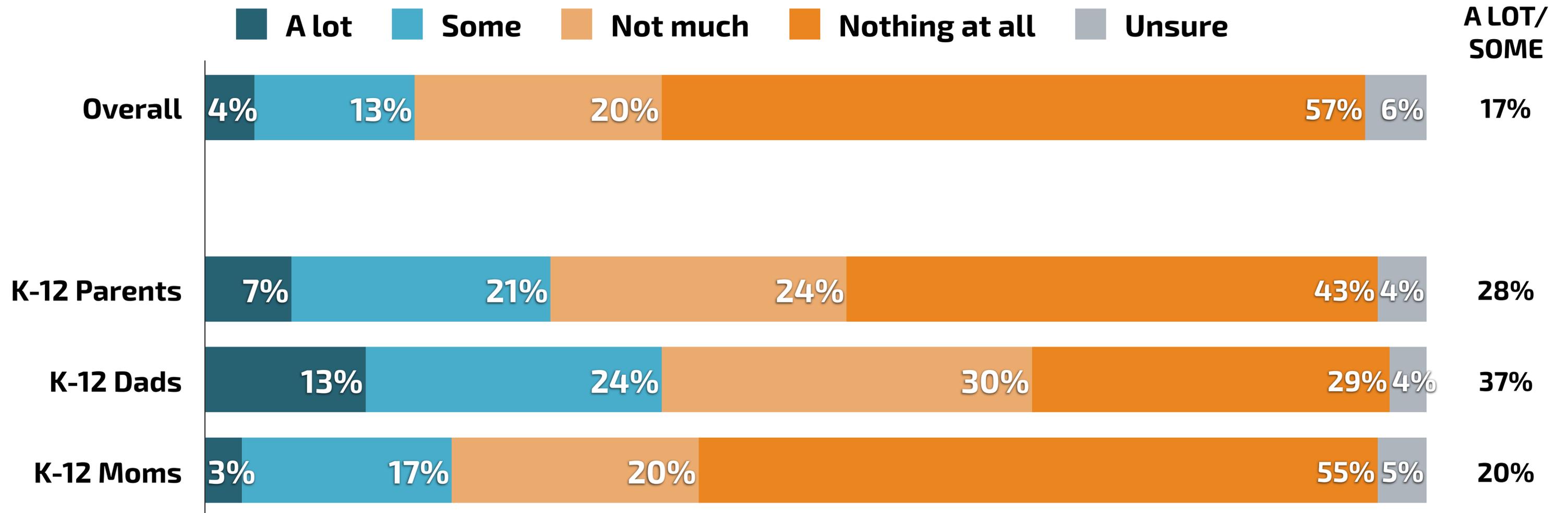


Views On ESSER & Spending Priorities



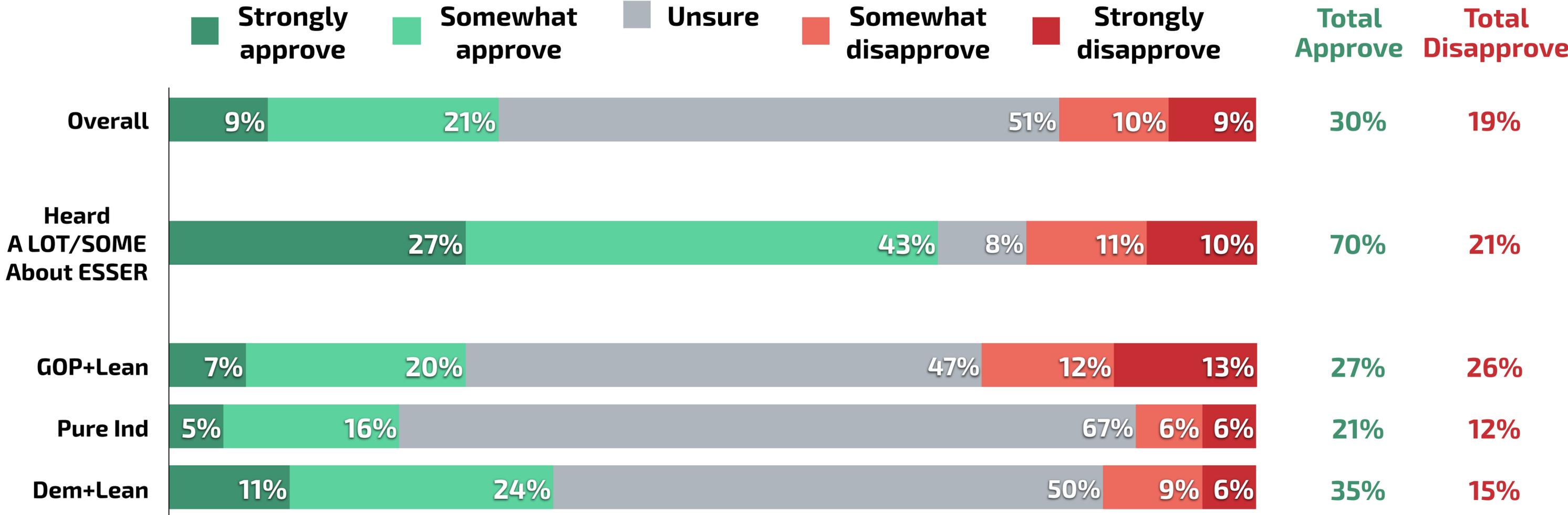
Most voters have heard little or nothing about ESSER

