



The Associated Press-NORC  
Center for Public Affairs Research

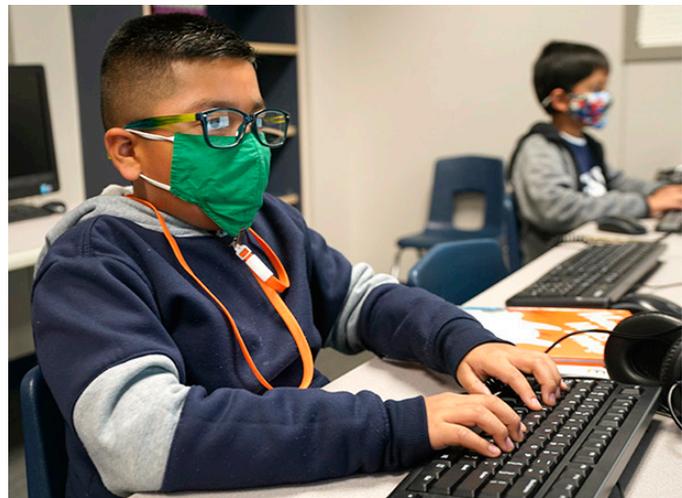
# WIDESPREAD PUBLIC CONCERN ABOUT CHILDREN FALLING BEHIND DUE TO CORONAVIRUS

Many Americans are concerned about children falling behind academically and socially due to the coronavirus outbreak, and there is broad public support for summer school and tutoring programs to help children catch up, according to a new UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll.

When it comes to the future success of children, 82% of Americans say the amount of time children spend with a parent is key, and 66% of Americans support government-funded paid parental leave. Democrats, Republicans, and independents all tend to see parents spending time with their children as essential, and 79% of Democrats and 53% of Republicans support paid family leave.

The survey finds that, one year into the pandemic, parents are less concerned about the impacts of the pandemic on their child's education than they were in July 2020. And parents are less concerned about the effects of the coronavirus outbreak on their own children than adults without school-age children are about children in general.

In order to return safely to in-person learning, most Americans agree common preventive measures are important. Sixty-two percent say wearing masks is essential, compared to about 4 in 10 who say the same about other measures such as limiting class sizes, requiring staff to be vaccinated, and regular testing.



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## Three Things You Should Know About the UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll

Among American Adults:

- 1) 81% support government-funded summer school or tutoring for students falling behind during the pandemic.
- 2) Many are highly concerned that children are falling behind academically and socially, but less than 4 in 10 are very worried that in-person schooling will increase spread of the virus.
- 3) 82% say the time a child spends with their parent is key for their success in the future, and 66% support paid parental leave.

Just 33% of parents and 41% of those without school-age children are extremely or very worried about in-person schooling leading to additional spread of the coronavirus, though about another third of each group are somewhat concerned.

While 52% of Americans feel the use of technology has improved the quality of education, half also believe technology has increased inequalities between high- and low-income students.

The nationwide poll was conducted by the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research from February 25 to March 1, 2021, using AmeriSpeak®, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cell phones were conducted with 1,076 adults. The margin of sampling error is +/- 4.1 percentage points.

Other key findings from the study include:

- While both those with and without school-age children agree on the other safety measures, just 33% of parents say requiring all students and staff to be tested regularly for COVID-19 is essential to reopening, compared to 44% of those without school-age children.
- Twenty-two percent of parents are very concerned about their ability to handle other responsibilities due to the pandemic, compared to 41% who said the same in July 2020.
- Sixty-nine percent of Americans support a government-funded program to provide students with laptop or tablet computers to help students complete their schoolwork at home.
- Fifty-one percent of parents support sending cash payments to parents, compared to 41% of those without school-age children.
- About 8 in 10 Americans say time spent with a parent and hard work is extremely or very important to future success, while just 26% say luck is important.
- Just 24% of white adults say race or ethnicity is key to children's success, compared to 43% of Hispanic and 64% of Black adults.

