

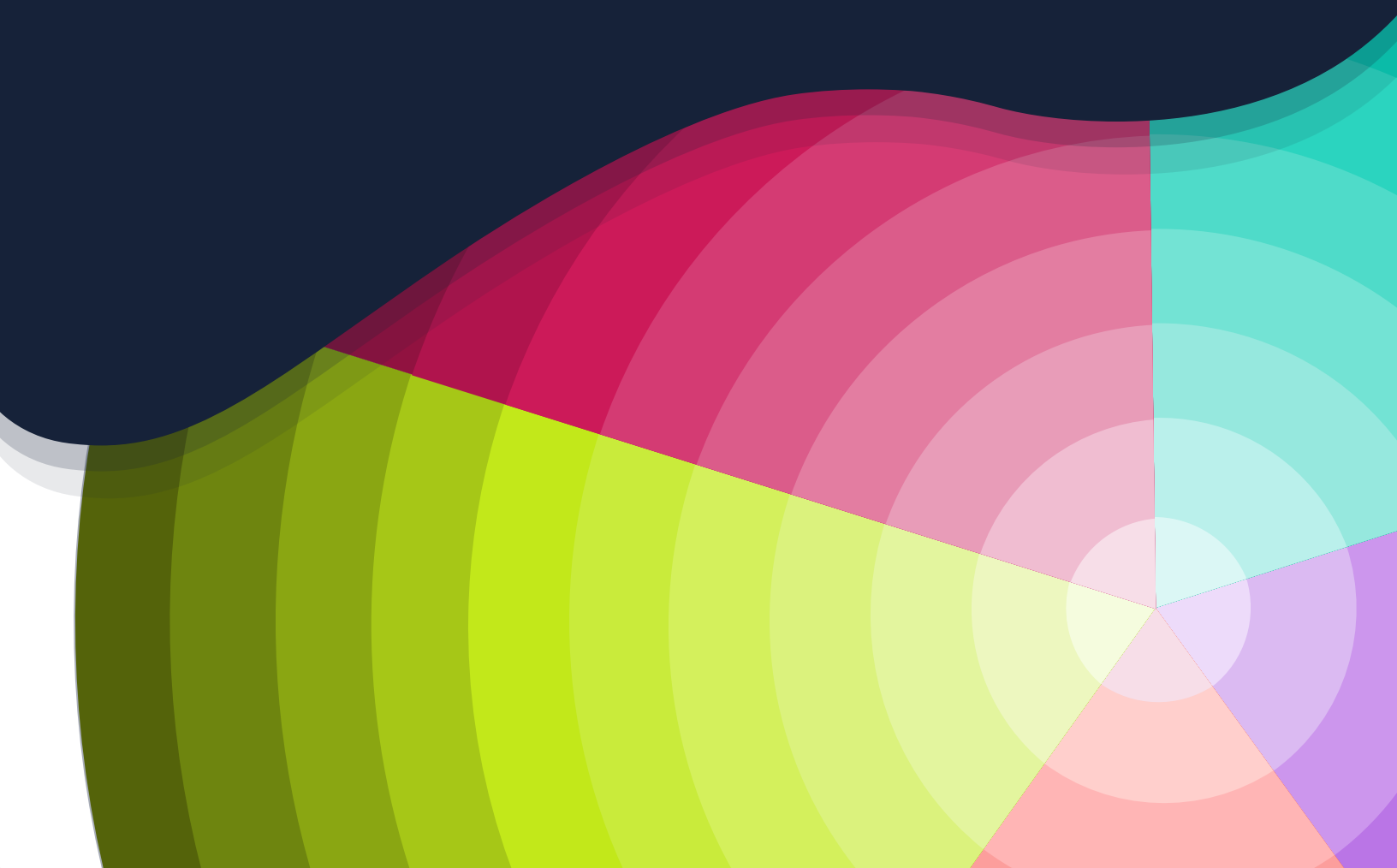


2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

# The State of Educational Opportunity in California

A Survey of California Parents

May 2026



2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

# The State of Educational Opportunity in California

A Survey of California Parents

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Dear Friends,

The future of California depends on how well we are educating today's children. One of the best ways to understand how we are doing is to ask their parents. That's exactly what we did for this new survey report: The State of Educational Opportunity in California.

Developed in partnership with Edge Research, this second edition captures how families are experiencing the education system now, while also allowing us to see where views have shifted since the last edition, published in November 2024. As conditions for students and schools continue to evolve, so too must our understanding of whether families feel supported, informed and empowered. By returning to this survey, we are able to track patterns over time, compare California to other states, and identify gaps that demand attention alongside areas of progress.

In this new edition of the survey, 822 California parents and guardians of school-aged children participated between September 30 and December 1, 2025, contributing to a national research effort that includes responses from more than 23,000 families nationwide, along with representative samples in all 50 states and the District of Columbia that allows for state-by-state comparisons.

Among the most interesting California results:

-  Hot-button education policies under debate enjoy broad support among California parents: 69% favor annual standardized testing (the 10th highest in the country) and 72% favor charter schools (the 13th highest in the country).
-  At the same time, California parents are skeptical that more money is the answer: only 26% think California's public school per pupil spending is too low (30th in the country) and just 23% think public school teacher salaries are too low (48th in the country).
-  The percentage of California students who got tutored in the past year was the 5th highest in the country, yet the percentage of parents whose child doesn't have a tutor and who say they want one was also the 5th highest in the country, showing how much further we have to go to meet the demand.
-  When comparing the results from across five areas of California, parents in Los Angeles county stand out both for the highest levels of support for charter schools and saying they feel like they have a choice in what school their child attends. They also lead the state in saying they have a clear understanding of how their child is performing academically and in their confidence their child is well prepared for the college and career opportunities ahead.

The pages that follow include:

- An overview of the survey's **methodology** and how to interpret the results.
- A concise **summary** of California's results across all five categories of educational opportunity.
- Visual **comparisons** showing how California stacks up nationally and how responses have changed since the previous survey.
- Tables comparing the results across the five biggest regions within California.

National results, the survey instrument, and the complete dataset can be found at [50can.org](https://50can.org).

Sincerely,



**Marc Porter Magee, Ph.D.**  
CEO and Founder, 50CAN

# Methodology

Edge Research conducted a nationwide survey of 23,104 U.S. parents and guardians of school-aged children (K-12th grade) in each of the 50 states plus the District of Columbia. **In California, 822 parents and guardians of K-12 children were surveyed.** Respondents could take the survey in either English or Spanish, based on their preference. The survey was in the field from September 30, 2025, to December 1, 2025.