Q. How much have you heard, if at all, about the ESSER Fund and plans for those funds in your local school district?



Voters are largely unfamiliar with how state and local education leaders have spend ESSER funds, but those who have an opinion are more positive

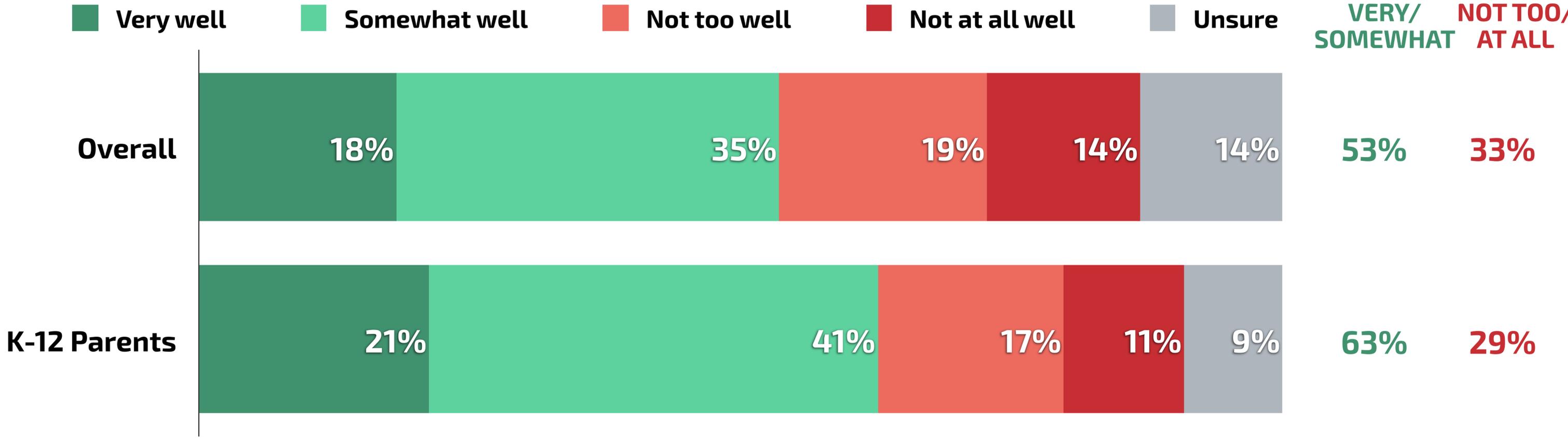
Q. Just based on what you know, do you approve or disapprove of how your state and local education leaders have spent ESSER funds thus far?



Even though most voters believe their schools spend money responsibly...

