

SOUTH CAROLINA SURVEY



UpONE **IMPACT**
INSIGHTS RESEARCH



Methodology

*South Carolina Survey (N=400 Registered Voters, $\pm 5.59\%$)
Online Opt-In Panel Methodology
September 22-October 1, 2025*

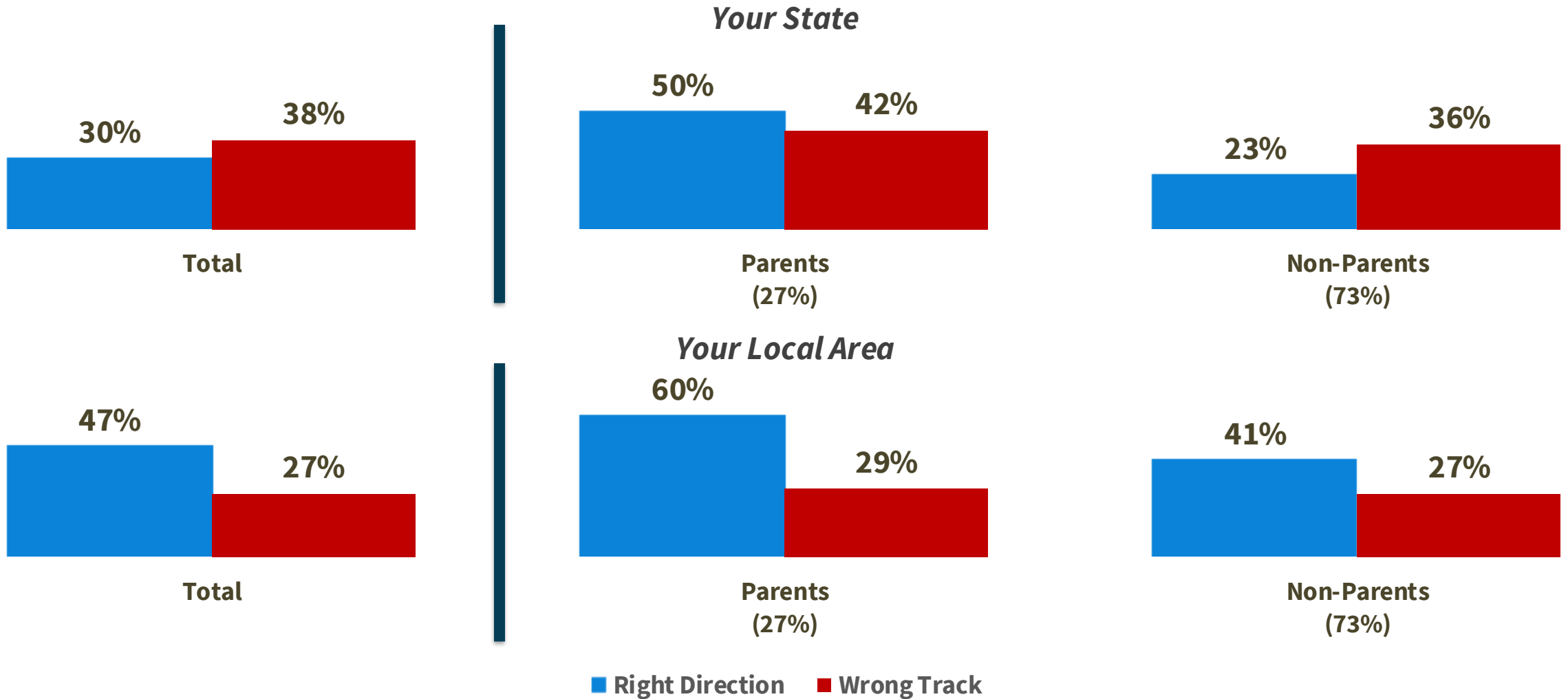
The Issue Agenda

Economic concerns dominate the issue agenda.

% Very Important	Total	GOP	IND	DEM	White	Black	Greenville	Columbia	Charleston	Myrtle	Augusta/ Savannah	Charlotte	Parent	Non-Parent
Improving the economy and job situation	80%	80%	84%	77%	79%	80%	84%	74%	76%	83%	82%	80%	86%	78%
Addressing crime and public safety	72%	78%	68%	66%	76%	65%	74%	64%	74%	78%	72%	75%	72%	72%
Addressing health care	70%	61%	75%	79%	67%	79%	70%	67%	72%	77%	63%	69%	73%	68%
Improving K-12 education	65%	60%	70%	69%	63%	72%	66%	66%	62%	70%	67%	58%	82%	59%
Improving infrastructure like roads and bridges	65%	65%	66%	63%	66%	61%	78%	56%	65%	61%	56%	58%	65%	65%
Lowering taxes	63%	64%	67%	58%	60%	70%	65%	68%	55%	51%	63%	75%	64%	62%
Reducing government spending	55%	62%	46%	50%	58%	48%	62%	51%	41%	55%	54%	73%	53%	56%

K-12 Education

Voters are mixed about the direction of K-12 education, though have a bit more optimism about schools in their local area.

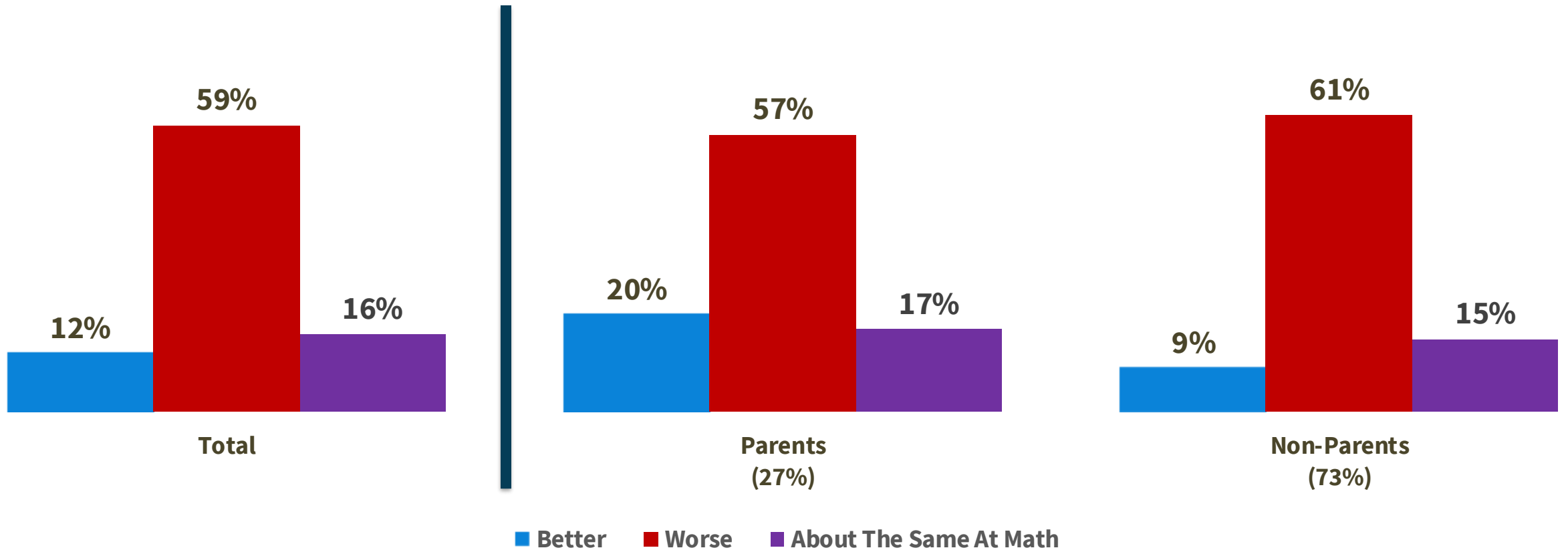


To improve education, South Carolinians prioritize school safety and ensuring students can read, write, and do math at grade level. Workforce preparation is also important.