## DATA COLLECTION

The survey used a mixed-mode methodology to reach as many households as possible. First, survey respondents were recruited using online, non-probability samples obtained via national opt-in consumer research panels. These surveys were mobile-optimized (meaning participants can take the survey on a PC or mobile device, which helps reach those who do not have internet access but do have a mobile data plan). In states where Edge Research was not able to collect enough surveys using this method, they obtained supplementary text-to-web interviews.

## SURVEY REPRESENTATIVENESS

As respondents entered the survey, they submitted demographic information, and quotas were set to ensure the sample is proportionately distributed in accordance with the most recent U.S. Census and National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data on U.S. parents in each state. Quotas functioned by predetermining the number of desired respondents by gender identity, race, ethnicity, child’s grade, and grade level in each state. Once the desired number was reached with each quota group, it closed, and additional respondents were turned away. After the survey came out of the field, Edge Research reviewed the data and applied additional weights by income, marital status, parent gender, race/ethnicity, school type, and area (e.g., urban, suburban, small town, rural) within states.

The following tables provide the demographics of survey respondents in California after weighting.

RACE/ETHNICITY							
Hispanic/Latino of Any Race	White Alone	Black/African American Alone	American Indian or Alaska Native Alone	Asian Alone	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander Alone	Some Other Race Alone	Two or More Races
44%	32%	4%	0.2%	16%	0.4%	0.2%	2%

INCOME DISTRIBUTION		
Low Income	Middle Income	High Income
38%	50%	12%

SCHOOL LEVEL		
K-5th	6th-8th	9th-12th
45%	23%	32%

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.census.gov/>  
<sup>2</sup> <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/tableviewer/acsProfile/2021>

## GRADE OF CHILD

K	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade	9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade
8%	7%	7%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	7%	8%

## SCHOOL TYPE

Local or Traditional Public School	Public Magnet School	Public Charter School	Private Independent School	Parochial/Religious School	Virtual/Online Public School	Homeschool	Microschool	Other Type of School
68%	5%	11%	9%	2%	2%	2%	0.2%	0.3%

## INCOME DEFINITIONS

In the pages that follow, we provide results for low-, middle- and high-income parents. These income buckets were calculated using the Pew Research Center’s study on “The State of the American Middle Class” and their category definitions:

- Middle-income households are defined as those with an income that is two-thirds to double that of the U.S. median household income, after being adjusted for household size.
- Lower-income households have incomes less than two-thirds of the median
- High-income households have incomes that are more than double the median.

Following these definitions, Edge Research adjusted the incomes reported in the survey to reflect a three-person household using the equivalence scales technique. Pulling from the U.S. Census 2023 Annual Social and Economic Supplements, they used the three-person household income breaks of \$61,000 to \$183,000 as middle, and values above and below those thresholds as lower and upper income respectively. Edge Research also adjusted each household income using Regional Price Parities (RPPs)—indexes from the Bureau of Economic Analysis—that compare local prices to the national average. These tell whether an area is more or less expensive than the country overall. RPPs are applied differently based on what is known about the household’s location. If the exact metro area is known, the RPP is used for that metro area. If the household is in a non-metro (rural or small-town) area, the RPP for non-metro areas in that state is used.

## DATA QUALITY CONTROL AND STANDARDS

Edge Research employed several practices to ensure data quality. The survey platform used reCAPTCHA to screen for bots. They also applied a third-party tool called Research Defender to screen out known bad actors and respondents with high survey-taking rates. In addition, data was monitored regularly while in the field. Once all responses were collected, they applied additional data cleaning processes, clearing data for cheating, speeding, inattentiveness, and AI-generated responses.

Edge Research follows the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) Code of Professional Ethics and Practices to maintain the highest standards of competence, integrity, accountability, and transparency in public opinion and survey research work.

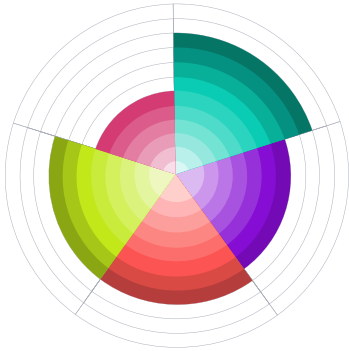
<sup>3</sup> <https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/cps/cps-asec.2023.html#list-tab-165711867>

<sup>4</sup> [Standards and Ethics - AAPOR](#)

# How to Read the Results

One challenge with a survey of this size was how to present the results in an accessible way that doesn't sacrifice the depth of insights. We decided to present the answers in two ways: first with an overview of the results across 15 questions for our state and then with a more in-depth look at how our state compared to all the other states for a few key questions.

## OUR STATE SUMMARY



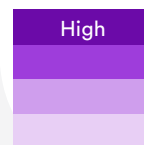
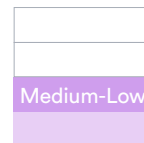
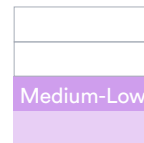
To help make it easier to look at our state's full results at a glance, we present the answers from our parents over two pages. At the top of the first page is the number of parents who participated in the survey.

We also provide a way to view our state's **relative strengths and weaknesses through a circle with five wedges**, one for each of the five categories of the survey: 1) School quality and opportunity (**pink**), 2) Tutoring, summer, and mental health (**green**), 3) Out of school activities (**teal**), 4) Information and engagement (**purple**), and 5) College and career readiness (**orange**).

Each of the five categories is made up of three questions. These are presented below each category with **our state's results compared to other states represented by a tier** shown to the right of each question, from low to high. These tiers are scored from 1 (low) to 4 (high) and the scores across the three questions determine how many rows are colored in for the wedge (up to a possible number of 12 rows).

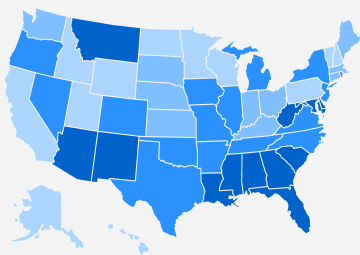
The state results for each question are presented in circles that offer a comparison of the state against the national average and the 2025 results compared to 2024. For yes/no questions, the results are presented as the percentage who said yes, rounded to the nearest whole number. For questions about parents' opinions and attitudes, we utilized a Likert scale and **reported out the percentage choosing the highest option**. For example, on question 1, which measures parents' satisfaction with their child's school, we present the percentage who answered that they were "very satisfied." This helps ground the comparison discussion in a high bar for success.

State Tier



## OUR STATE IN CONTEXT

The second section of this report provides comparative results for all 50 states plus D.C., one question at a time.