Q. Overall, how well do you think K-12 public schools in your local area are currently doing at each of the following?

Spending the education funding they receive in a responsible way



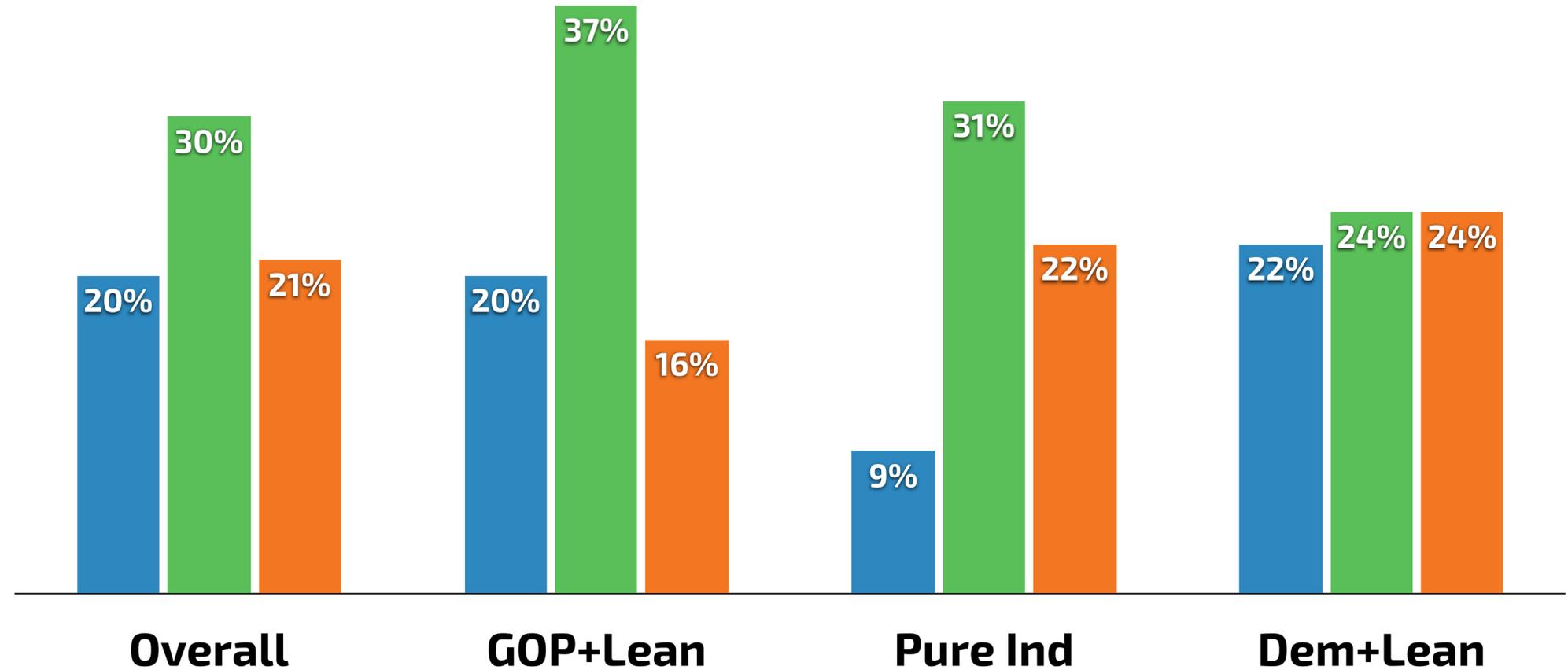
...Many still say that increased funding has either not happened or not resulted in better outcomes for students

Q. Even if none of these perfectly describes your views, which of the following statements do you agree with most?

I believe my school district has received an increase in funding in recent years, and this funding has improved the quality of students' education

I believe my school district has received an increase in funding in recent years, but this funding has NOT improved the quality of students' education

I do not believe my school district has received an increase in funding in recent years



