



December 7, 2023

**TO:** Interested Parties  
**FROM:** Sumati Thomas and Stephen Clermont, [Change Research](#)  
**RE:** Voters' Priorities and Concerns of Education in Idaho

A recent survey of 2,313 registered voters in Idaho<sup>1</sup> provides a detailed look into the attitudes and priorities of Idaho voters regarding public education. Conducted by Change Research from September 30 to October 5, 2023, the poll has a margin of error of 2.2 percentage points. The large sample size allows the Idaho Education Association (IEA) to thoroughly analyze different segments of the Idaho electorate and their perspectives on public education in the state. This polling is included in the 2024 edition of the IEA Policy Guide, which is available to all IEA-endorsed legislators.

The results of this poll paint a clear picture of Idaho's educational landscape, highlighting the collective challenges and goals. Idahoans express overwhelming support for public education, demonstrating notable distrust towards education savings accounts (ESA) and voucher programs. Additionally, there is evident skepticism regarding excessive governmental intervention in school library content. Nearly 90% agree that it is the State of Idaho's responsibility to adequately fund school facilities, underlining the community's commitment to enhancing the educational infrastructure.

### Presenting a Unified Vision for Education

- **Idahoans have spoken loud and clear: education is their top concern.** 52% of the electorate, including half, 50%, of parents with children under 18 and 47% of conservatives, view "having a well-educated workforce" as the primary challenge for the state. This shared concern surpasses fears of political extremism and economic inequality, highlighting a community-wide commitment to fostering educational excellence.
- **The data reveals a multi-faceted perspective on the challenges facing Idaho.** While education reigns as the top issue, other concerns such as political extremism (41%), economic inequality (36%), and issues like too much development and the loss of rural character, resonate with different segments of the population.
- **The Idaho electorate is profoundly invested in the education of its younger generation.** This unified vision for education, transcending other significant but lesser concerns, provides a clear directive for policymakers and educational stakeholders in Idaho. The emphasis on nurturing a

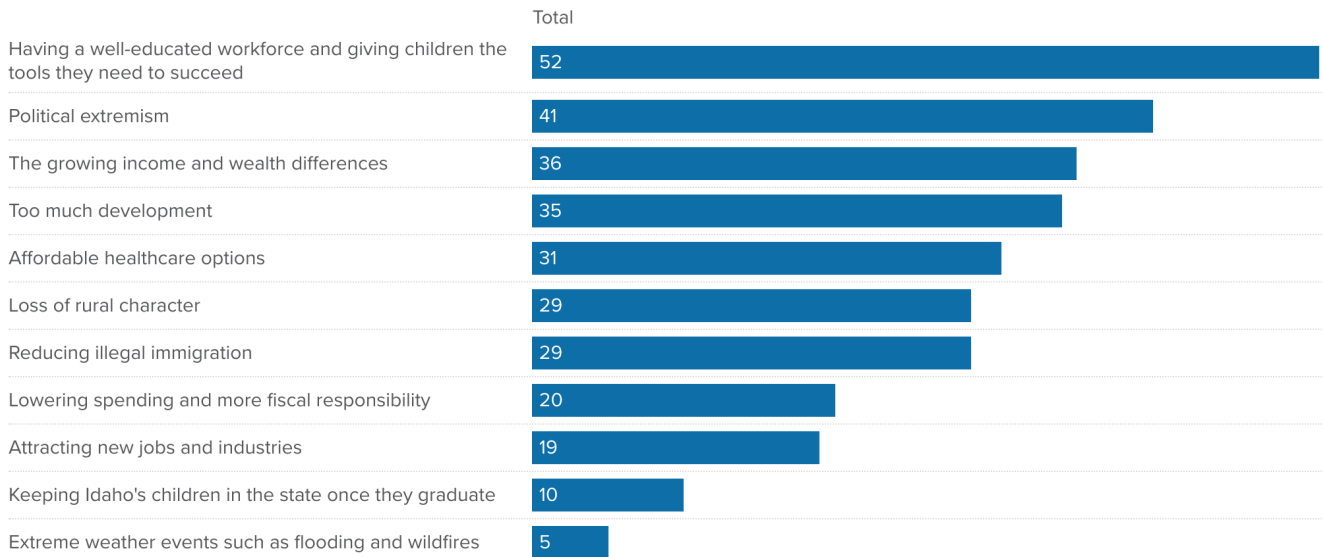
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<sup>1</sup>Polling was conducted online from September 30–October 5, 2023. Using Dynamic Online Sampling to attain a representative sample, Change Research polled 2,313 voters in Idaho. Post-stratification was performed on age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, region, and 2020 presidential vote. Members of the AAPOR's Transparency Initiative disclose all relevant details about our research, with the principle that the public should be able to evaluate and understand research-based findings, in order to instill and restore public confidence in survey results. The results have a margin of error of 2.2 percentage points.

well-educated workforce, equipped with the necessary tools for success, is an unmistakable mandate from the people of Idaho, calling for focused action in this domain.