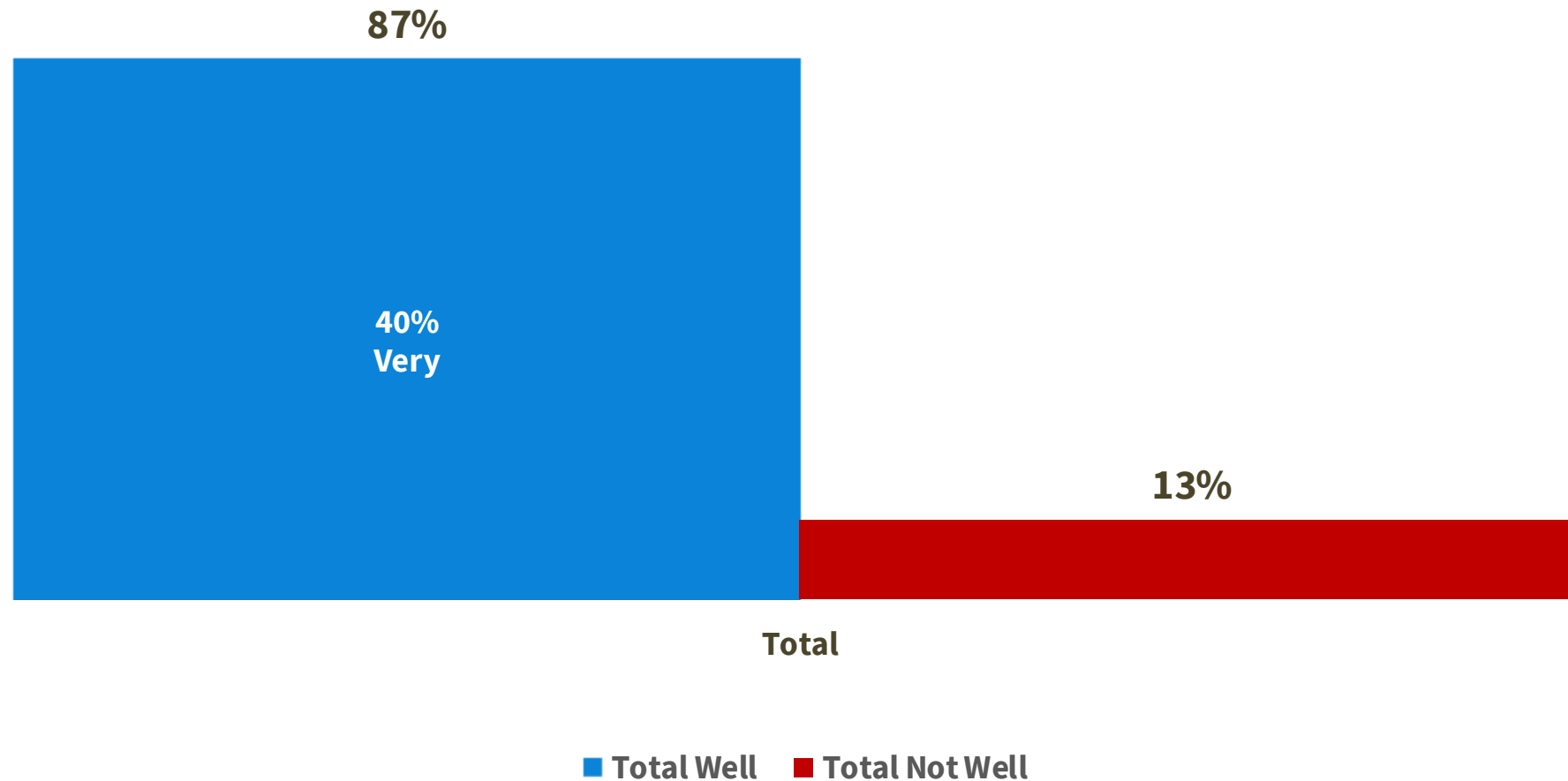
% Very Important	Total	GOP	IND	DEM	White	Black	Greenville	Columbia	Charleston	Myrtle	Augusta/ Savannah	Charlotte	Parent	Non-Parent
Improving school safety	86%	87%	84%	86%	86%	86%	87%	84%	89%	86%	76%	92%	90%	84%
Ensuring every child is at grade level in reading, math, and writing	85%	86%	85%	82%	86%	83%	88%	77%	88%	82%	87%	87%	81%	86%
Better preparing students for the workforce	82%	86%	81%	76%	83%	80%	80%	84%	78%	86%	84%	85%	85%	81%
Better support for great teachers (B)	75%	72%	73%	80%	74%	73%	89%	60%	68%	82%	60%	86%	73%	76%
Better pay for great teachers (A)	61%	54%	59%	72%	56%	68%	67%	55%	60%	74%	56%	42%	78%	55%
Increasing school funding	55%	41%	63%	70%	47%	73%	53%	49%	59%	60%	55%	56%	70%	49%
Giving parents more school choice	44%	45%	47%	40%	40%	53%	45%	51%	43%	43%	43%	46%	55%	40%
Banning the use of cell phones in classrooms	42%	52%	24%	38%	48%	31%	43%	40%	43%	41%	31%	52%	26%	48%

Math

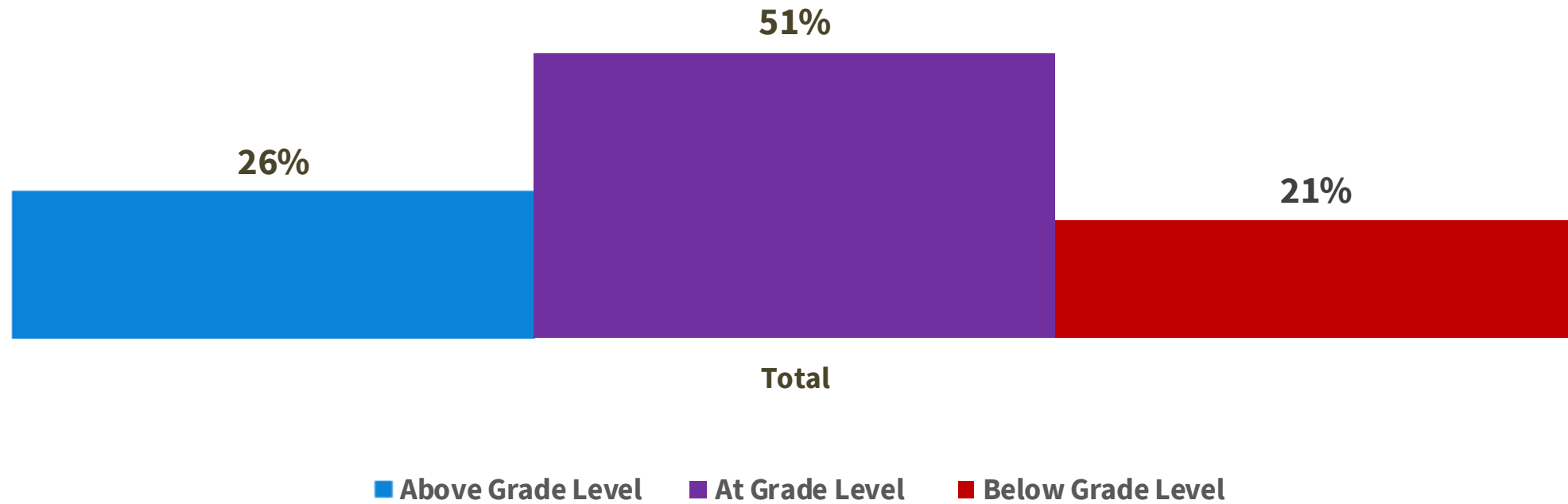
Parents and voters believe students are worse at math than in the past.



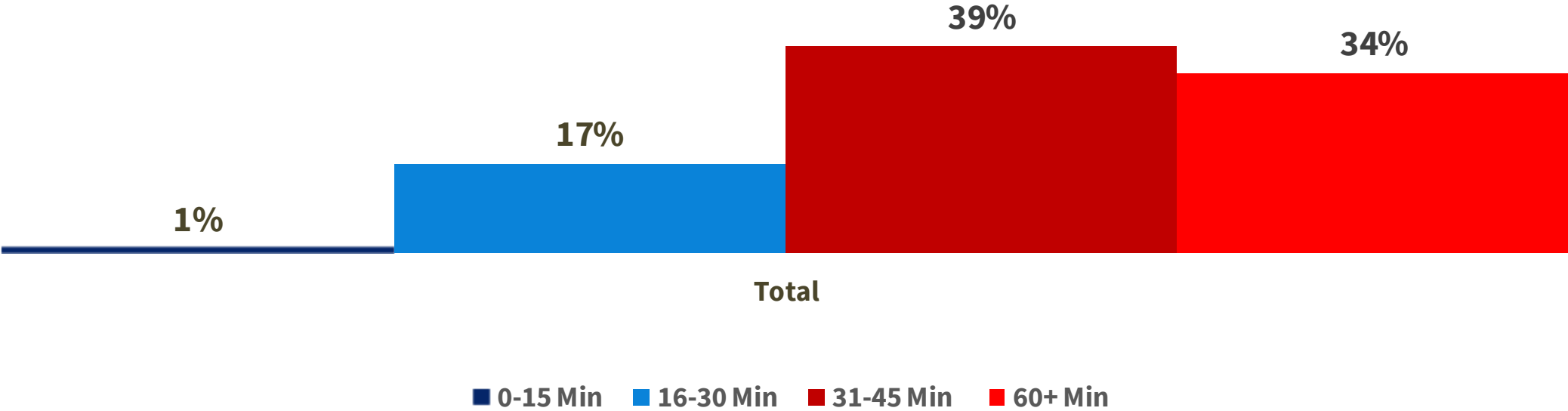
Overwhelmingly, parents believe they understand their child's specific math needs and challenges.



Still, few parents believe their kids' math skills are "below grade level."