Note: "Unsure" responses not shown

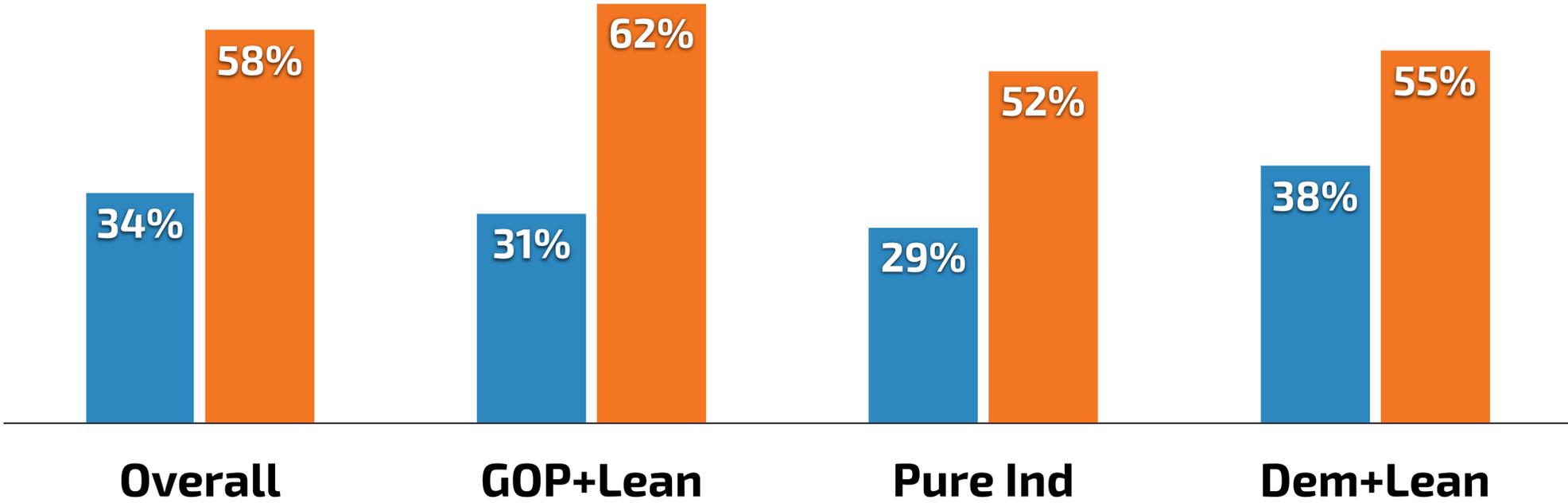


Most support using ESSER to creatively reimagine education

Q. Even if neither one perfectly describes your views, which of the following statements do you agree with more?

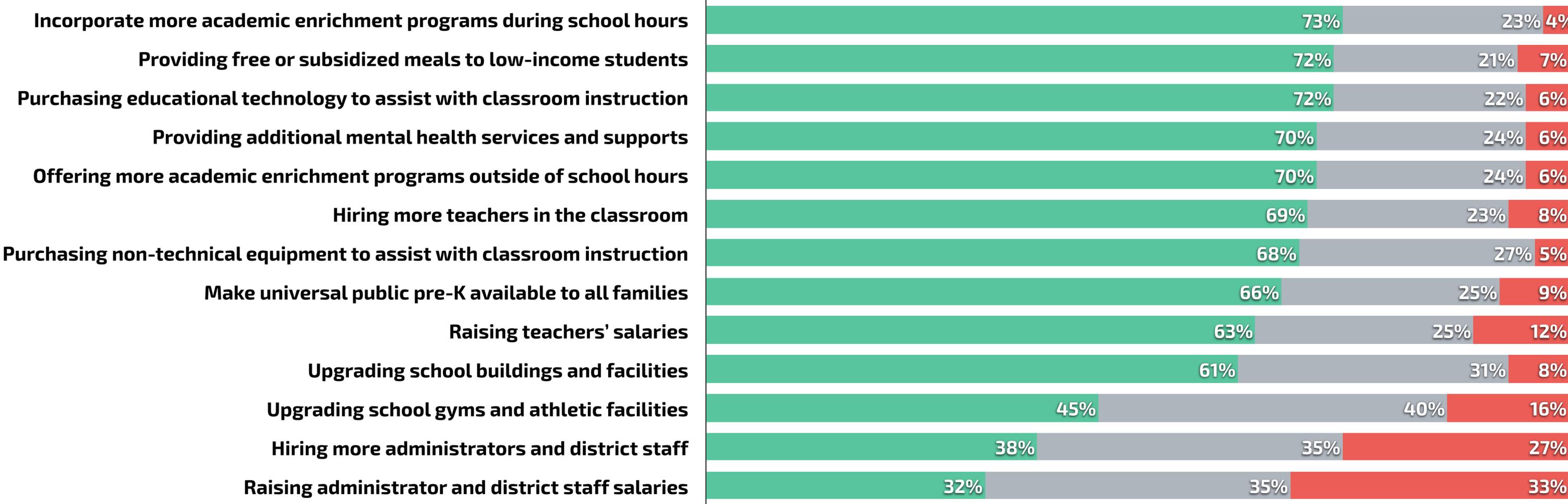
STATEMENT A: School leaders should be able to spend this money on things like hiring more personnel, including teachers, and raising district salaries.