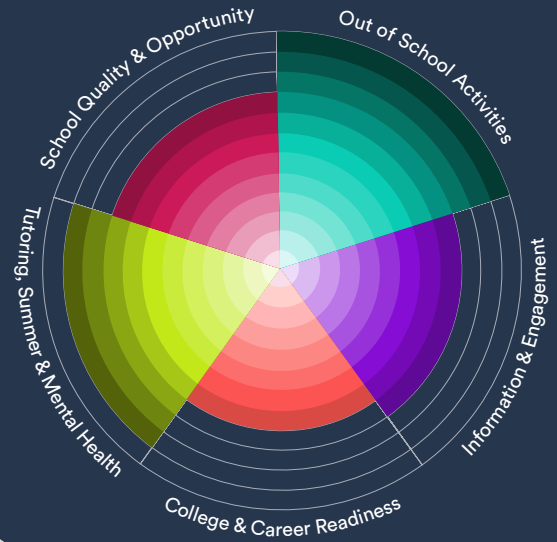
For the maps, a key provides the scale for the map and explains the numbers behind each of the four shades of blue. The darkest shade of blue is always the highest numbers and the lightest shade of blue is always the lowest numbers. Our state is outlined in red.

For the list, states are ordered from highest performing states at the top to lowest performing states at the bottom. This list shows the state average as a dark blue dot and the results for low-income families in a light shade of the section color and the results for middle- and high-income families as a darker shade of that color. Our state is identified with a red box to make it easier to spot.

# CALIFORNIA



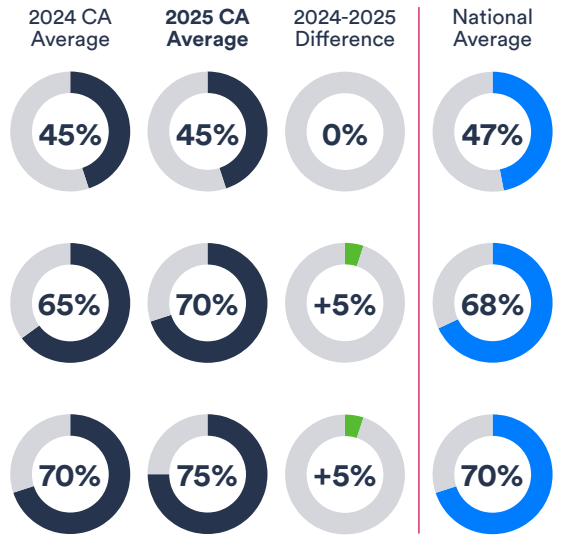
Surveyed September 30 - December 1, 2025  
 Sample size (N) = 822 parents and guardians



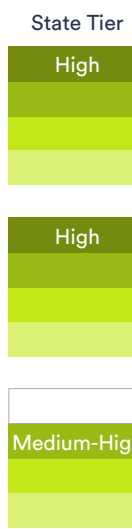
## SCHOOL QUALITY AND OPPORTUNITY



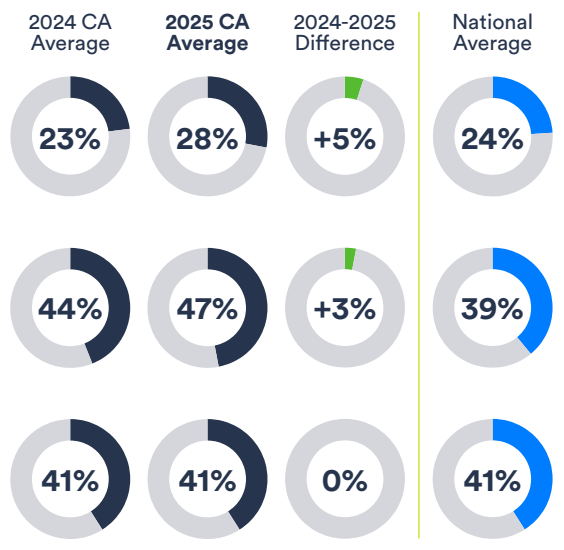
<b>Very Satisfied with School</b> Percentage answering they are very satisfied with their child's school
<b>Would Make the Same Choice</b> Percentage answering that they would send their child to the school they go to today
<b>Feel They Have a Choice</b> Percentage answering they feel like they have a choice in what school their child attends