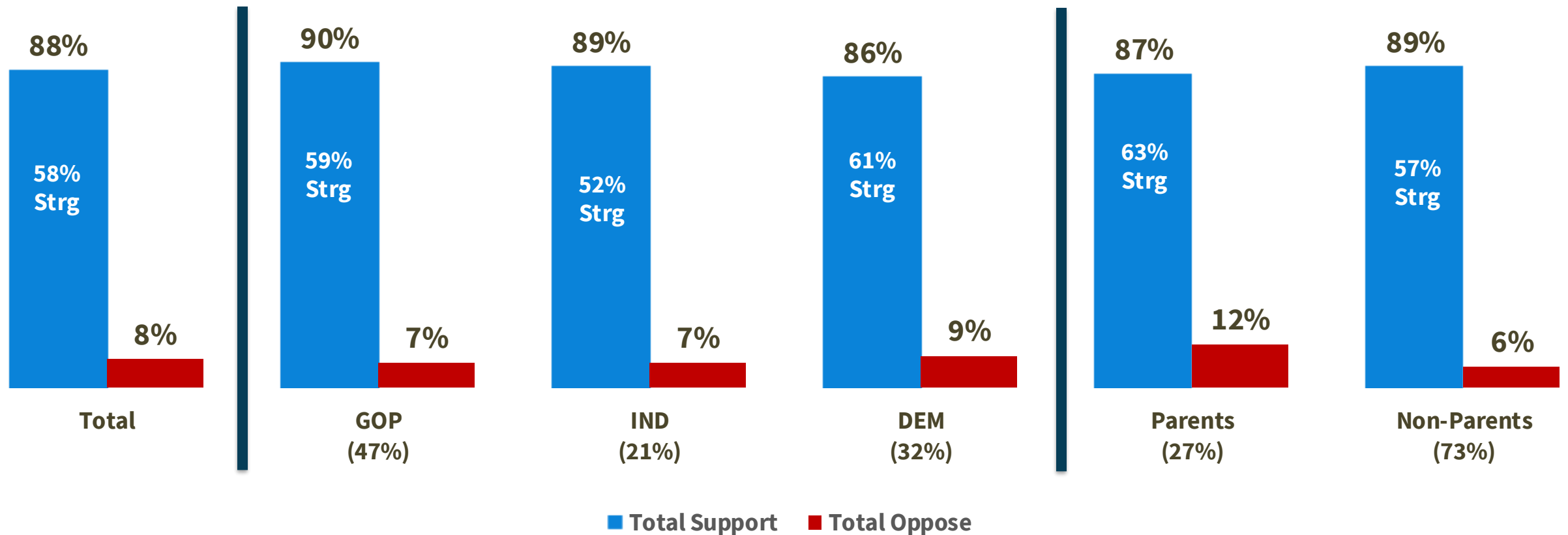


On average, most K-5 elementary school parents believe their kids are spending 31-45 minutes or more per day on math in school.



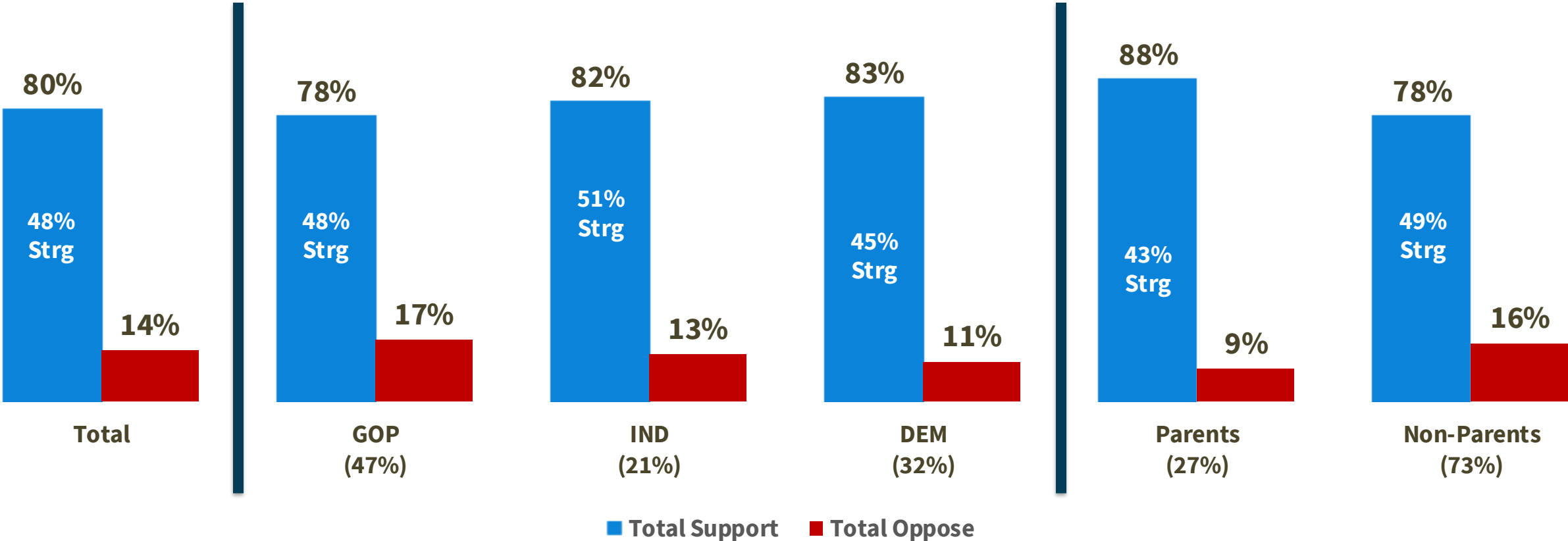
After hearing about top performing countries, there is overwhelming support for requiring all elementary students receiving at least 60 minutes a day of math.

Research shows the top performing countries in the world ensure their elementary students receive at least 60 minutes a day of instruction in foundational math. However, very few states in the U.S. require this level of math instruction in elementary school.

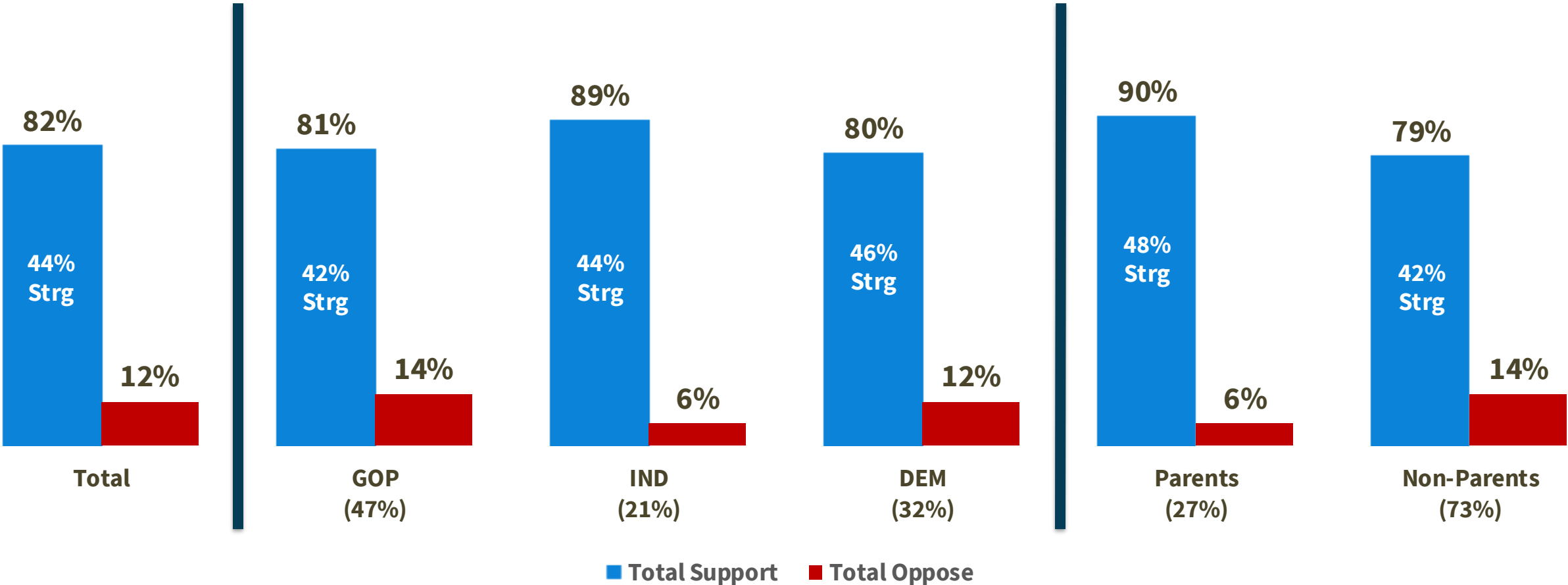


After learning some background about Algebra I, 80% of South Carolinians support ensuring all eligible students take the course by 9th grade.

Research shows that students who are successful in Algebra I by 9th grade have better high school graduation rates, college-going rates, college completion rates, and higher wages upon graduation.