STATEMENT B: School leaders should use this one-time influx of funding to be creative and re-imagine how we educate students, rather than just pouring the money into the existing people and systems without making real changes.



Voters clearly think funds are better spent on supporting learning and student needs than on admin or athletic facilities

Q. The following are all things that some schools and districts are considering spending ESSER funds on. For each, please indicate how you would feel if your local schools were spending the funds in this way.



■ Very happy/Happy
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Very Unhappy/Unhappy



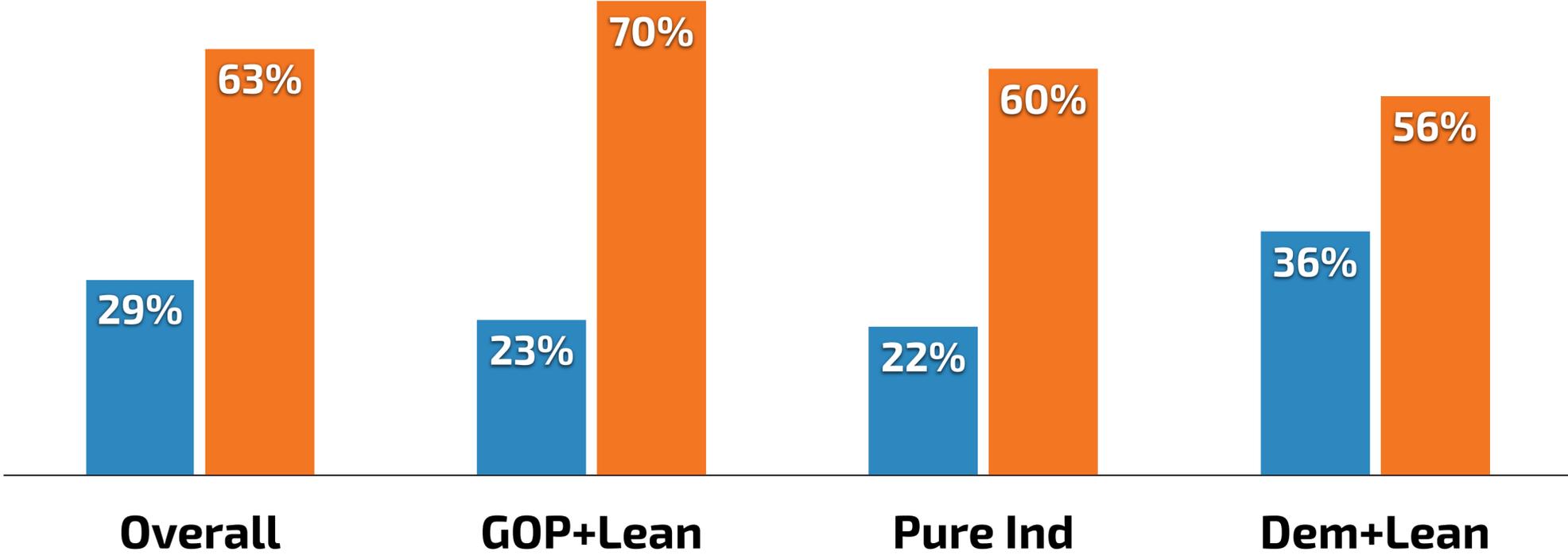
Note: Some of the answer choices on this slide were condensed for visualization purposes. 21

