



# August 2021 American Perspectives Survey Topline Questionnaire

Total N=2,625 adults, including an oversample of 610 parents with children under the age of 18 |  
Interview dates: August 16–August 26, 2021.

*Note: All results shown are percentages. An asterisk (\*) replaces percentages greater than zero but less than 0.5 percent. Responses may not total to 100 percent due to rounding.*

## ASK ALL:

**Q.1** In general, how would you rate the public schools in the US?

3	Excellent
42	Good
39	Only fair
11	Poor
5	Failing
*	Refused

**Q.2** And how would you rate the public schools where you live?

10	Excellent
46	Good
30	Only fair
9	Poor
4	Failing
*	Refused

**Q.3** Compared with other developed nations, how would you rate the public school system in the US?

4	The US is the best in the world
27	The US is above average
42	The US is average
26	The US is below average
1	Refused

**Q.4** How much of a problem, if at all, do you think the following are for US public schools?  
**[RANDOMIZE]**

A. Inefficiency or waste of school resources

50	Major problem
42	Minor problem
8	Not a problem
1	Refused

B. Overcrowded classrooms

53	Major problem
38	Minor problem
9	Not a problem
1	Refused

C. Bullying or harassment

57	Major problem
38	Minor problem
4	Not a problem
1	Refused

D. Racial segregation of schools

32	Major problem
42	Minor problem
25	Not a problem
1	Refused

E. Lack of parental involvement

57	Major problem
36	Minor problem
6	Not a problem
1	Refused

F. Drugs or alcohol use

43	Major problem
49	Minor problem
7	Not a problem
1	Refused

G. Quality of teachers

36	Major problem
54	Minor problem
10	Not a problem
1	Refused

H. Unequal school funding

60	Major problem
32	Minor problem
8	Not a problem
1	Refused

I. COVID-19

59	Major problem
31	Minor problem
9	Not a problem
1	Refused

**Q.5** If local schools in your area were to receive a one-time funding increase from the federal government, what is the MOST important thing schools could spend these funds on?  
**[RANDOMIZE]**

- 13 Improving school facilities
- 1 Sports and athletics
- 4 Arts and music
- 14 After school programs or tutoring for students
- 21 Increasing teacher pay
- 11 Expanding access to mental health services for students
- 6 Increasing school security, such as guards and metal detectors
- 5 Creating or expanding gifted and talented programs
- 18 Funding programs designed to keep kids in school
- 6 Something else [SPECIFY]
- 1 Refused

**ASK IF HAS SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN: [N=967]:**

**Q.6** What grade(s) are your children entering this fall? . . . **[SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]**

- 16 PK-3 or PK-4
- 12 Kindergarten
- 13 First grade
- 10 Second grade
- 12 Third grade
- 11 Fourth grade
- 9 Fifth grade
- 13 Sixth grade
- 11 Seventh grade
- 10 Eighth grade
- 14 Ninth grade (Freshman)
- 11 Tenth grade (Sophomore)
- 13 Eleventh grade (Junior)
- 12 Twelfth grade (Senior)
- 2 Daycare or other childcare arrangement
- 3 Other [SPECIFY]
- 1 Refused

**Q.7** What type of school does your child(ren) attend, if any? **[SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]**

- 78 Public
- 1 Public magnet
- 8 Private-parochial/religious
- 2 Private nonreligious
- 5 Charter
- 7 Homeschool
- 4 Private daycare
- 1 Other [SPECIFY]
- 1 Refused

**ASK IF HOMESCHOOLED [N=77]:**

**Q.8** What is the most important reason you decided to homeschool your child or children?

[SPECIFY]

**ASK IF HAS SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN [N=967]:**

**Q.9** If you had a choice of sending your child to any public school, would you keep your child in the same school they are now, or switch to another school?

80 Keep in same  
19 Switch  
1 Refused

**ASK IF PREFER TO SWITCH [N=169]:**

**Q.10** And would you prefer to send your child to another school in the same school district or a school in a different school district?

