

# New AP-NORC education survey delves into Americans' views on choice, quality, and control

15 May 2017

About 4 in 10 Americans think there is too little school choice in their state or their own community, and more than half say the amount of school choice parents have is about right, according to a new survey by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. The survey also found that when it comes to school assignment, the idea of schools continuing to give preference to children living in nearby areas is more popular than several alternate proposals that would give families more choice using lotteries or criteria other than residence in the community.

"This survey provides important data on one of society's most important issues - education," said Trevor Tompson, director of The AP-NORC Center. "These results indicate a strong preference for greater local control and more [school choice](#) but there is little support for several proposals to provide options in elementary and secondary education."

Key findings from the poll include:

- About 55 percent say parents in their state and locally have the right amount of alternatives in deciding which school their children attend, but nearly 4 in 10 say parents have too little choice. Only 4 percent think parents have too much choice in their state or local community when it comes to where their children will be educated.
- A third of Americans regard the quality of [charter schools](#)—both in their own community and nationally—as excellent or good, and less than 10 percent consider them to be substandard. However, about a third of Americans were unable to give an assessment, and 6 in 10 have heard little or nothing about charter schools.
- Nearly half, 47 percent, favor more charter schools, defined in the survey as "public schools that function independently of local school district control," and 23 percent oppose. Thirty percent neither favor nor oppose. Among those who consider the amount of school choice available in their community for parents insufficient, about 6 in 10 support additional charter schools.
- The public is even less familiar with school voucher programs. Two-thirds of the public have heard little or nothing about school vouchers. Forty-three percent favor the idea of giving low-income parents tax-funded vouchers they can use to help pay for tuition for their children to attend private or religious schools of their choice, and 35 percent oppose. Twenty-one percent are ambivalent about the idea. But, about 6 in 10 of those who would say parents have too little school [choice](#) in their community favor voucher programs.
- Seven in 10 Americans say charter schools and private schools that receive tax-funded vouchers should be held to the same standards as other schools, rather than setting their own standards.
- In general, only 26 percent of Americans consider the nation's public schools to be excellent or good. Typically, the public has a better impression when they have some first-hand knowledge, and so 45 percent regard the quality of education at their local schools to be excellent or good. And 52 percent of people whose children actually attend public school say the quality of education at their local public schools is excellent or good.
- Parents are more positive about the school they know best, but still a third of parents are not particularly enthusiastic about the

quality of their child's education. Although 67 percent say the quality of their child's school is excellent or good, 27 percent describe the [education](#) their child receives as fair, and 5 percent say the quality of their child's school is poor.

- Beyond the overall quality of schools, Americans don't give particularly high marks for the job that is done in preparing students for life after high [school](#). Only about a third say students are well prepared to join the workforce or be good citizens. About 4 in 10 say their local schools do an excellent or good job of college preparation.

Provided by University of Chicago

APA citation: New AP-NORC education survey delves into Americans' views on choice, quality, and control (2017, May 15) retrieved 19 September 2019 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-05-ap-norc-survey-delves-americans-views.html>

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