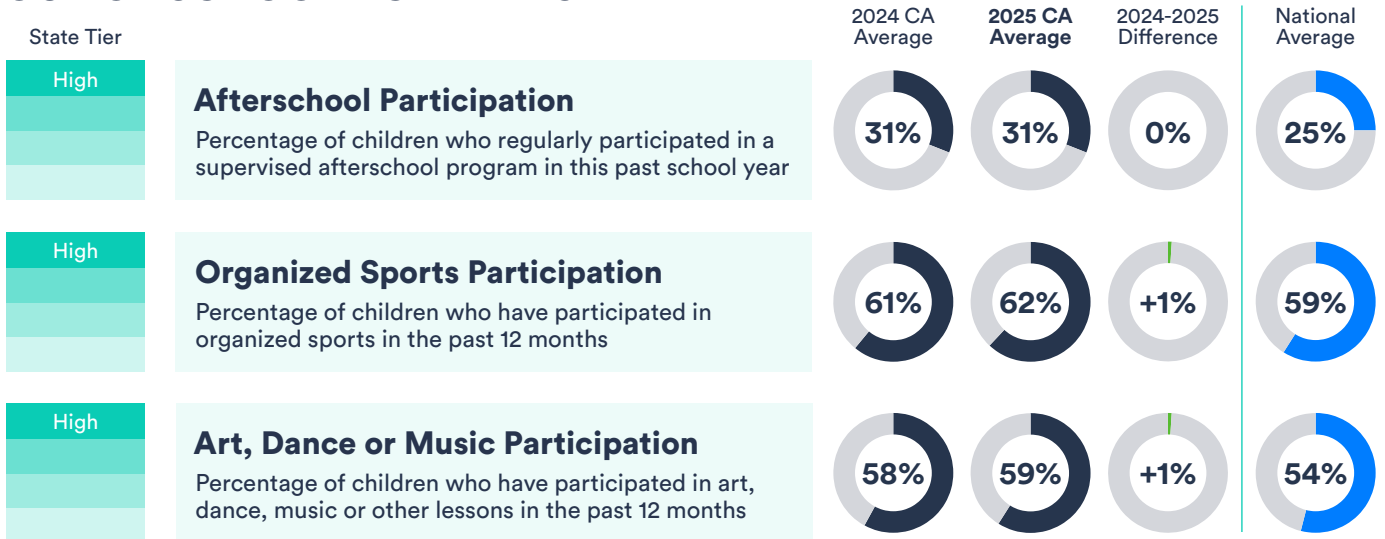
## TUTORING, SUMMER AND MENTAL HEALTH



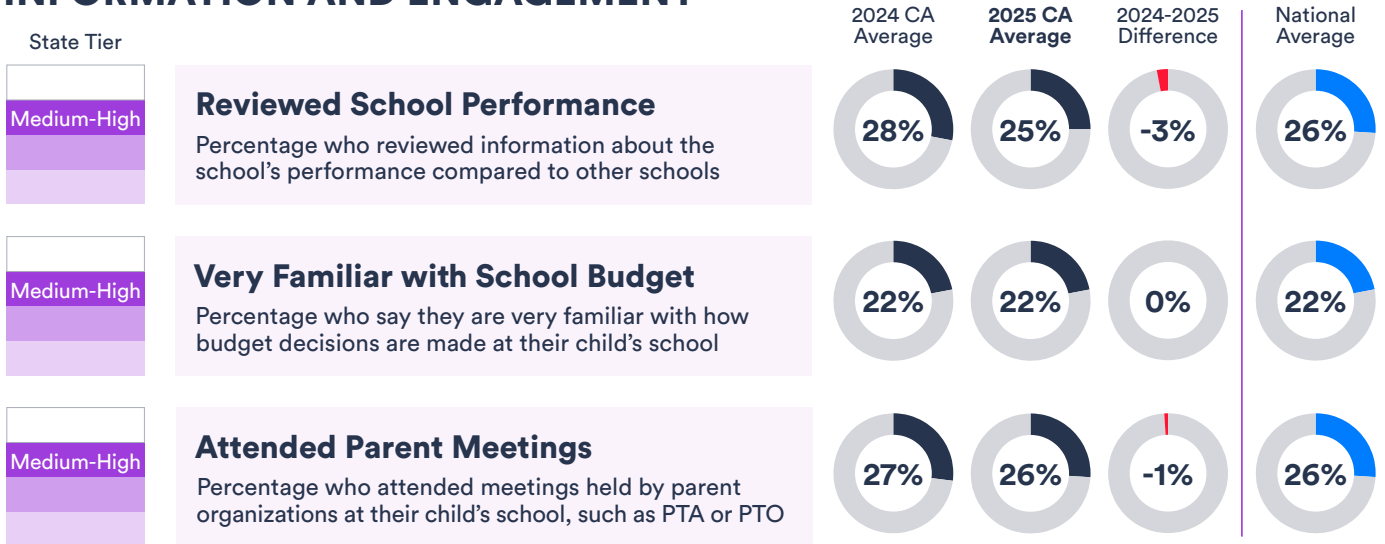
<b>Tutoring Participation</b> Percentage of children who have received academic tutoring in this past school year
<b>Summer Program Participation</b> Percentage of children who participated in a supervised summer program
<b>Very Satisfied with Mental Health Support</b> Percentage answering they are very satisfied with how the school supports their child's mental health needs