## **AMERICANS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT CHILDREN FALLING BEHIND DURING THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK, BUT PARENTS ARE LESS WORRIED THAN ADULTS WITHOUT SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN.**

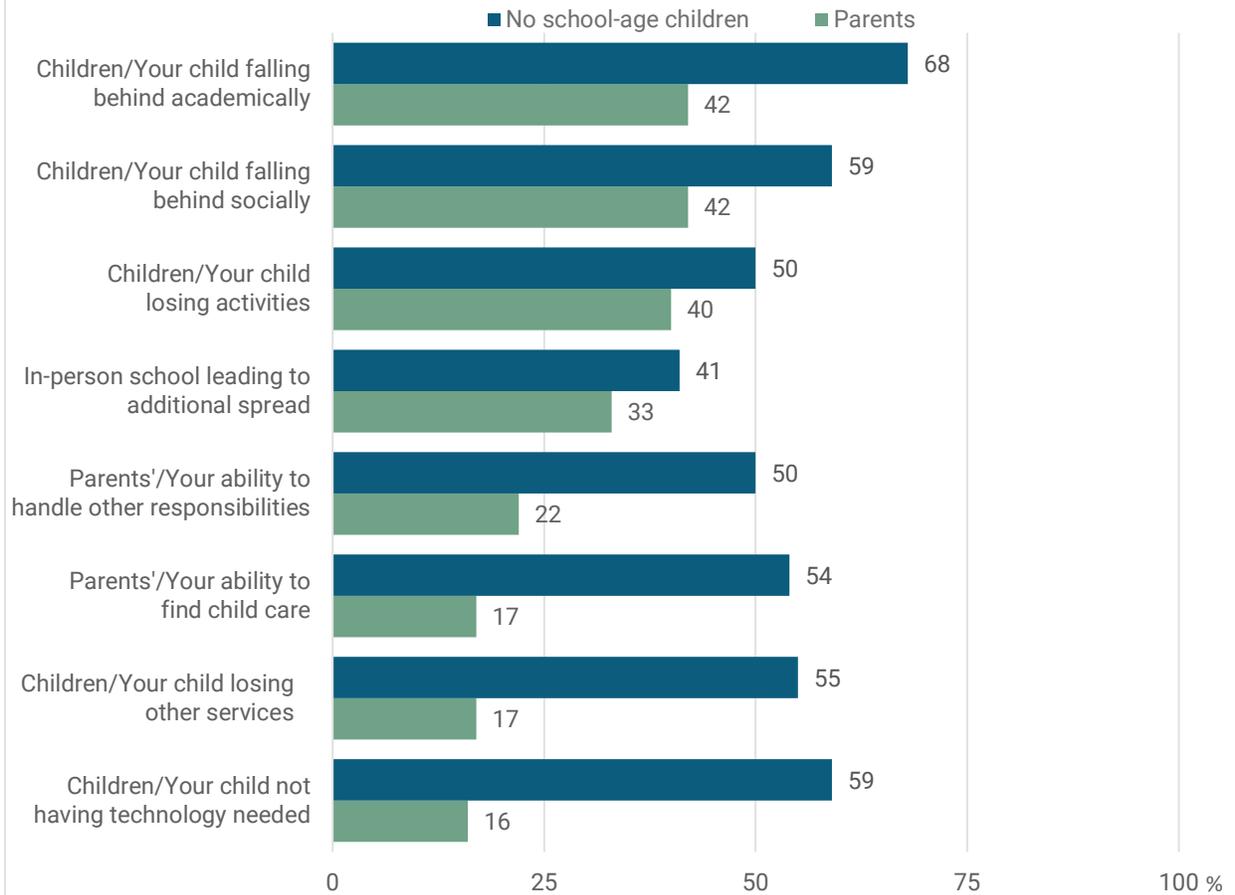
About a year after many schools began closing their doors and shifting to virtual classrooms due to the coronavirus outbreak, there is concern among both parents and those without school-age children about the effect of the pandemic on children.