37 Same school district  
63 Different school district  
\* Refused

**ASK ALL:**

**Q.11** Do you agree or disagree with the following... **[RANDOMIZE LIST]**

A. Sex education classes should include discussions of same-sex relationships

30 Completely agree  
29 Somewhat agree  
17 Somewhat disagree  
23 Completely disagree  
1 Refused

B. Sex education classes should teach students that sexual activity outside of marriage is likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects

22 Completely agree  
27 Somewhat agree  
23 Somewhat disagree  
28 Completely disagree  
1 Refused

C. Coaches at public high schools should be allowed to lead their players in Christian prayer before games

33 Completely agree  
27 Somewhat agree  
17 Somewhat disagree  
21 Completely disagree  
1 Refused

D. Public schools should do more to help children develop interpersonal skills and learn self-control even if it means focusing less on academics

24 Completely agree  
45 Somewhat agree  
23 Somewhat disagree  
7 Completely disagree  
1 Refused

E. Schools today are not doing enough to teach students to love their country

31	Completely agree
30	Somewhat agree
22	Somewhat disagree
16	Completely disagree
1	Refused

F. Schools should ensure that students read authors from a variety of different racial and ethnic backgrounds

55	Completely agree
35	Somewhat agree
6	Somewhat disagree
4	Completely disagree
1	Refused

G. Public school libraries should remove any works of literature that include dated words or references that might be offensive to certain groups

7	Completely agree
16	Somewhat agree
28	Somewhat disagree
49	Completely disagree
1	Refused

**Q.12** Thinking about the following subjects...How important is it that high school students in the US learn about the following issues and ideas in school? **[RANDOMIZE LIST]**

A. LGBTQ identity and experience

6	One of the most important
18	Very important
33	Somewhat important
22	Not that important
20	Should not be taught
1	Refused

B. How human activity is contributing to climate change

28	One of the most important
33	Very important
24	Somewhat important
9	Not that important
6	Should not be taught
1	Refused

C. How slavery and racial discrimination shaped American history

24	One of the most important
42	Very important
26	Somewhat important
6	Not that important
3	Should not be taught
1	Refused

D. Evolution

13	One of the most important
36	Very important
31	Somewhat important
11	Not that important
8	Should not be taught
1	Refused

E. Religious liberty issues

13	One of the most important
34	Very important
35	Somewhat important
13	Not that important
5	Should not be taught
1	Refused

F. Sex education

17	One of the most important
42	Very important
30	Somewhat important
8	Not that important
4	Should not be taught
1	Refused

G. The role of Christianity in America's founding

12	One of the most important
25	Very important
34	Somewhat important
21	Not that important
7	Should not be taught
1	Refused

H. The benefits of free market capitalism

14	One of the most important
33	Very important
39	Somewhat important
10	Not that important
4	Should not be taught
1	Refused

**Q.13** In general, how much confidence do you have in the teachers at the local public high school to teach controversial issues in a fair and honest way?

7	A great deal
48	A fair amount
32	Very little
12	None at all
1	Refused

**Q.14** In general, would you say the theory of evolution conflicts with your religious or personal beliefs or is it compatible with your religious or personal beliefs?

35 Conflicts with my religious or personal beliefs  
63 Compatible with my religious or personal beliefs  
3 Refused

**Q.15** Do you favor or oppose the following in public schools... **[RANDOMIZE LIST]**

**ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=1,309]:**

A. Requiring all public-school students to be vaccinated for childhood illnesses, such as measles, mumps and rubella, before they can attend school in person

64 Strongly favor  
23 Somewhat favor  
7 Somewhat oppose  
5 Strongly oppose  
\* Refused

**ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=1,316]:**

B. Requiring all public-school students age 12 and up to be vaccinated for COVID-19 before they can attend school in person