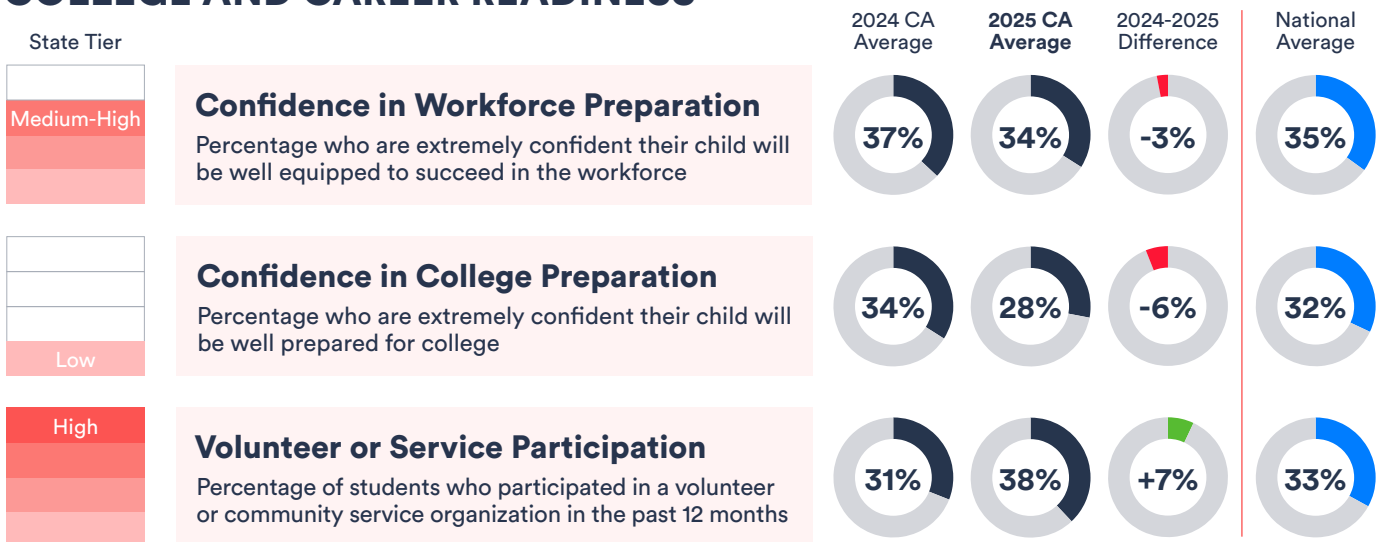
## OUT OF SCHOOL ACTIVITIES



## INFORMATION AND ENGAGEMENT



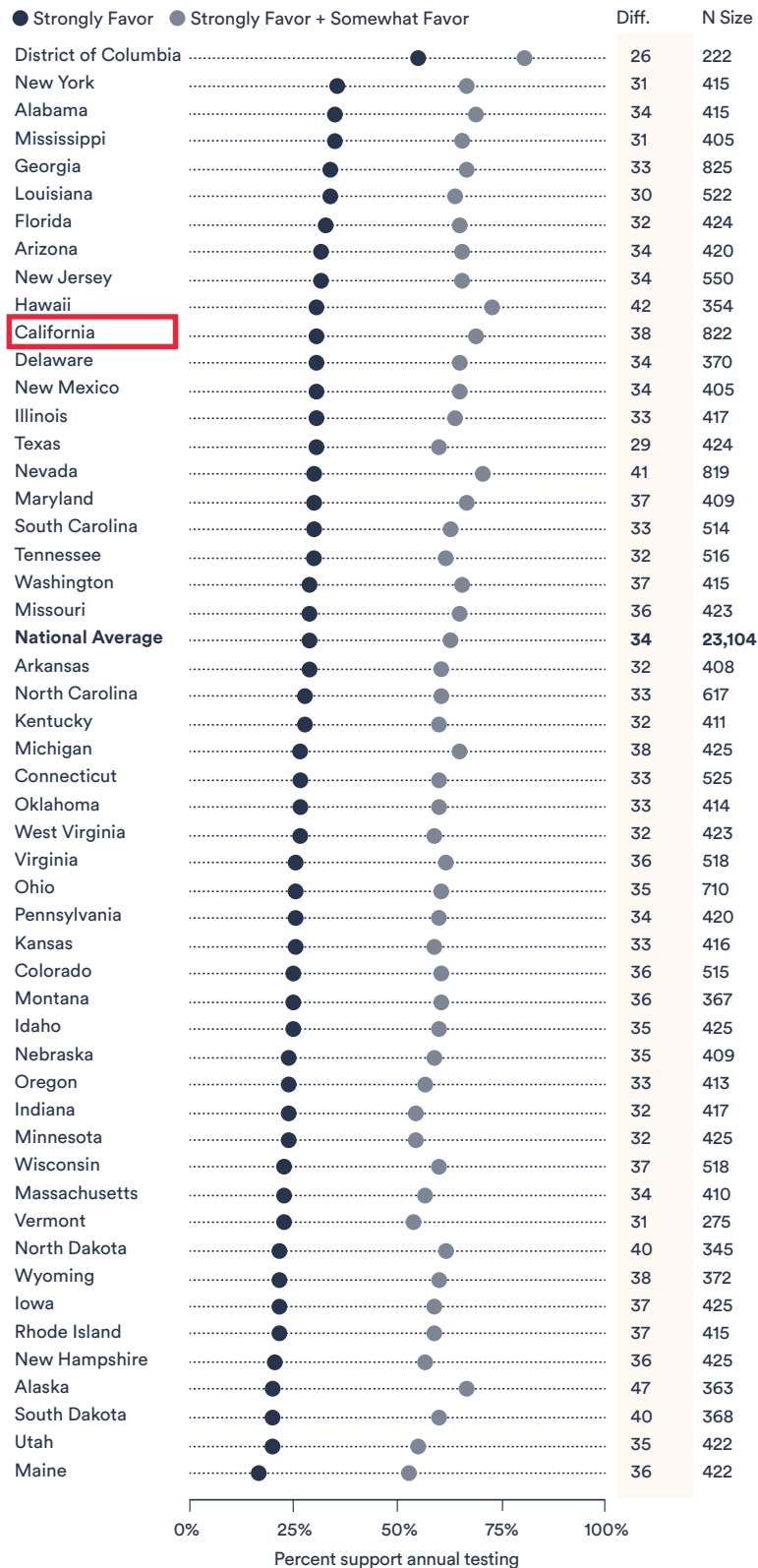
## COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS



# California in Context: A 50-State Perspective

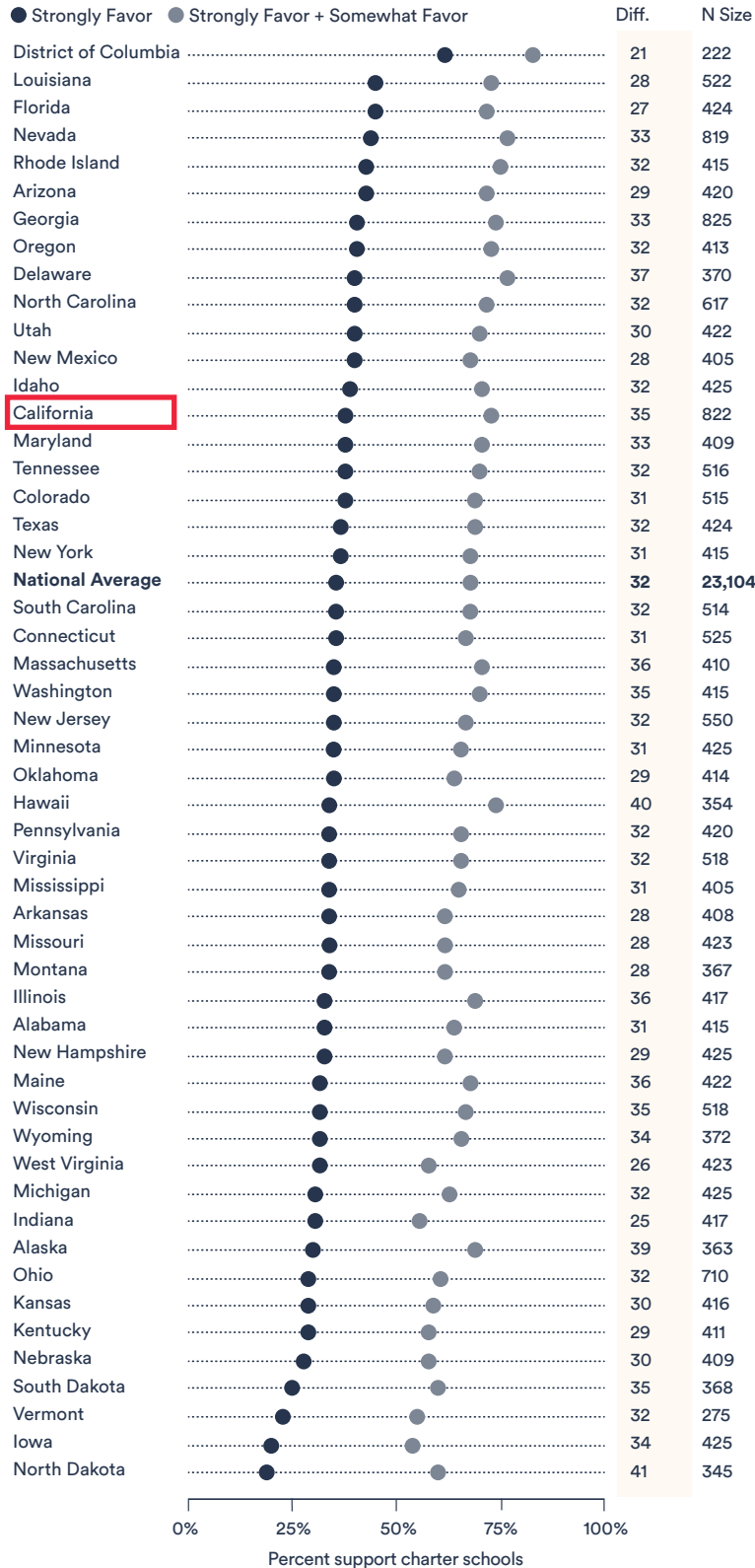
## SUPPORT FOR ANNUAL TESTING BY STATE

Percentage answering they favor the use of annual standardized tests to measure how well your child is achieving academically