They also want to avoid a future budget crunch

Q. Even if neither one perfectly describes your views, which of the following statements do you agree with more?

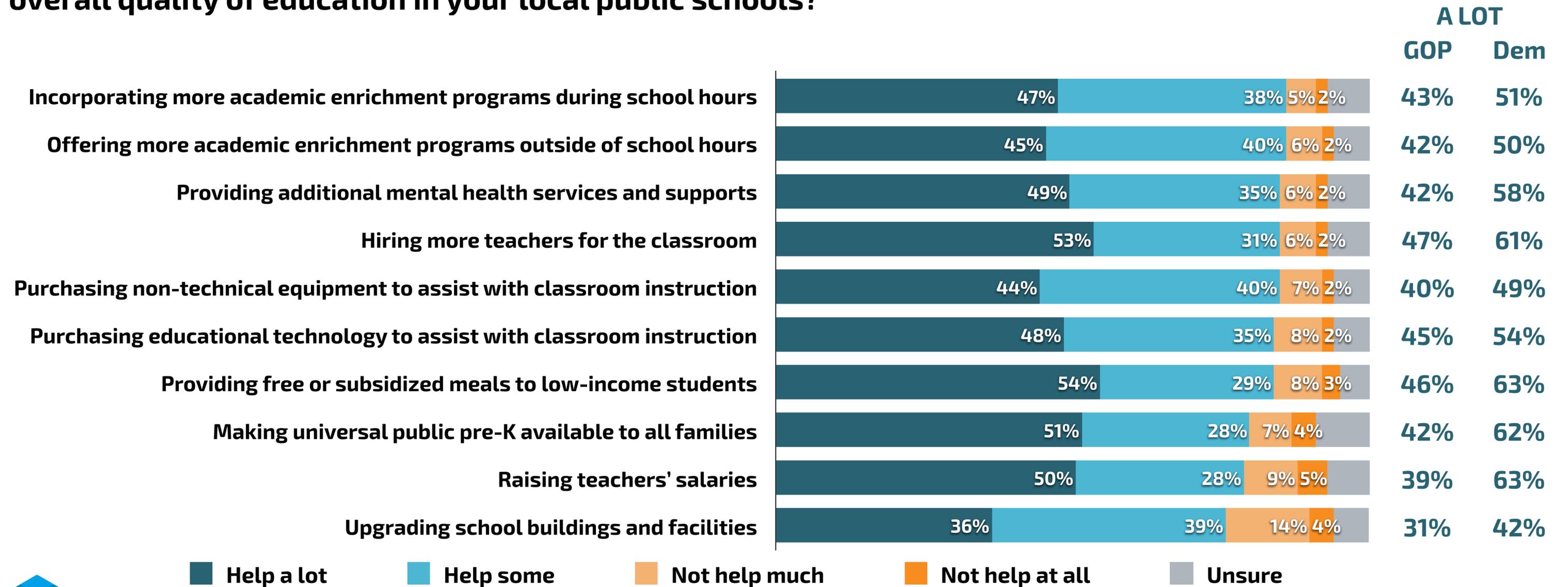
STATEMENT A: School leaders should be able to spend this one-time ESSER money on things like hiring more personnel, including teachers, and raising district salaries.

STATEMENT B: Since this is an unprecedented one-time investment, school leaders should have to spend this money responsibly and sustainably on things that won't create a budget crunch for our schools down the road once the funds are used up.



While voters think a lot of funding uses would be helpful...

Q. How much do you think spending education funding on each of the following would help improve the overall quality of education in your local public schools?