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What do you see as the biggest challenges facing Idaho? Please choose no more than three.

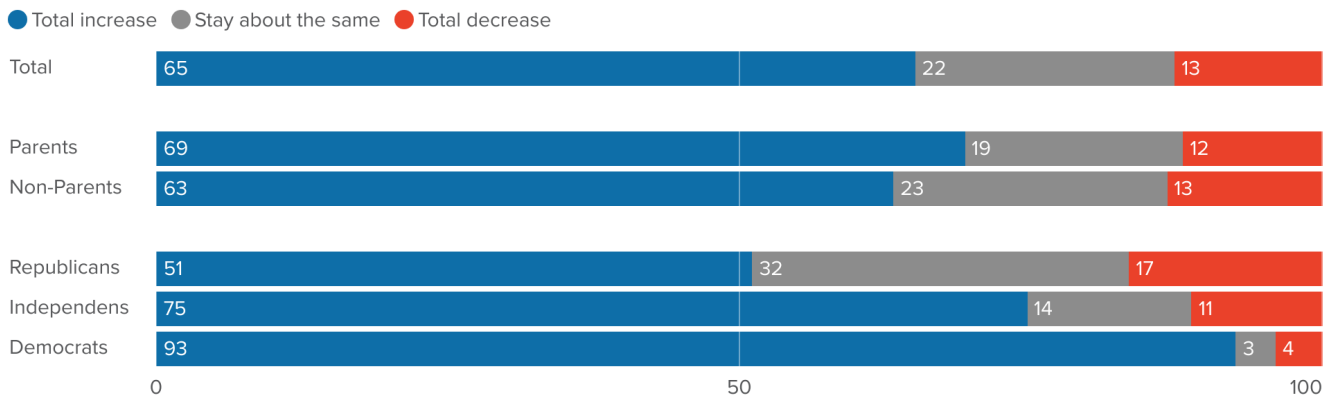


### Diverse Attitudes Toward Educational Funding

- In Idaho, attitudes towards educational funding reveal a complex picture, reflecting a spectrum of views of Idahoans.** The support for increasing funding for public schools stands at 65%, with 69% support among parents. This consensus extends beyond party lines, with over half of conservative respondents (51%) favoring increased funding, alongside a substantial majority of Independents (75%). Common ground extends across political ideologies, emphasizing a statewide commitment to enhancing educational resources.

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Do you think that government funding for public schools in your community should:



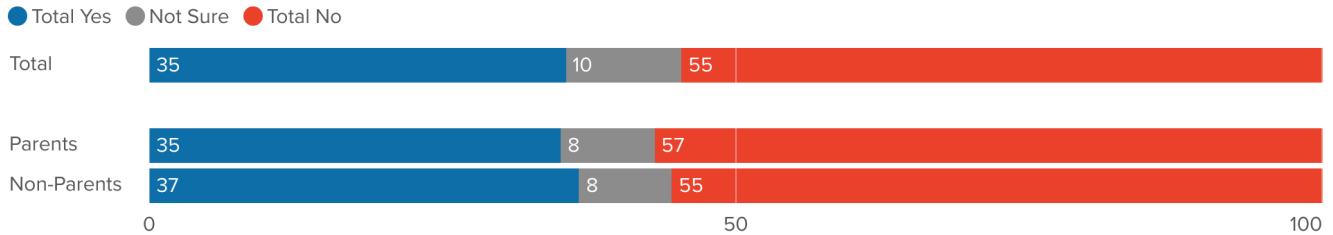
## School Vouchers and Accountability

- **A majority (55%) of voters opposed the allocation of public funds to private K-12 schools.** This sentiment spans various segments of Idaho's population, with 57% of parents opposing this allocation of public tax dollars to private schools.