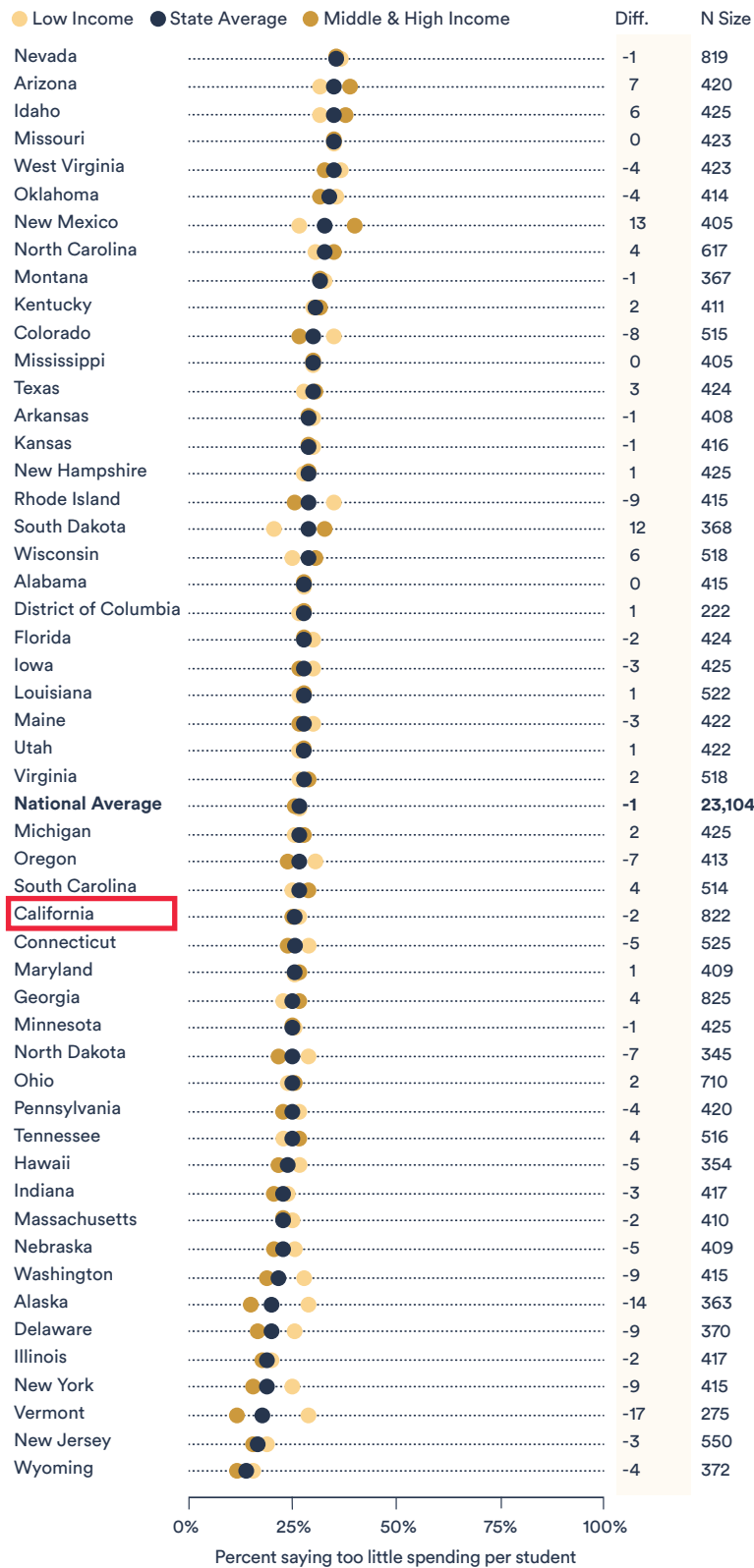
## SUPPORT FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS BY STATE

Percentage answering they strongly favor charter schools (public schools exempt from some regulations in exchange for greater accountability for results)



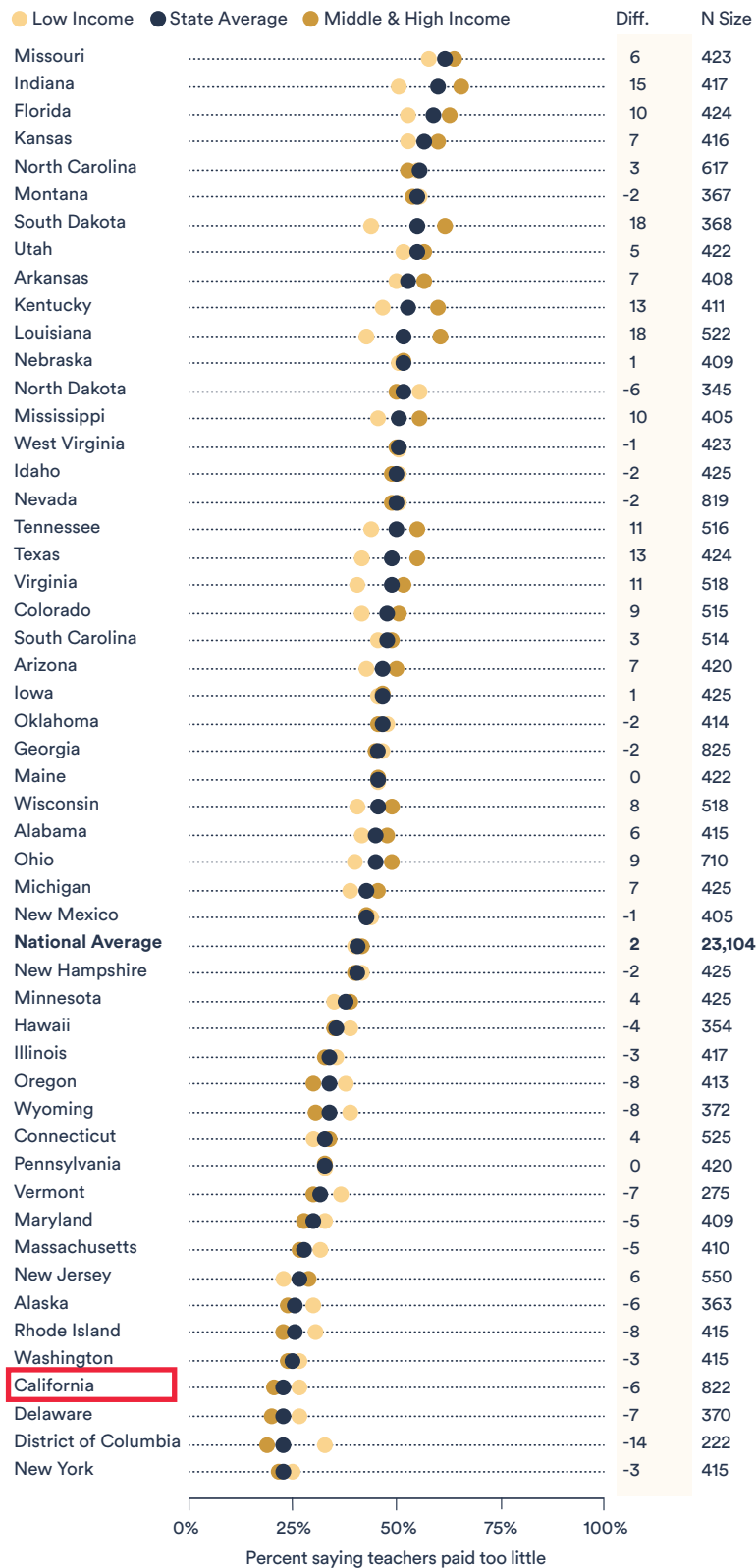
## SUPPORT MORE FUNDING BY STATE & INCOME