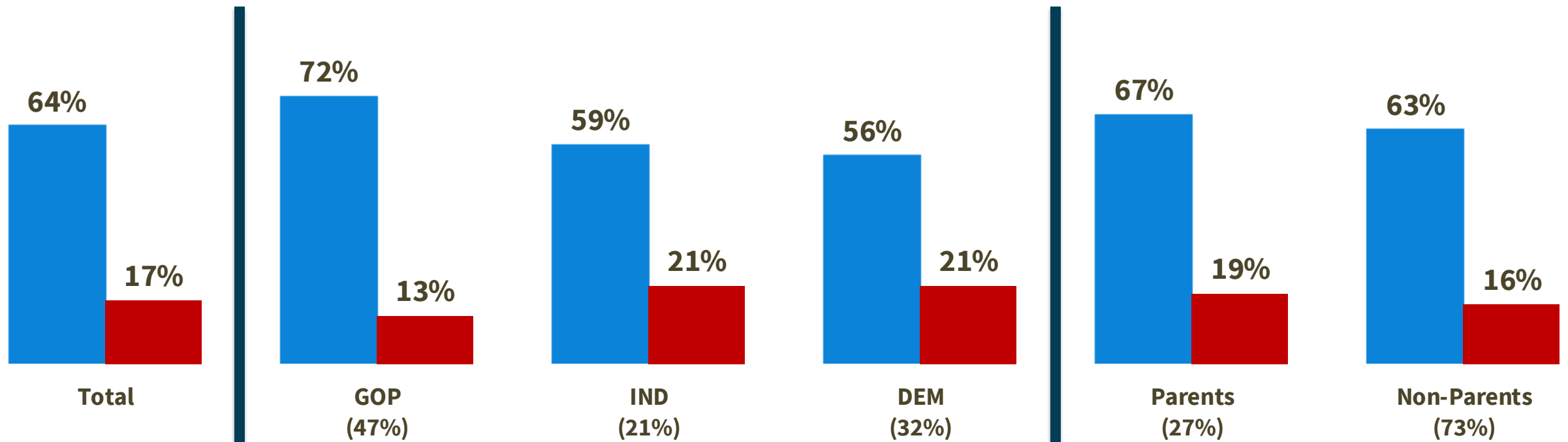
There's equally impressive support to guaranteeing high performing students in lower grades earlier access to Algebra I.



Accountability

By a wide margin, South Carolina voters believe the lack of accountability for underperforming schools is a larger problem than current methods of measuring school accountability.

There is a lack of accountability for persistently underperforming schools
Current ways to measure school accountability are too rigid and stifle innovation



Voters across the state find “A-F letter grades” for schools the most informative and helpful.

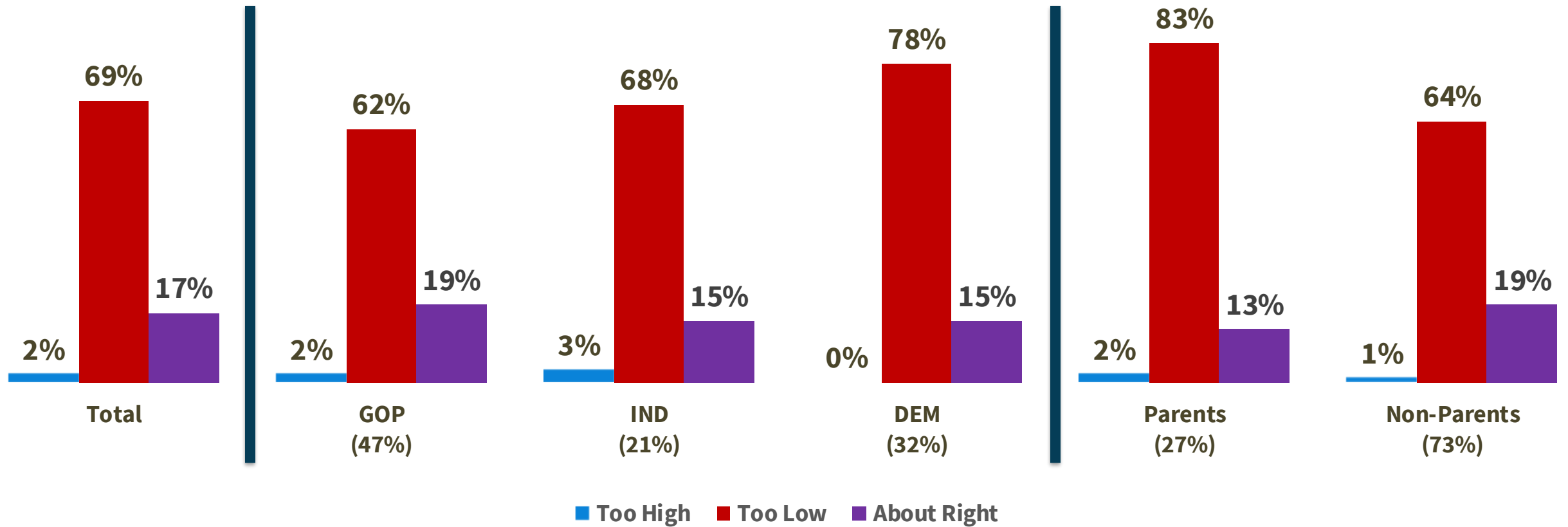
	Total	GOP	IND	DEM	White	Black	Greenville	Columbia	Charleston	Myrtle	Augusta/ Savannah	Charlotte	Parent	Non-Parent
A-F letter grades	39%	42%	37%	37%	41%	37%	38%	40%	45%	34%	33%	45%	39%	40%
Numeric scores	16%	14%	17%	20%	19%	15%	15%	21%	11%	19%	15%	19%	16%	16%
Descriptive labels	13%	12%	18%	11%	12%	15%	13%	14%	11%	17%	13%	11%	19%	11%
Star ratings	7%	5%	3%	11%	5%	10%	8%	1%	9%	2%	12%	9%	7%	7%
Tier system	4%	3%	8%	3%	4%	6%	3%	3%	7%	2%	5%	4%	7%	3%
Badges or titles	2%	2%	-	4%	2%	1%	4%	-	3%	3%	-	1%	2%	3%
Color-coded performance indicators	1%	2%	1%	-	2%	-	-	5%	-	2%	-	2%	-	2%

When it comes to understanding how well a school is performing, South Carolinians say: look to student performance.

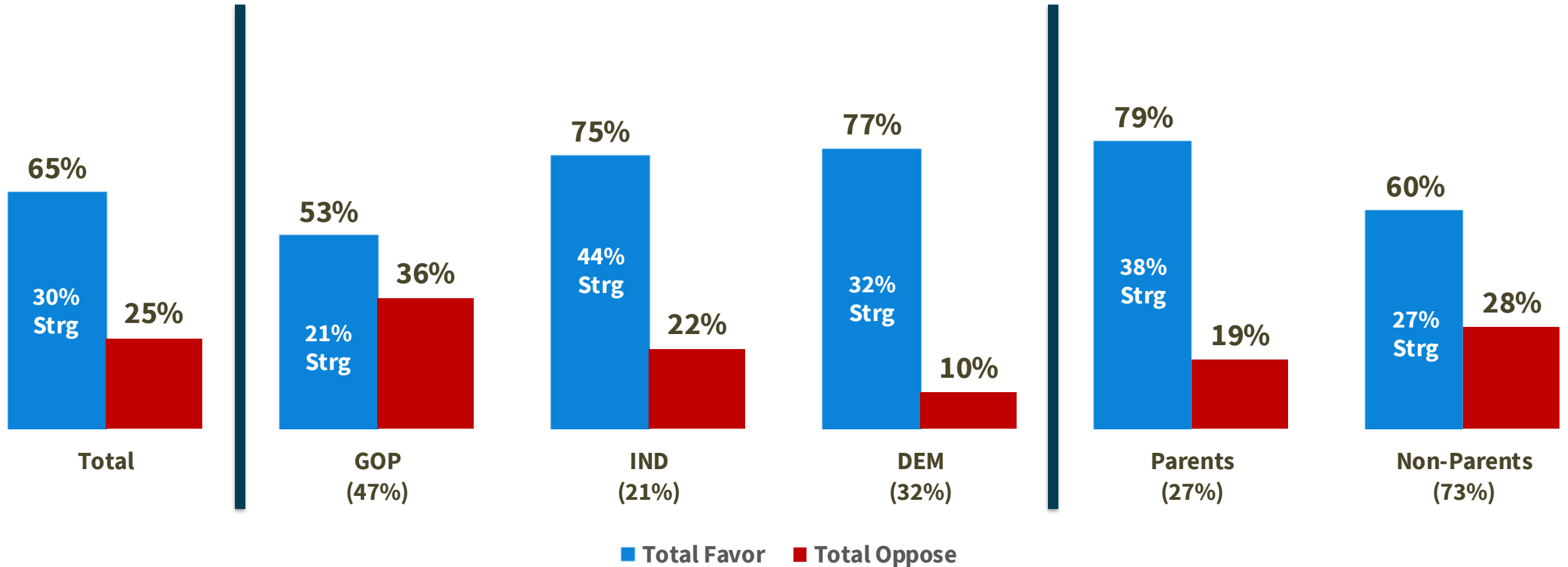
% Combined Choices	Total	GOP	IND	DEM	White	Black	Greenville	Columbia	Charleston	Myrtle	Augusta/ Savannah	Charlotte	Parent	Non-Parent
Student grade level performance	43%	50%	43%	33%	50%	28%	53%	42%	40%	36%	39%	35%	38%	44%
Student academic growth over time	31%	33%	34%	26%	31%	24%	27%	36%	31%	26%	39%	27%	34%	30%
Graduation rates	29%	26%	34%	29%	31%	24%	34%	29%	21%	26%	28%	31%	27%	29%
College or career readiness	22%	19%	22%	26%	21%	23%	27%	16%	19%	23%	21%	22%	22%	22%
School safety	15%	12%	19%	18%	14%	20%	9%	10%	22%	28%	12%	19%	21%	13%
Attendance or absenteeism	12%	14%	13%	9%	11%	18%	13%	14%	14%	12%	6%	6%	6%	15%
Equity in opportunities across student groups	10%	6%	12%	13%	9%	15%	8%	13%	5%	12%	14%	10%	10%	10%
School discipline	8%	10%	1%	8%	7%	9%	1%	13%	14%	3%	10%	11%	6%	8%
Parent satisfaction	7%	10%	1%	7%	5%	8%	8%	5%	5%	3%	10%	17%	12%	5%
Equity in outcomes across student groups	7%	4%	9%	10%	6%	11%	4%	8%	10%	11%	6%	5%	6%	7%
Student participation in different activities	5%	7%	4%	4%	7%	2%	9%	3%	4%	9%	1%	4%	11%	4%