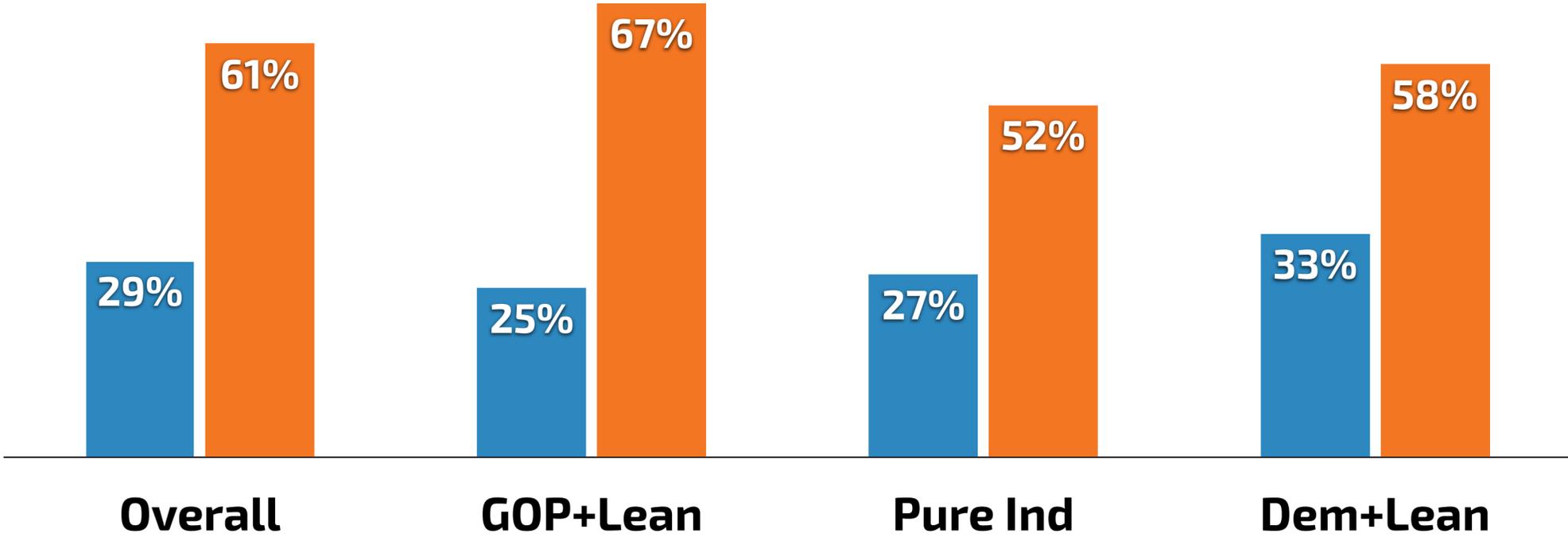
Note: Some of the answer choices on this slide were condensed for visualization purposes. 23

Voters see ESSER as a chance to make real changes in K-12 education, and they should be held accountable for their use of funds

Q. Even if neither one perfectly describes your views, which of the following statements do you agree with more?

STATEMENT A: The ESSER funds filled in gaps in chronically underfunded areas like teacher salaries and building improvements, but we can't expect too much to change because more is always needed in order to bring about real benefits to students.

STATEMENT B: After years of asking for more funding, the ESSER funds gave schools an important chance to make real, lasting improvements in how they educate students, and we should hold them accountable for having used these funds effectively.