Percentage who think their state spends too little per public school student after being told how much their state spends per student



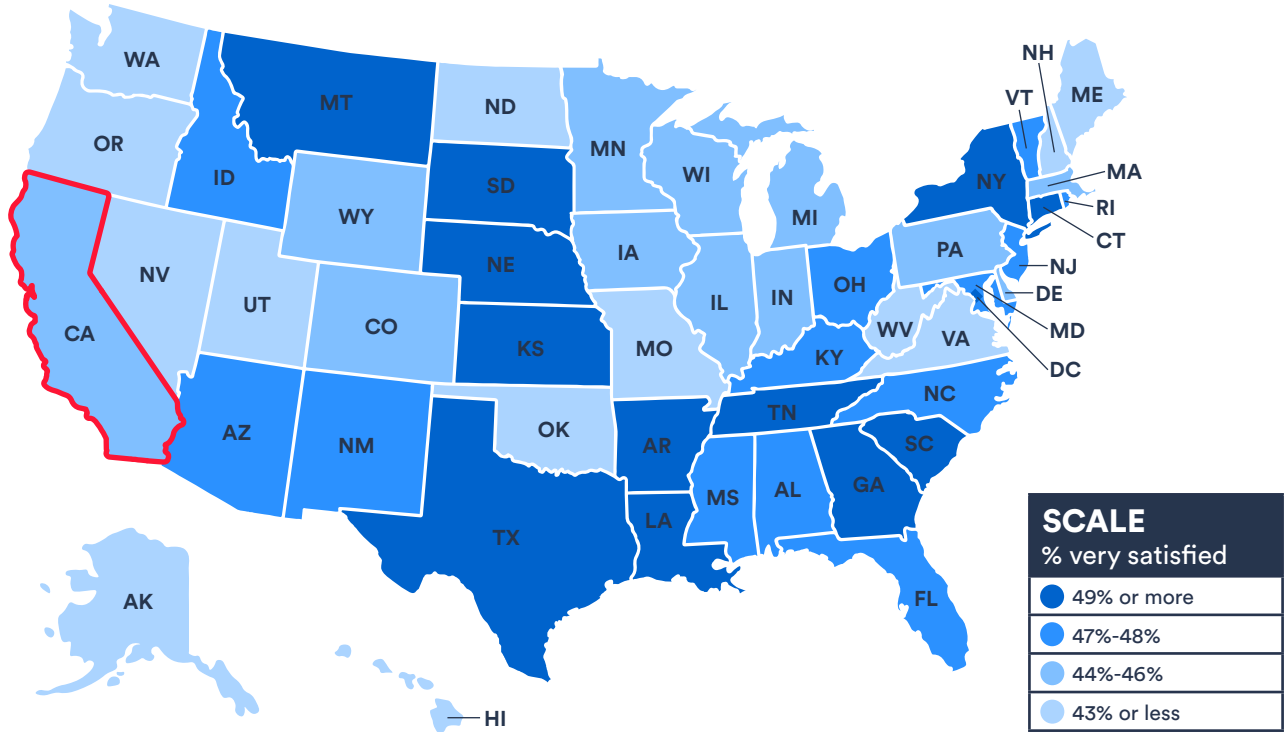
## SUPPORT FOR HIGHER SALARIES BY STATE & INCOME

Percentage who think the average public school teacher in their state is paid too little after being told the average public school teacher salary in their state