Teaching/Teachers

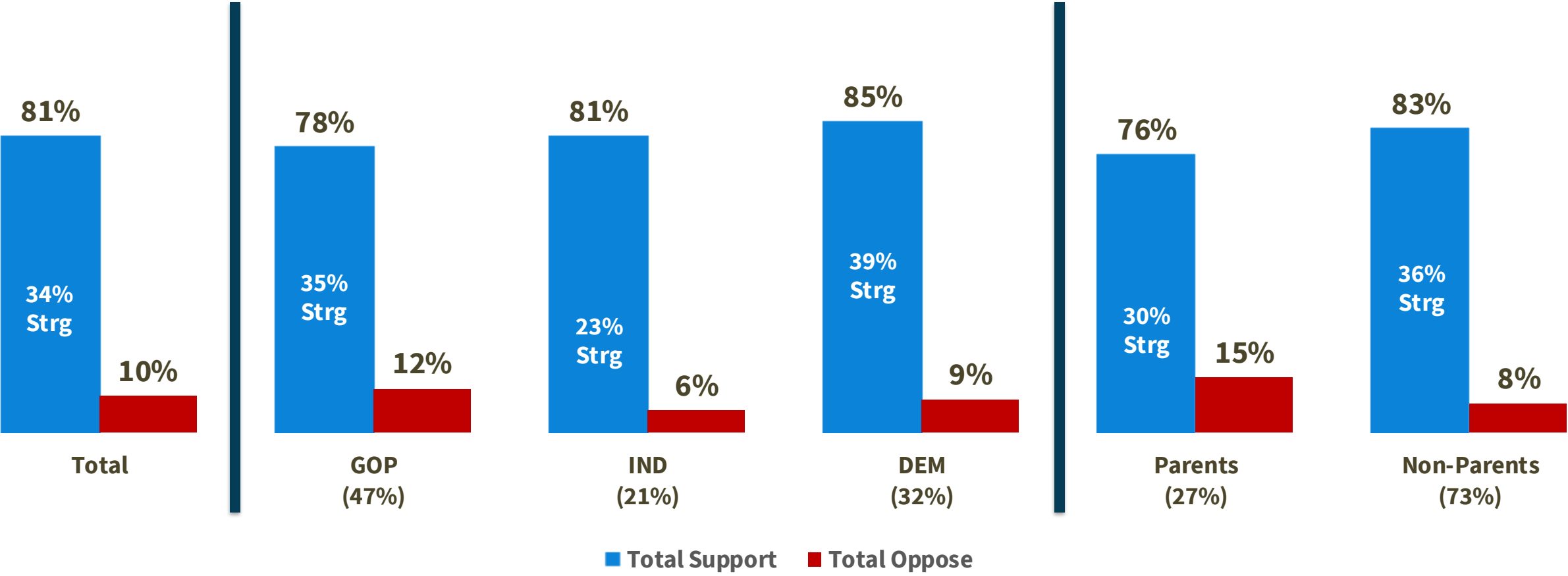
Over two thirds of South Carolina believes salaries and benefits for teachers in their state are “too low.”



An overwhelming majority of voters support using state funding to help highly effective teachers in at-risk schools earn up to \$100,000 a year.



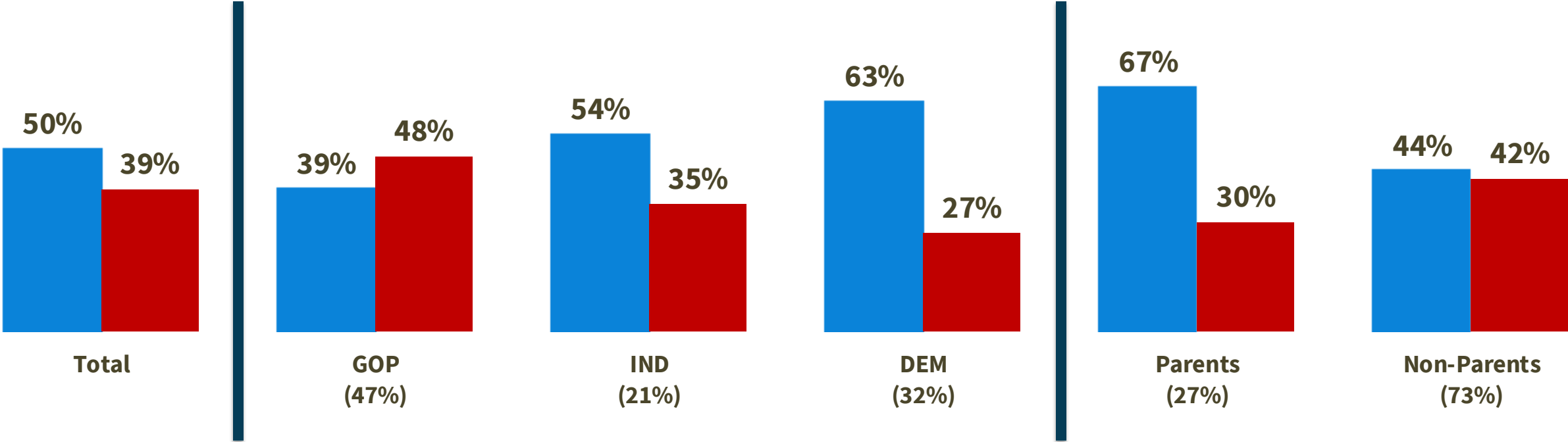
There's even higher support for a dedicated pool of money to help place highly effective teachers in at-risk schools.



School Funding & Choice

Voters narrowly side with “not enough funding” being a bigger problem than money being “wasted and not spent wisely,” but this has partisan undertones.

There is not enough funding
There is sufficient funding, but it is wasted and not spent wisely



Voters agree that their state should ensure more funding is going to schools serving kids with greater learning needs, and that funding should follow the student.

% Agree - % Disagree	Total	GOP	IND	DEM	White	Black	Greenville	Columbia	Charleston	Myrtle	Augusta/ Savannah	Charlotte	Parent	Non-Parent
The state should ensure that more funding is going to schools serving students with greater learning needs.	75%	68%	79%	83%	72%	77%	76%	74%	79%	76%	66%	73%	87%	71%
	19%	25%	17%	11%	21%	17%	19%	22%	12%	15%	22%	27%	11%	22%
School funding should follow a student regardless of where their parents decide to send them to school - whether it be another public school, a public charter school, a private school, or to home school. (A)	73%	79%	80%	58%	71%	75%	81%	81%	69%	66%	59%	59%	77%	71%
	20%	14%	16%	32%	22%	17%	13%	10%	23%	26%	31%	34%	19%	20%
The amount of school funding per student should not change regardless of where their parents decide to send them to school. (B)	69%	77%	59%	63%	68%	66%	78%	61%	70%	60%	61%	77%	74%	67%
	20%	12%	31%	25%	17%	29%	11%	29%	17%	29%	24%	19%	17%	21%

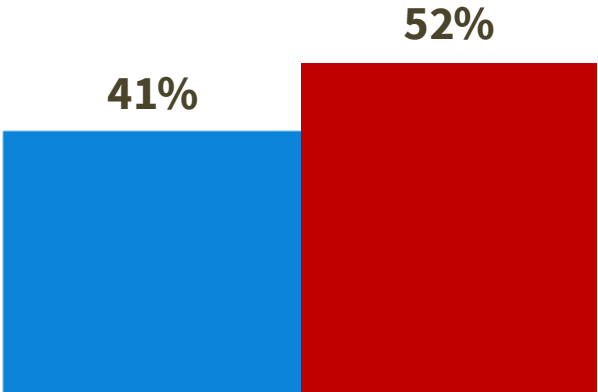
Voters largely agree with the following statements related to school choice:

% Agree - % Disagree	Total	GOP	IND	DEM	White	Black	Greenville	Columbia	Charleston	Myrtle	Augusta/ Savannah	Charlotte	Parent	Non-Parent
Parents should be able to have a choice in where and how their children are educated. (A)	86%	89%	95%	72%	88%	78%	91%	92%	80%	75%	92%	74%	91%	84%
	10%	6%	4%	21%	8%	15%	7%	5%	12%	21%	8%	13%	9%	10%
Parents, not the government, should be allowed to choose the best education environment for their children.	82%	88%	85%	71%	82%	79%	82%	81%	80%	84%	78%	90%	87%	80%
	14%	9%	14%	23%	14%	19%	12%	18%	17%	12%	17%	8%	10%	16%
Parents should be able to have a choice in where and how their children are educated, even if it's not a choice I would make for my own child. (B)	79%	83%	82%	73%	76%	83%	72%	86%	80%	78%	88%	77%	90%	75%
	16%	16%	9%	21%	19%	12%	22%	13%	16%	14%	9%	15%	6%	20%
Giving parents more options for where and how their children are educated results in better outcomes for students.	78%	83%	85%	65%	77%	76%	80%	73%	79%	73%	84%	82%	85%	75%
	17%	11%	12%	27%	17%	18%	15%	23%	15%	18%	9%	16%	13%	18%

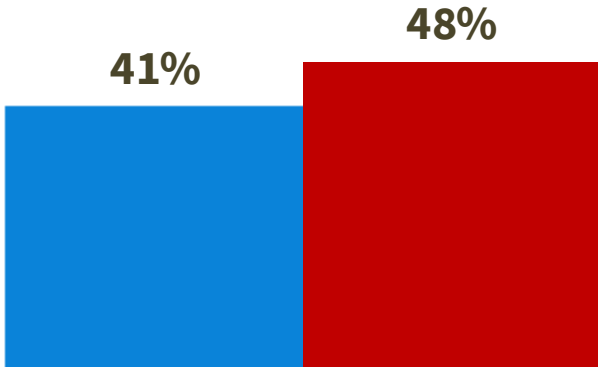
Career & College Pathways

Voters aren't sold on the idea high schoolers in their states are prepared for life after graduation whether that be for college or the workforce.