39 Strongly favor  
22 Somewhat favor  
13 Somewhat oppose  
25 Strongly oppose  
1 Refused

**ASK ALL:**

C. Allowing a group of atheist students to organize an after-school club at the local public high school

25 Strongly favor  
38 Somewhat favor  
22 Somewhat oppose  
14 Strongly oppose  
1 Refused

D. State legislators passing laws that would ban teaching Critical Race Theory in all public schools

24 Strongly favor  
16 Somewhat favor  
30 Somewhat oppose  
29 Strongly oppose  
1 Refused

E. Allowing daily prayer to be spoken in the classroom

26 Strongly favor  
30 Somewhat favor  
23 Somewhat oppose  
21 Strongly oppose  
1 Refused

F. Allowing students to refuse participating in the Pledge of Allegiance

24	Strongly favor
25	Somewhat favor
23	Somewhat oppose
28	Strongly oppose
1	Refused

G. Teaching students that young people who get at least a high school degree, have a job and get married – before having children – are more likely to be financially secure and to avoid poverty

39	Strongly favor
38	Somewhat favor
14	Somewhat oppose
8	Strongly oppose
1	Refused

H. Teaching creationism or intelligent design as alternative theories to evolution

15	Strongly favor
35	Somewhat favor
26	Somewhat oppose
22	Strongly oppose
1	Refused

I. Teaching students that slavery was the primary cause of the Civil War

37	Strongly favor
40	Somewhat favor
15	Somewhat oppose
8	Strongly oppose
1	Refused

**Q.16** How much say SHOULD the following groups have over what subjects are taught in public schools and how these subjects are covered? **[RANDOMIZE LIST]**

A. The local school board

23	A great deal
53	A fair amount
19	Not too much
4	None at all
1	Refused

B. The school principal

21	A great deal
49	A fair amount
24	Not too much
5	None at all
1	Refused



C. Teachers

42	A great deal
43	A fair amount
11	Not too much
3	None at all
1	Refused

D. Parents

36	A great deal
41	A fair amount
18	Not too much
4	None at all
1	Refused

E. State legislators

8	A great deal
34	A fair amount
41	Not too much
15	None at all
1	Refused

F. Congress

7	A great deal
30	A fair amount
42	Not too much
21	None at all
1	Refused

G. Students

22	A great deal
41	A fair amount
29	Not too much
7	None at all
1	Refused

**Q.17** Do you think sex education should be required for students, or should it be optional?

58	Required
37	Optional
4	Should not be taught
1	Refused

**ASK IF HAS CHILDREN UNDER 18 [N=1,072]:**

**Q.18** How much confidence do you have that sex education programs in the local public schools in your community teach values similar to those you teach at home?

9	Very confident
47	Somewhat confident
29	Not too confident
15	Not confident at all
1	Refused

**ASK ALL:**

**Q.19** Would you favor or oppose public schools displaying the following on school property during the school day? **[RANDOMIZE LIST]**

A. A Jewish menorah as a symbol for Hanukkah

20	Strongly favor
44	Somewhat favor
20	Somewhat oppose
15	Strongly oppose
1	Refused

B. A Christmas tree

38	Strongly favor
43	Somewhat favor
11	Somewhat oppose
8	Strongly oppose
1	Refused

C. The Christian nativity scene

26	Strongly favor
38	Somewhat favor
20	Somewhat oppose
15	Strongly oppose
1	Refused

D. A star and crescent moon as a symbol of the Muslim holiday of Ramadan

15	Strongly favor
38	Somewhat favor
24	Somewhat oppose
22	Strongly oppose
1	Refused

E. A Black Lives Matter banner

16	Strongly favor
28	Somewhat favor
21	Somewhat oppose
34	Strongly oppose
1	Refused

F. A pride flag or rainbow banner

15	Strongly favor
32	Somewhat favor
23	Somewhat oppose
29	Strongly oppose
1	Refused

**Q.20** Here are some things that make some people uncomfortable. Please say whether you personally would be comfortable or uncomfortable with any of the following... **[RANDOMIZE LIST]**

**ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=1,309]:**

A. An evangelical Christian teacher who talks openly about their personal religious beliefs in class

16	Very comfortable
25	Somewhat comfortable
34	Somewhat uncomfortable
25	Very uncomfortable
*	Refused

**ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=1,316]:**

B. An atheist teacher who talks openly about their personal religious beliefs in class

12	Very comfortable
21	Somewhat comfortable
29	Somewhat uncomfortable
36	Very uncomfortable
1	Refused

**ASK ALL:**

C. A transgender teacher teaching at an elementary school in your community

31	Very comfortable
29	Somewhat comfortable
21	Somewhat uncomfortable
18	Very uncomfortable
1	Refused

D. Having books at the local elementary school library that include gay and lesbian characters or stories

28	Very comfortable
26	Somewhat comfortable
22	Somewhat uncomfortable
23	Very uncomfortable
1	Refused

E. High school students learning about world religions, such as Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism

46	Very comfortable
37	Somewhat comfortable
11	Somewhat uncomfortable
5	Very uncomfortable
1	Refused

F. An optional class on the Bible being offered to students at the local public high school

41	Very comfortable
35	Somewhat comfortable
15	Somewhat uncomfortable
8	Very uncomfortable
1	Refused

**Q.21** Do you think the following information should be included in high school social studies or history textbooks, or not? **[RANDOMIZE]**

A. Photo of a lynching

50 Should be included  
30 Should not be included  
20 Not sure  
1 Refused

B. That George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and many other founders were slave owners

85 Should be included  
6 Should not be included  
8 Not sure  
1 Refused

C. The federal government's role in creating Japanese internment camps during World War II

83 Should be included  
8 Should not be included  
8 Not sure  
1 Refused

D. How the US government forcibly removed Native Americans from their land

86 Should be included  
6 Should not be included  
6 Not sure  
1 Refused

E. The history of the gay rights movement

57 Should be included  
26 Should not be included  
16 Not sure  
1 Refused

F. The concept of "white privilege"

46 Should be included  
37 Should not be included  
16 Not sure  
1 Refused

**Q.22** In general, do you think teachers should avoid discussion of controversial subjects if it might make students uncomfortable, or should they discuss these topics even if some students feel uncomfortable doing so?

77 Should discuss controversial subjects  
22 Should NOT discuss controversial subjects  
1 Refused

Now thinking about when you were growing up...

**Q.23** Growing up, do you believe that the schools you attended generally provided students with a good education, or not?

82	Yes, did
18	No, did not
1	Refused

**Q.24** What is one thing you think you should have been taught in school, but were not? Please share in just a few words...

SPECIFY

Turning to the upcoming school year...

**ASK IF PARENT OF SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN [N=967]:**

**Q.25a** In the fall, would you want your children's school to have full-time distance/remote learning, have a modified program where they attend school part time and do some distance/remote learning, or have your children attend school full time?

72	Full-time in-person school
17	Part-time in-person school with some distance learning
11	Full-time distance/remote learning
1	Refused

**ASK IF NOT PARENT OF SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN [N=1,658]:**

**Q.25b** In the fall, do you think children in your community should have full-time distance/remote learning, have a modified program where they attend school part time and do some distance/remote learning, or have your children attend school full time?

52	Full-time in-person school
36	Part-time in-person school with some distance learning
11	Full-time distance/remote learning
2	Refused

**ASK IF PARENT OF SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN [N=967]:**

**Q.26** If your child(ren)'s schools reopen for in-person classes this upcoming school year, how confident are you that they can prevent the spread of COVID-19 among students, teachers, and staff?

23	Very confident
42	Somewhat confident
23	Not too confident
11	Not confident at all
1	Refused

**ASK ALL:**

**Q.27** Do you think public schools should require...

63	All students, teachers and staff to wear a mask regardless of whether they are vaccinated
14	Only students, teachers and staff who are unvaccinated to wear a mask
22	No one to wear a mask
1	Refused

**ASK IF PARENT OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN [N=967]:**

**Q.28a** How worried are you that your child(ren) will get the coronavirus at their school or childcare center?

23	Very worried
36	Somewhat worried
27	Not too worried
14	Not at all worried
1	Refused

**ASK IF NOT PARENT OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN [N=1,658]:**

**Q.28b** How worried are you that children in your local area will get the coronavirus at their school or childcare center?