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If the following question was on the November 2024 ballot, how would you vote:

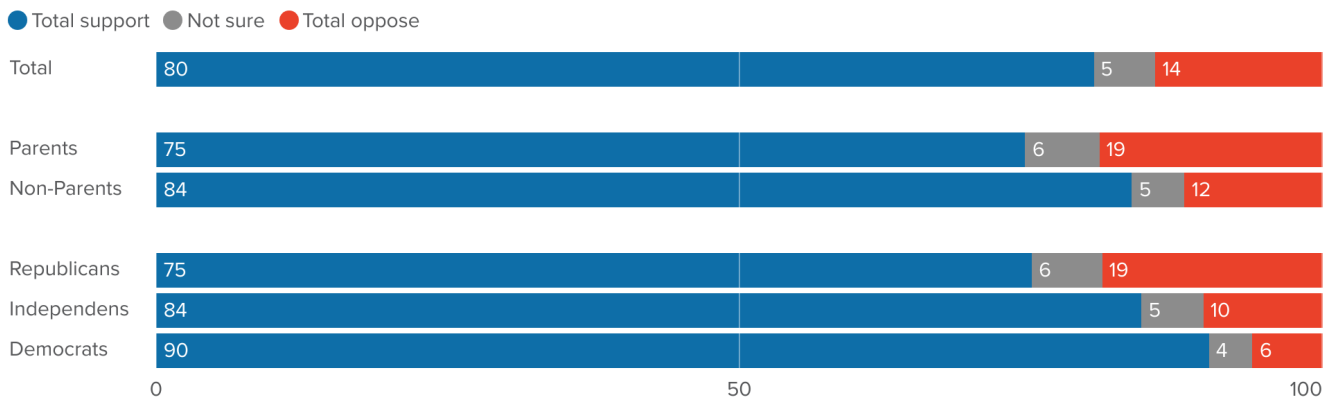
"Should the State of Idaho, the Idaho Legislature, or any state agency direct or appropriate public tax dollars to private K-12 schools, including private religious and for-profit schools?"



- **Idahoans are united around accountability and transparency standards.** A robust 80% believe schools benefiting from any theoretical voucher plan (such as ESAs and tuition tax credits) should adhere to the same accountability and transparency standards as public schools. This consensus challenges the status quo: no ESA, voucher, or tuition tax credit scheme proposed or passed nationwide aligns with Idahoans' desired standards. Groups advocating for these policies often sidestep such accountability standards, despite using metrics from public school transparency and accountability requirements in their arguments.

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Do you support or oppose requiring any private or religious school that receives public tax dollars to be held to the same transparency and accountability standards as public schools in Idaho?



- **This data not only highlights Idahoans' hesitancy to redirect public funds to private schools but also emphasizes their strong preference for accountability and transparency in the educational sector.** The call for upholding rigorous standards in private schools receiving public money is a clear indication of the state's collective demand for quality and fairness in education. This aligns with the broader sentiment across Idaho, where residents seek a balanced and equitable educational landscape.

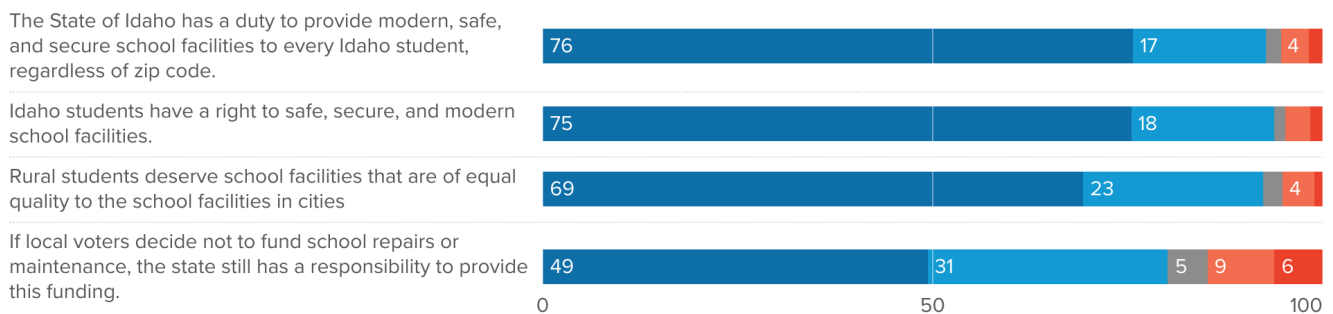
## The State of School Facilities

- Across Idaho, there's strong agreement on the state's role in ensuring top-notch school facilities, transcending political and demographic lines.** An overwhelming 93% believe that providing modern, safe, and secure school facilities is a duty of the state. Furthermore, 94% assert that such facilities are a right for Idaho students, not merely a privilege. This belief is held strongly across various demographics, with parents of children under 18, both mothers (94%) and fathers (85%), in agreement that the state should ensure modern and secure facilities for every student, regardless of their location. Among conservatives, a notable 91% agree that the state has a duty to provide these facilities.