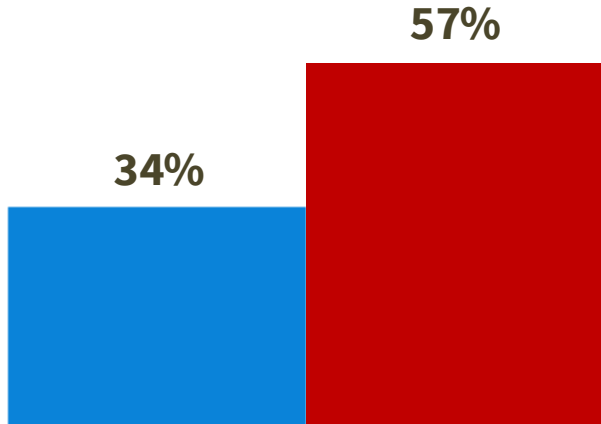
Generally speaking, do you believe graduates of your state's high schools are prepared or unprepared to meet the expectations they face as they take the next steps after high school?



Do you believe high school graduates in your state are properly prepared for higher education like college?



Do you believe high school graduates in your state are properly prepared for a job or the workforce?



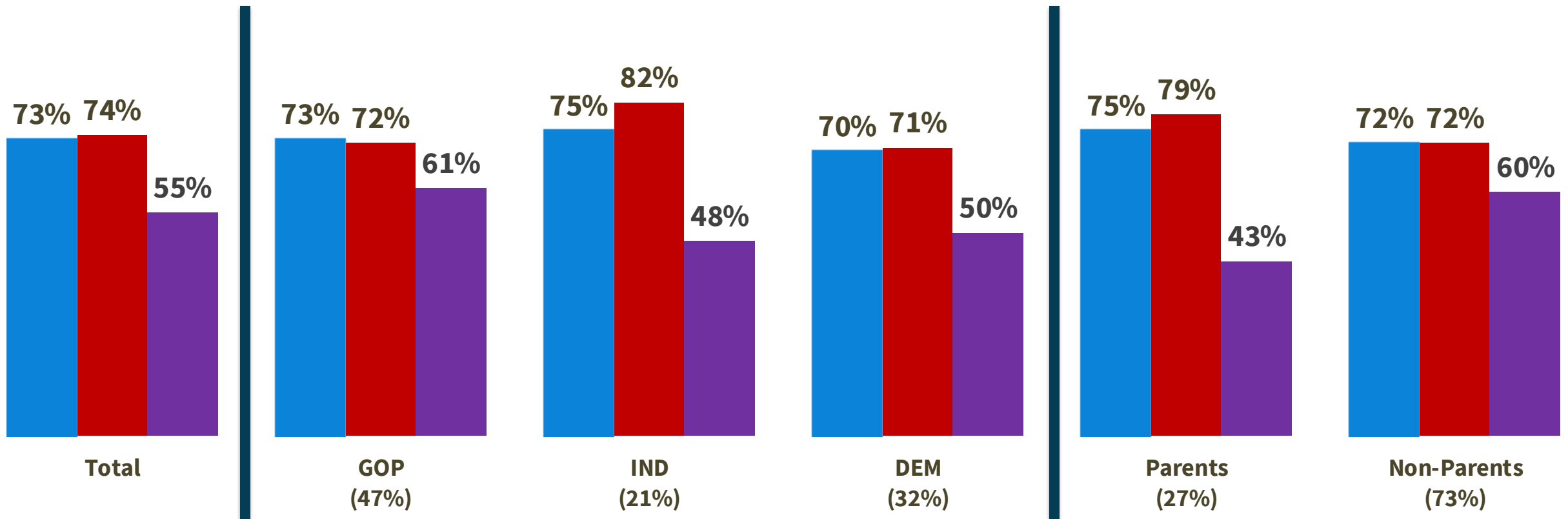
■ Total Prepared ■ Total Unprepared

There's no real difference between "enrollment" or "employment" – both are viewed as legitimate and valuable outcomes for students after high school.

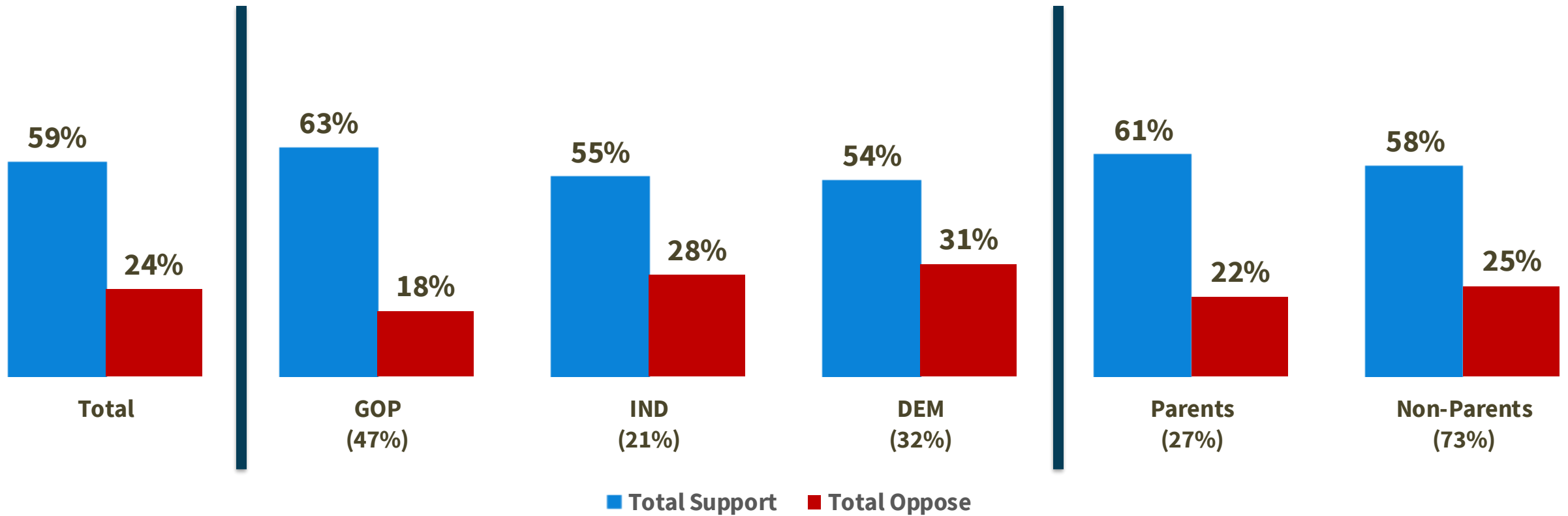
Enrollment: enrolling in a college or university, or certification program