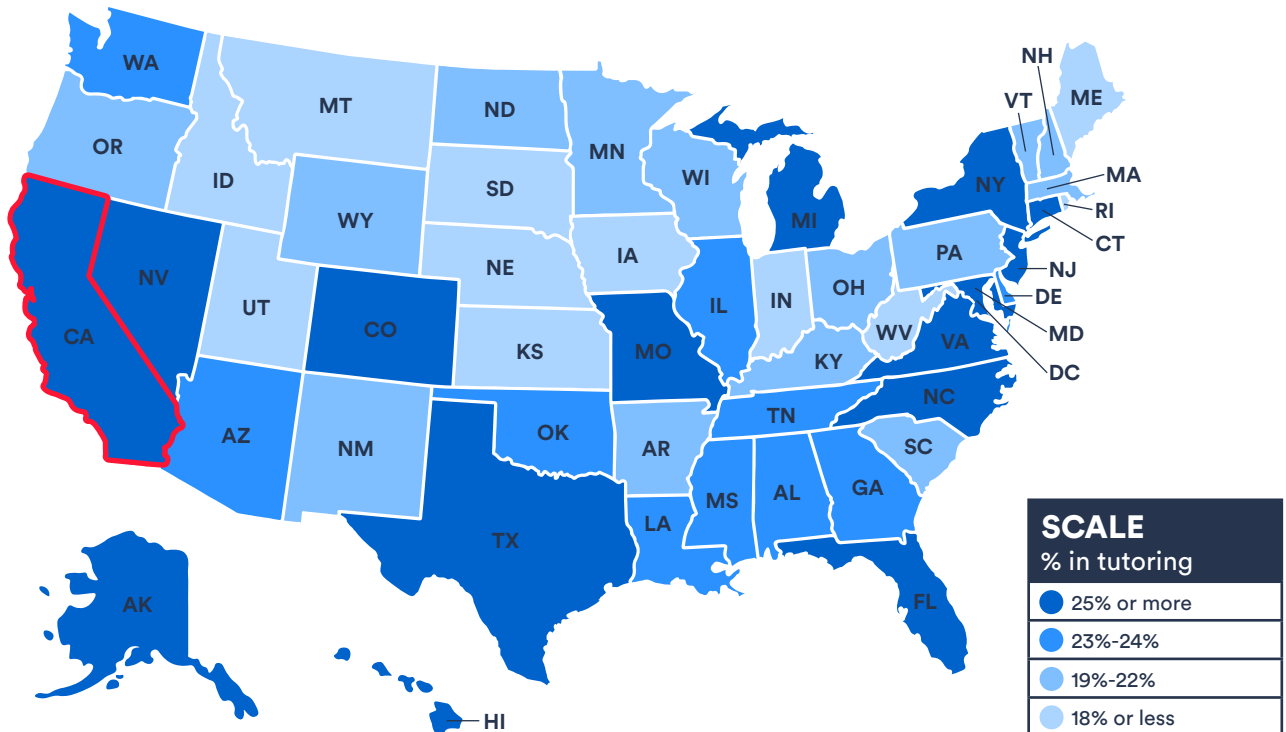
## VERY SATISFIED WITH SCHOOL BY STATE

Percentage answering they are very satisfied with their child's school



## TUTORING PARTICIPATION BY STATE

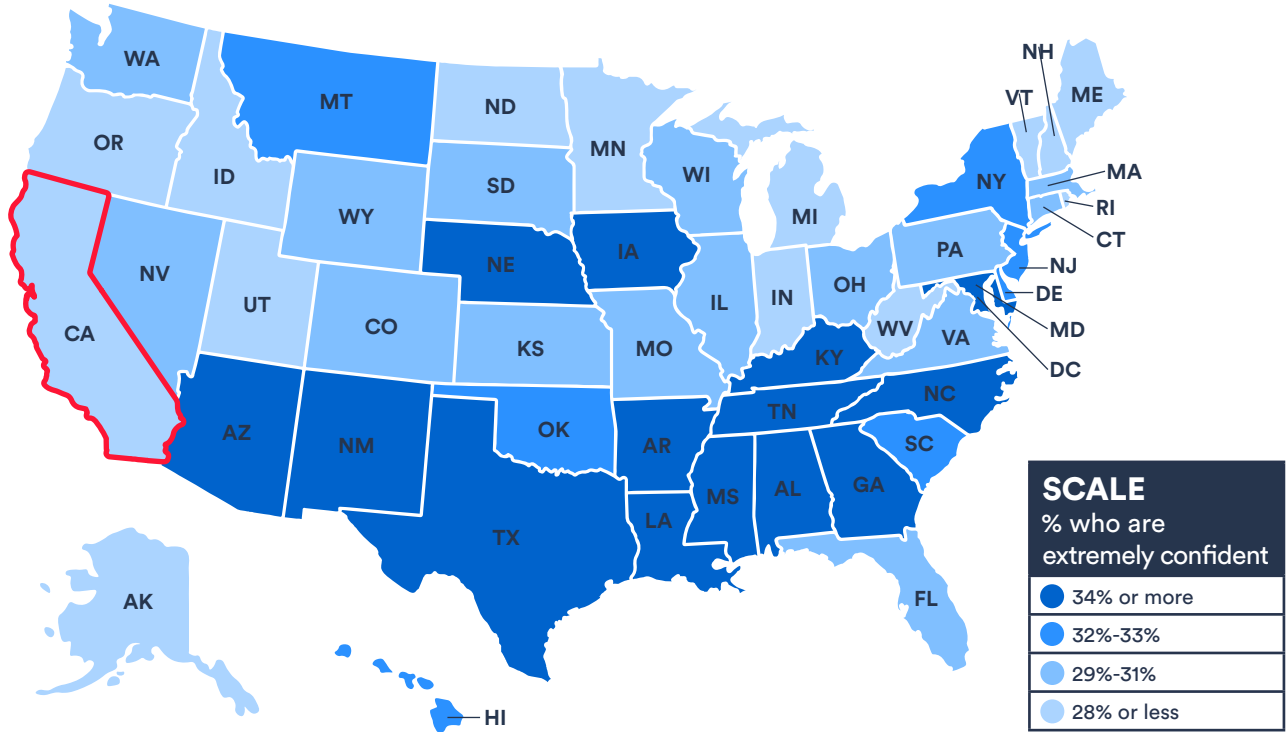
Percentage of children who have received academic tutoring in this past school year





# CONFIDENCE IN COLLEGE PREPARATION BY STATE

Percentage who are extremely confident their child will be well prepared for entrance into and success in college upon graduation from high school



## CALIFORNIA RESPONDENTS PER REGION

Northern CA	SF Bay Area	Southern CA	LA County	Orange-SD-Imperial
131	127	211	226	122



## CALIFORNIA RESULTS BY REGION

	CA Total	Northern CA	SF Bay Area	Southern CA	LA County	Orange-SD-Imperial
Would make the same choice	70%	68%	72%	68%	<b>77%</b>	63%
Feel they have a choice	75%	69%	75%	72%	<b>80%</b>	79%
Favor charter schools	73%	68%	69%	68%	<b>80%</b>	76%
Confidence in understanding achievement	81%	75%	76%	79%	<b>91%</b>	80%
Confidence in workforce preparation	74%	67%	68%	74%	<b>79%</b>	74%
Confidence in college preparation	69%	61%	64%	70%	<b>75%</b>	70%

## CALIFORNIA RESULTS BY SCHOOL TYPE

	Traditional Public School	Schools of Choice
Very satisfied with school	42%	<b>51%</b>
Would make the same choice	64%	<b>82%</b>
Feel they have a choice	68%	<b>90%</b>
Very satisfied with mental health support	37%	<b>47%</b>
Tutoring participation	27%	<b>32%</b>
Summer program participation	42%	<b>56%</b>

## ABOUT 50CAN

**50CAN** is an education advocacy organization focused on building the dynamic, student-centered education system of the future so that all kids, regardless of address, receive a high quality education. At the center of this work is our support for local education advocates who together have secured more than 275 transformative policy wins since our founding in 2011. This advocacy work is complemented by fellowships to spark and amplify the voices of changemakers, support for educational entrepreneurs as they build proof points of a better tomorrow, and efforts to help elected leaders better serve the public through a deeper understanding of education policy.

## ABOUT EDGE RESEARCH

**Edge Research** tells data-driven stories that make our clients' programs, products, and brands successful. One of Edge's key verticals is education, which ranges from early childhood development, to K-12 and postsecondary education, to lifelong learning. We work for dozens of foundations, advocacy organizations, curriculum providers, associations, districts, schools and universities. Edge is constantly in the field talking to parents, students, teachers, administrators, and other education decision makers – getting the pulse on the issues that matter most.