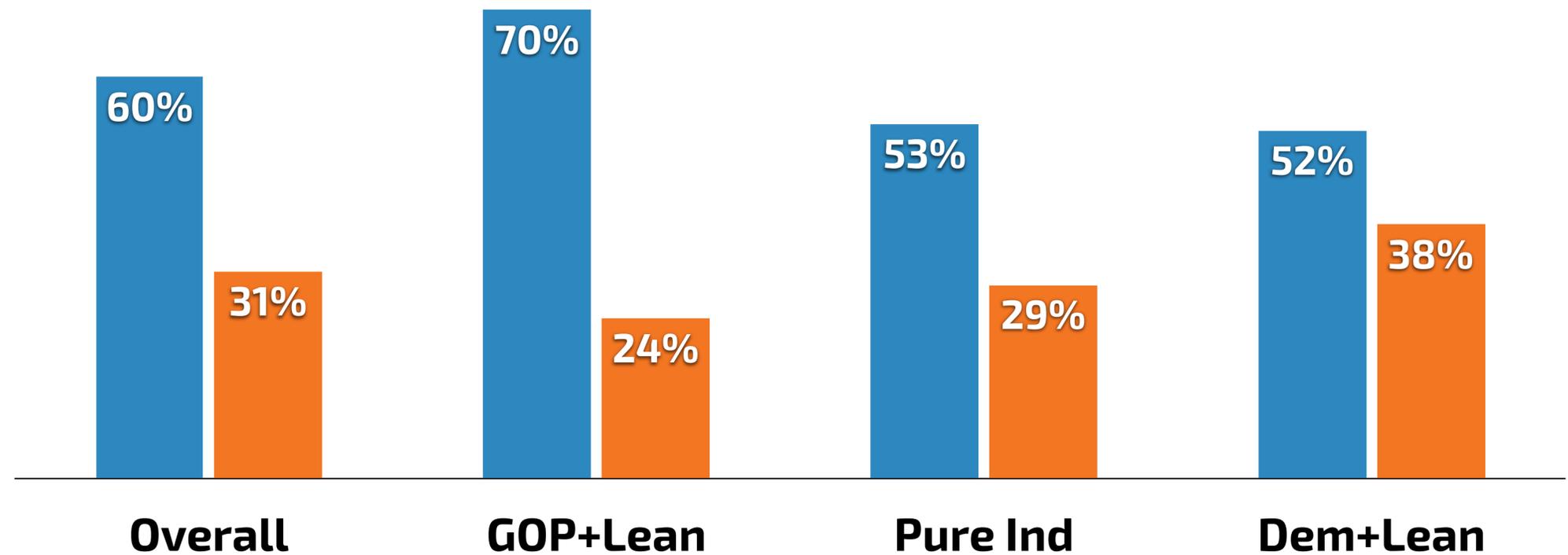


Even if ESSER doesn't guarantee success, voters still demand accountability and progress

Q.The one-time funding increase is ending soon and funds must be spent by September 2024. Once those funds have been used, districts will return to their previous level of funding unless policymakers pass additional funding increases. Which do you agree with more?

STATEMENT A: If we get to the time when this major, unprecedented funding runs out and schools haven't made meaningful progress toward getting students on track, we should demand accountability from those in charge of our schools.

STATEMENT B: We very well might not see meaningful progress in student learning, but that just means we need to give schools even more resources down the road if we want to expect results.



Methodology



Methodology

Echelon Insights, working in collaboration with Benenson Strategy Group, conducted a survey on behalf of the Walton Family Foundation to examine perceptions of education issues and the use of ARP/ESSER funding. The survey was fielded online from in English among a sample of N=2049 registered voters nationwide using non-probability sampling.

The sample was drawn from the Lucid sample exchange based on gender, age, race/ethnicity, and educational attainment quota targets derived from population benchmarks for registered voters.

All respondents were required to answer screening questions to verify they fit the criteria for the study, and the sample was matched to the L2 voter file to confirm respondents' voter registration status. For quality control purposes, respondents were removed from the sample if they failed to correctly answer an attentiveness check question or if they answered more than one-third of the questions they were asked in less than one-third of the median response time per question.

- The sample was weighted to population benchmarks for registered voters in the United States on gender, age, region, race/ethnicity, educational attainment, and parental status, as well on the following interactions: gender by educational attainment (college/non-college), simplified race (white/non-white) by educational attainment (college/non-college), and parental status by gender. The sample was also weighted on 2020 presidential vote choice to reflect official election results, as well as on information about party registration if available in the voter file. The benchmark sources for these variables were: Age, Gender, and Region: L2 voter file
- Educational Attainment, Race/Ethnicity, Gender by Educational Attainment, and Race by Educational Attainment: US Census Bureau American Community Survey demographic data adjusted to voter registration rate estimates from the November 2020 Current Population Survey Voting and Registration Supplement
- Parent of Child Under Age 18 and Parent by Gender: November 2020 Current Population Survey Voting and Registration Supplement
- 2020 presidential vote choice: 2020 election results
- Political party registration (if available): L2 voter file

Calculated the way it would be for a random sample and adjusted to incorporate the effect of weighting, the margin of sampling error is ± 2.5 percentage points. This estimate of precision does not account for other potential sources of error that can occur in online surveys with non-probability samples, including, but not limited to, non-coverage due to the survey being conducted online, or possible failure to correct for ways people who have agreed to join an online panel or take online surveys might not be representative of the general population (e.g., on measures that are not included as weighting variables).







ECHELON
INSIGHTS