Employment: gaining full-time or part-time employment

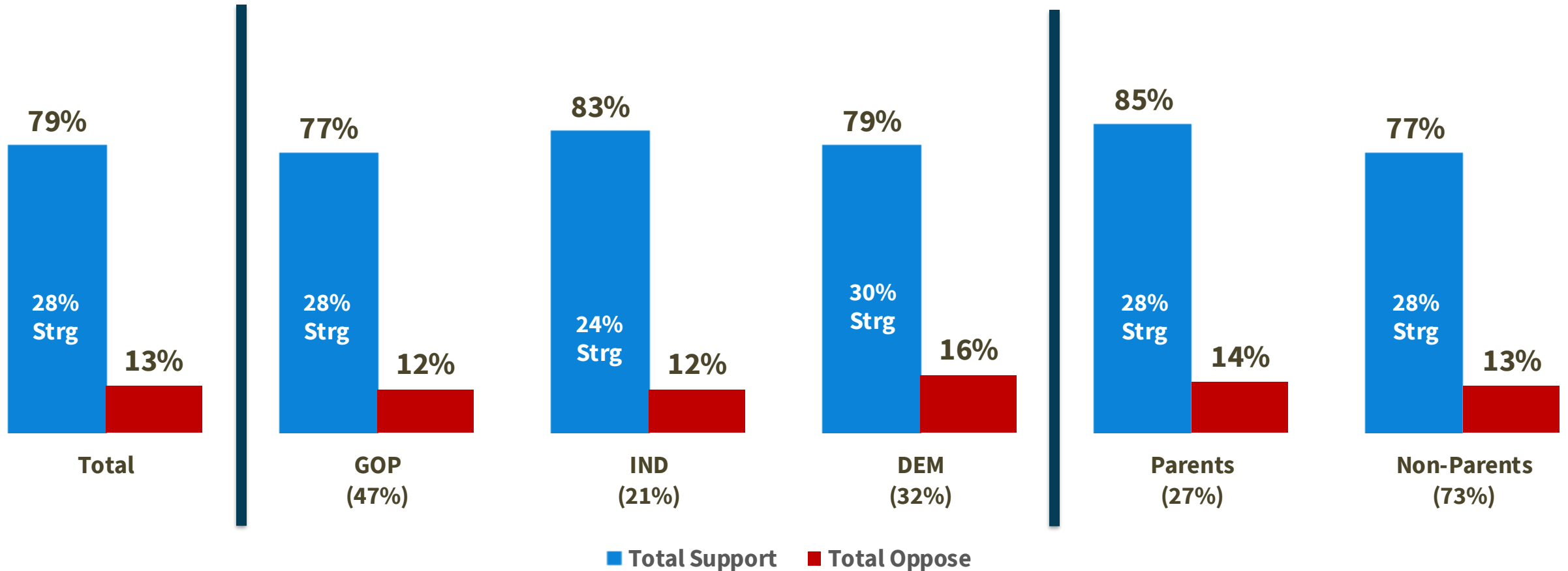
Enlistment: enlisting in the military



A strong majority of South Carolina supports the idea of outcomes-based funding.



Nearly 80% of voters support the state providing financial incentives to schools that help students enroll, become employed, or enlist.



Support / Oppose State Actions on ROI of Workforce Credentials

	Total	GOP	IND	DEM	White	Black	Greenville	Columbia	Charleston	Myrtle	Augusta/ Savannah	Charlotte	Parent	Non-Parent
Investing more in programs and credentials that are shown to lead to higher wages and job demand in the state.	89%	88%	93%	86%	87%	92%	91%	91%	87%	74%	96%	92%	95%	86%
	6%	10%	4%	2%	9%	0%	3%	3%	8%	14%	4%	8%	3%	7%
Making this ROI information publicly available to help families and communities understand the value of different credentials.	86%	87%	89%	83%	88%	81%	89%	93%	74%	91%	85%	86%	90%	85%
	7%	8%	3%	7%	5%	11%	6%	0%	15%	0%	15%	11%	5%	8%
Providing this information to students and adults to help them choose which credentials to pursue.	86%	87%	89%	85%	87%	86%	90%	90%	83%	74%	86%	94%	95%	83%
	9%	10%	9%	6%	9%	6%	5%	4%	14%	14%	14%	6%	3%	10%
Reducing funding for credential programs that lead to low-wage jobs or where there are few or no job opportunities.	48%	57%	41%	38%	52%	32%	58%	40%	47%	40%	48%	46%	53%	46%
	39%	30%	45%	49%	32%	58%	29%	51%	33%	46%	44%	41%	39%	39%

As you may know, some states are now analyzing the return on investment (ROI) of workforce credentials (like those needed for positions in computer science, skilled trades, or health care) by comparing what credentials students are earning to the credentials that employers say they are looking for when they hire.

Support / Oppose State Actions on ROI of Higher Education Degrees

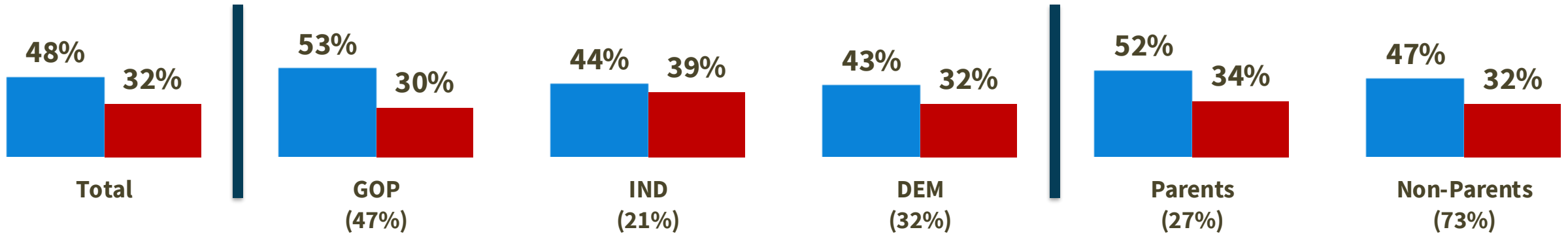
	Total	GOP	IND	DEM	White	Black	Greenville	Columbia	Charleston	Myrtle	Augusta/ Savannah	Charlotte	Parent	Non-Parent
Providing financial incentives to colleges and universities that help students achieve successful outcomes after graduation, such as employment, higher wages, military service or continued education.	75%	77%	78%	71%	72%	78%	66%	79%	88%	82%	72%	62%	75%	76%
	18%	19%	12%	21%	20%	19%	32%	13%	12%	13%	6%	25%	18%	18%
Conducting this kind of ROI analysis annually and transparently provide students applying to college with the help to make informed choices in their majors.	74%	77%	76%	70%	73%	79%	68%	71%	91%	73%	73%	71%	83%	71%
	16%	13%	10%	23%	16%	14%	22%	18%	5%	27%	0%	20%	4%	21%
Tying a portion of public funding for colleges to the job placement and earnings of their graduates.	59%	64%	69%	45%	58%	61%	51%	57%	61%	71%	50%	71%	68%	55%
	26%	20%	15%	41%	27%	24%	31%	37%	24%	23%	9%	16%	15%	30%
Giving students a money-back guarantee that higher education will provide them with a quality degree and a job of a certain wage after graduation . . . or their money back.	51%	45%	59%	54%	42%	73%	39%	62%	51%	51%	63%	43%	80%	39%
	39%	46%	32%	34%	49%	13%	47%	26%	44%	43%	30%	40%	15%	49%
Ending taxpayer support for degree programs where graduates consistently earn less than or the same as high school graduates.	51%	60%	56%	36%	54%	47%	45%	45%	65%	32%	65%	66%	63%	46%
	37%	27%	34%	51%	35%	45%	36%	47%	31%	57%	20%	16%	22%	42%
Reducing taxpayer support for degree programs where graduates consistently earn less than or the same as high school graduates.	48%	55%	52%	38%	52%	51%	40%	59%	59%	39%	31%	64%	58%	45%
	39%	38%	37%	42%	37%	34%	43%	35%	39%	39%	57%	18%	34%	41%

Some states are now analyzing the return on investment (ROI) of higher education degrees. They are comparing the long-term earnings of individuals who earn associate or bachelor's degrees to the wages of high school graduates to understand which higher education degrees provide a greater wage than a high school diploma and how quickly each degree pays for itself.

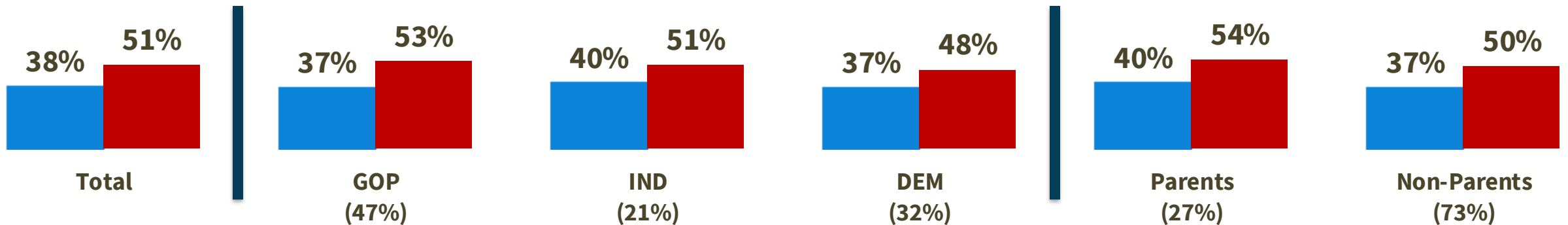
Cell Phone Use in School

Generally speaking, there's a sense there is too much technology in schools today.