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Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

● Strongly agree 
 ● Somewhat agree 
 ● Not sure 
 ● Somewhat disagree 
 ● Strongly disagree



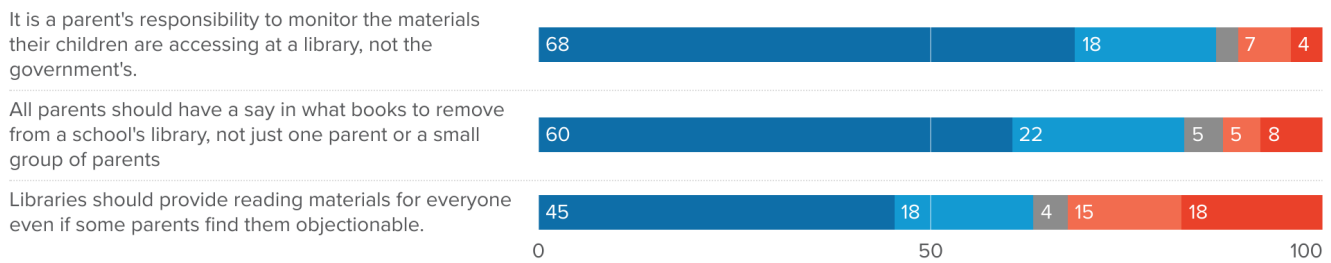
- The prevailing dissatisfaction with the current locally funded system is evident, with 80% stating the state should provide funding even if local voters reject it in bond or levy elections.** Notably, this view finds strong support among conservatives, who typically advocate for local control, with 74% agreeing that the state should step in to fund public school facilities.
- Idahoans also stand united in the belief that rural students deserve facilities equal to those in cities, with 92% agreement.** This perspective is particularly strong among both Republicans (90%) and Democrats (98%), as well as among parents (94%), emphasizing a widespread desire for equitable educational environments across rural and urban areas.

## Libraries and Mental Health: Localized Control and Support

- The role of libraries in education underscores a clear preference for parental involvement.** Eight in ten voters (86%) believe that monitoring children's library materials falls within the parent's responsibility to monitor. This stance is widely held among all respondents, with 84% of parents of children under 18 agreeing. It also cuts across political lines, with 83% of Republicans and nine in ten Independents (90%) and Democrats (93%) sharing this view.
- There's a widespread belief (82%) that all parents should have a say in the content of school libraries, suggesting a strong preference for community-based decision-making.** The idea of libraries providing reading materials for everyone, even if some parents might find them objectionable, is supported by 63% of respondents.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

● Strongly agree ● Somewhat agree ● Not sure ● Somewhat disagree ● Strongly disagree



- **Regarding mental health, there's a notable agreement (88%) on the necessity for students to have access to certified, high-quality school counselors and mental health professionals.** This view is shared across all demographics, with high agreement from both Republicans (83%) and Democrats (99%). Parents show strong support for these services, with 91% of mothers and 82% of fathers acknowledging the necessity for professional mental health services in schools.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

● Strongly agree ● Somewhat agree ● Not sure ● Somewhat disagree ● Strongly disagree



- **Furthermore, the idea that teachers should assist in developing students' social and emotional skills is supported by 79% of respondents, highlighting the growing recognition of the mental health crisis in schools.** This belief is especially pronounced with younger Idahoans (86% among 18-34 year olds), indicating a generational shift in attitudes towards mental health education. Moreover, a substantial 71% of Republicans and 80% of Independents agree with this role for teachers.

### Charting the Future: A Call to Action for Idaho's Education

These findings present a clear and compelling mandate for Idaho’s legislators, pointing towards a future where enhanced public school investments are a priority. The electorate’s demand for enhanced public school investments, reservations about education savings accounts and voucher programs, and localized control over educational content cannot be overstated. This sentiment is shared across the spectrum, including socially conservative Idahoans, with less than 10% expressing dissatisfaction with the state’s public education system.

As Idaho looks toward the future, it’s clear that its residents desire a robust educational system capable of preparing children for success in a dynamic and evolving world. The call for modern facilities, expansive mental health support, and an educational system characterized by accountability and transparency is unmistakable.

These insights transcend mere statistics; they represent a resounding directive from the people of Idaho, calling for actionable change and investment in the next generation. The vast majority of Idahoans, rural or urban, liberal or conservative, support their public schools and want to see them enhanced. They envision a future with competent professional educators, state-of-the-art facilities, and equitable educational opportunities for all students across the state. The stage is set for policymakers to heed this call and ensure that Idaho's education system is equipped to meet the challenges of today and the opportunities of tomorrow.

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