36	Very worried
34	Somewhat worried
20	Not too worried
10	Not at all worried
1	Refused

**ASK ALL:**

**Q.29** Based on what you have heard or read... Do you believe the following statements are accurate or are they NOT accurate? **[RANDOMIZE LIST]**

A. Childhood vaccines have been shown to cause autism

3	Completely accurate
7	Mostly accurate
21	Mostly NOT accurate
50	Completely NOT accurate
19	Not sure
1	Refused

B. COVID-19 is no more serious than the common flu

17	Completely accurate
17	Mostly accurate
17	Mostly NOT accurate
43	Completely NOT accurate
5	Not sure
1	Refused

C. There is near universal agreement among scientists that the earth is warming due to human activity

39	Completely accurate
28	Mostly accurate
12	Mostly NOT accurate
9	Completely NOT accurate
11	Not sure
1	Refused

**Q.30** Have all ELIGIBLE members of your household received at least one dose of a COVID-19 (coronavirus) vaccine, or is there anyone living in your household who is eligible, but who has not been vaccinated?

- 69 All eligible household members have received at least one dose
- 15 Not all eligible household members have received at least one dose
- 15 No one in household has received at least one dose
- 1 Refused

**ASK IF RESPONDENT HAS CHILD(REN) UNDER THE AGE OF 12: [N=724]**

**Q.31** Once there is a COVID-19 vaccine authorized and available for your child's age group, do you think you will...?

- 40 Get them vaccinated right away
- 24 Wait a while to see how it is working
- 7 Only get your child vaccinated if their school requires it
- 26 Definitely not get them vaccinated
- 2 Other [SPECIFY]
- 1 Refused

**ASK IF HAS SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN [N=967]:**

**Q.32** Since Fall 2020, which of the following best describes your child's learning environment? If it has changed, select the one that has been most common

- 30 Remote, full-time
- 38 In-person, full-time
- 23 In-person, part-time (hybrid)
- 7 Other/ homeschool / too young [SPECIFY]
- 1 Refused

**Q.33** In general, compared to this time last year, how have your child(ren) progressed in the following areas? **[RANDOMIZE LIST]**

A. Reading and writing skills

- 28 My child is ahead of where they should be
- 55 My child is more or less on track
- 16 My child is behind where they should be
- 1 Other [SPECIFY]
- \* Refused

B. Math and science skills

- 27 My child is ahead of where they should be
- 54 My child is more or less on track
- 18 My child is behind where they should be
- 1 Other [SPECIFY]
- \* Refused

C. Mental health and emotional well-being

- 20 My child is ahead of where they should be
- 62 My child is more or less on track
- 17 My child is behind where they should be
- 1 Other [SPECIFY]
- \* Refused

D. Socialization and communication

21 My child is ahead of where they should be  
58 My child is more or less on track  
20 My child is behind where they should be  
1 Other [SPECIFY]  
\* Refused

E. Time management skills

15 My child is ahead of where they should be  
62 My child is more or less on track  
22 My child is behind where they should be  
1 Other [SPECIFY]  
\* Refused



## Survey Methodology

The survey was designed and conducted by the Survey Center on American Life. Interviews were conducted among a random sample of 2,625 adults (age 18 and up), including an oversample of 610 respondents who are parents with children under the age 18 living in the United States, including all 50 states and the District of Columbia. All interviews were conducted among participants of the Ipsos KnowledgePanel, a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the US general population, not just the online population. Interviewing was conducted between August 16 and August 26 2021. Interviews were conducted in Spanish and English.

Initially, participants are chosen scientifically by a random selection of telephone numbers and residential addresses. Persons in selected households are then invited by telephone or mail to participate in the Ipsos KnowledgePanel. For those who agree to participate but do not already have internet access, Ipsos provides at no cost a laptop and internet service provider connection. People who already have computers and internet service are permitted to participate using their own equipment. Panelists then receive unique log-in information for accessing surveys online and then are sent emails throughout each month inviting them to participate in research.

The data were weighted to adjust for gender by age, race, education, Census region by metropolitan status, and household income. The sample weighting was accomplished using an iterative proportional fitting (IFP) process that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables.

The use of survey weights in statistical analyses ensures that the demographic characteristics of the sample closely approximate the demographic characteristics of the target population. The margin of error for the qualified survey sample is  $\pm 2.2$  percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence. The design effect for the survey is 1.3.