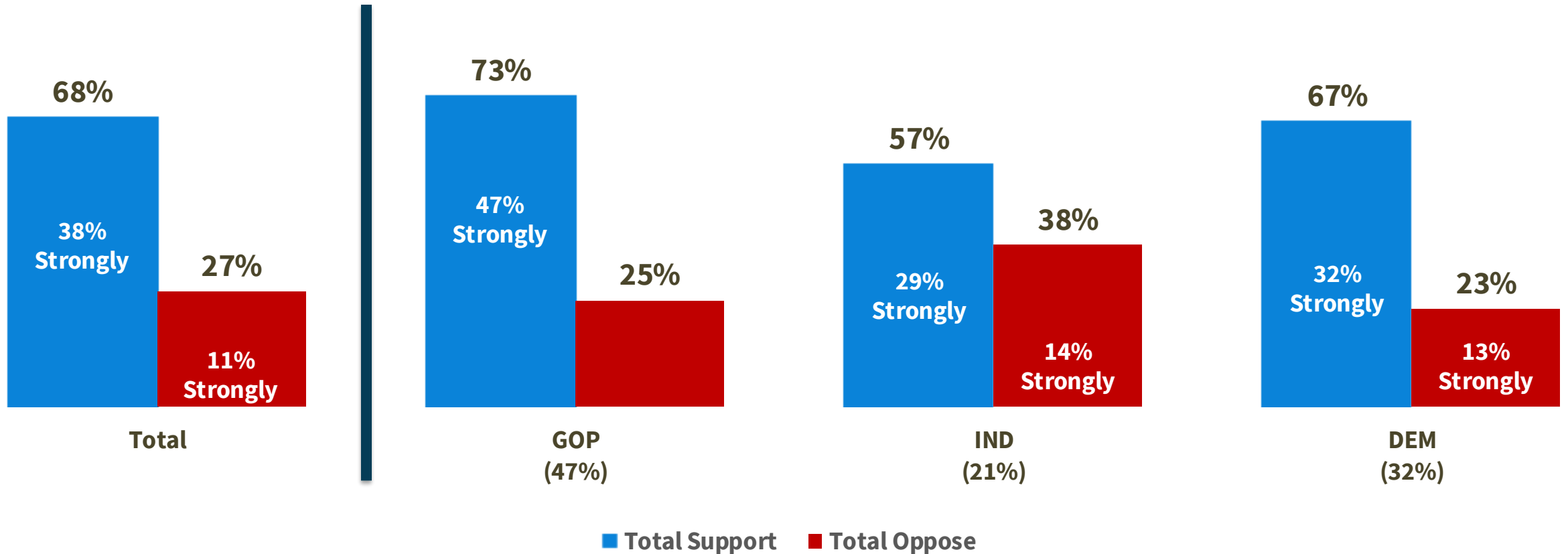
There is too much technology
There is not enough technology



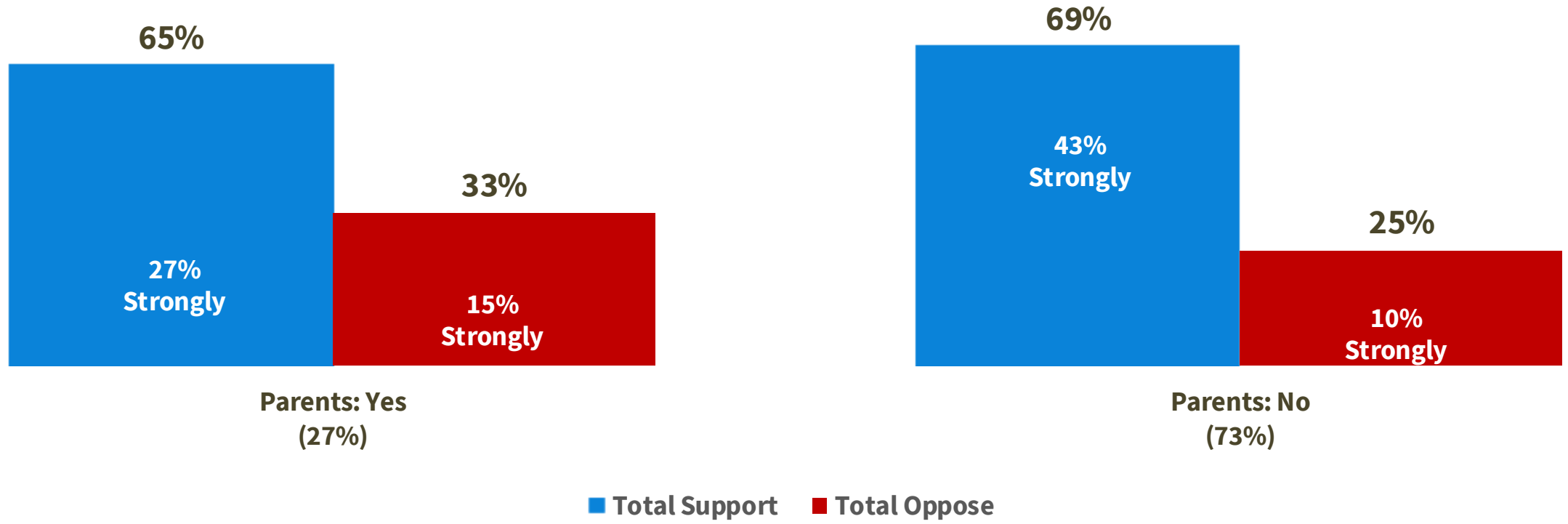
There is not enough preparation for future technological advancements and the digital economy
There is too much use of technology in classrooms instead of reading actual books, writing on paper, and creative thinking without technological stimulation



Nearly two-thirds of voters support making K-12 schools in their state cell phone-free.

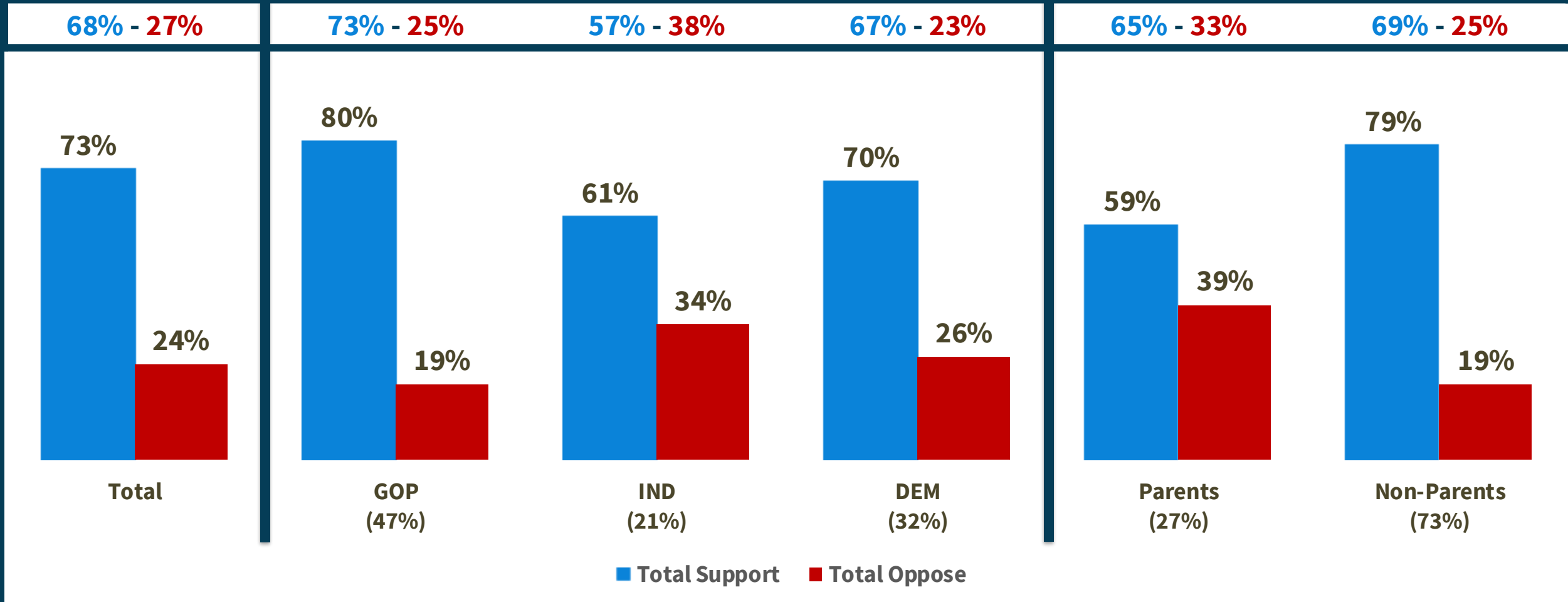


Parents and non-parents feel roughly the same way.



After hearing some background about the benefits of removing cell phones from schools, support increases.

Initial Support-Oppose Making K-12 Public Schools Cell Phone-Free



The strongest scoring messages in favor of cell phone-free schools are more personal interactions, less personal stress for students, and less bullying.

% Much More Likely	Total	GOP	IND	DEM	Parent	Non-Parent
Evidence shows that after the first few weeks of cell phone-free schools, principals report that students not only adjust to the policy, but they report enjoying more personal interactions with fellow students and teachers.	46%	51%	42%	43%	39%	49%
Students in cell phone-free schools report less personal stress because the pressure to check and respond immediately to texts goes away when everyone's phones are put away.	43%	50%	32%	41%	39%	45%
Principals in cell phone-free schools report that rather than silence as students stared at their phones, lunchrooms and hallways are now filled with conversations.	42%	50%	33%	37%	45%	42%
Reports show that incidents of bullying and fighting declines in cell phone-free schools.	41%	48%	38%	33%	34%	43%
A 2024 study found that approximately 90% of teachers support prohibiting cell phones during instructional time, and about three-quarters of teachers favor full day bans.	41%	48%	32%	36%	34%	43%
At least 26 states have passed laws or executive orders that require or encourage local school districts to ban or limit cell phone use in K-12 public schools, with 22 of these occurring in 2025 alone.	34%	40%	26%	32%	27%	37%

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