In particular, majorities of Americans without school-age children are very concerned about children falling behind both academically and socially. They are less worried about in-person learning leading to additional spread of the coronavirus.

Parents are less concerned about the impacts of COVID-19 for their own children than those without school-age children are about children in general. Less than half of parents say they are extremely or very concerned about their own child for each of the potential concerns asked about, while more than half of those without school-age children express apprehension for nearly every concern.

### Adults without school-age children express more concern for children than parents do about their own children.

Percent of adults without school-age children and parents who say extremely or very concerned



**Question:** As a result of the coronavirus outbreak, how concerned are you about each of the following? (Those without school-age children asked about "children" and "parents' ability", parents asked about "your child" and "your ability.")

**Source:** UChicago Harris/AP-NORC poll conducted February 25 - March 1, 2021, with 1,076 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

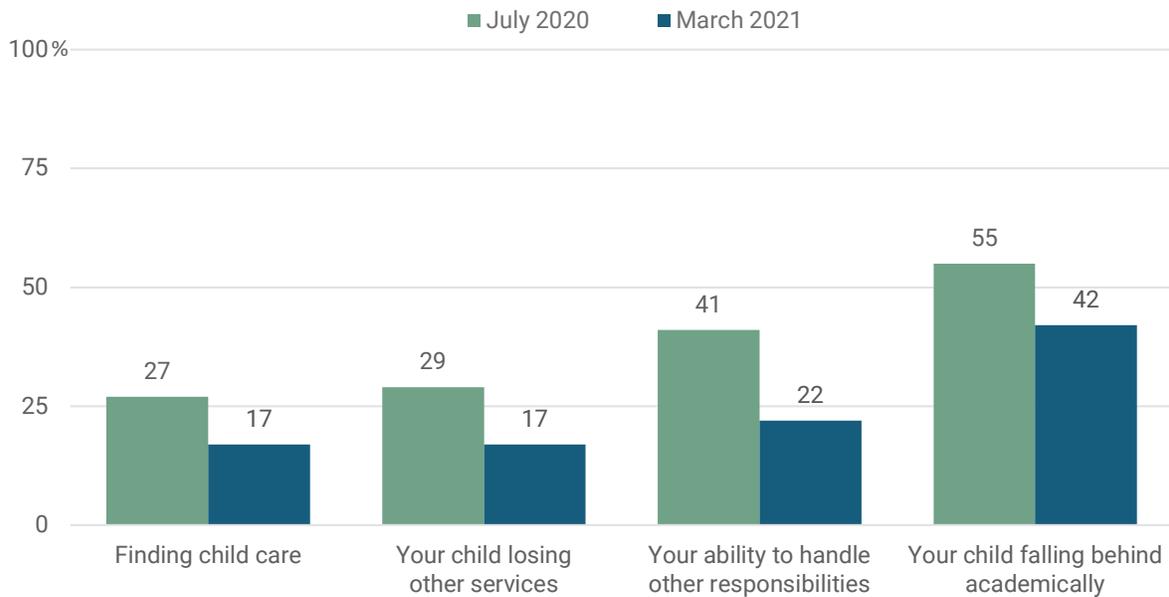


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Additionally, concern among parents has decreased since July 2020. Of the four impacts of COVID-19 asked about in July 2020, parents are now significantly less worried about the effects on their children than they were earlier in the pandemic.

## Parents are less concerned about the effects of the pandemic on their children than they were in July 2020.

Percent of parents who say extremely or very concerned



**Question:** As a result of the coronavirus outbreak, how concerned are you about each of the following?

**Source:** UChicago Harris/AP-NORC poll conducted February 25 - March 1, 2021, with 1,076 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted July 16-20, 2020, with 1,057 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

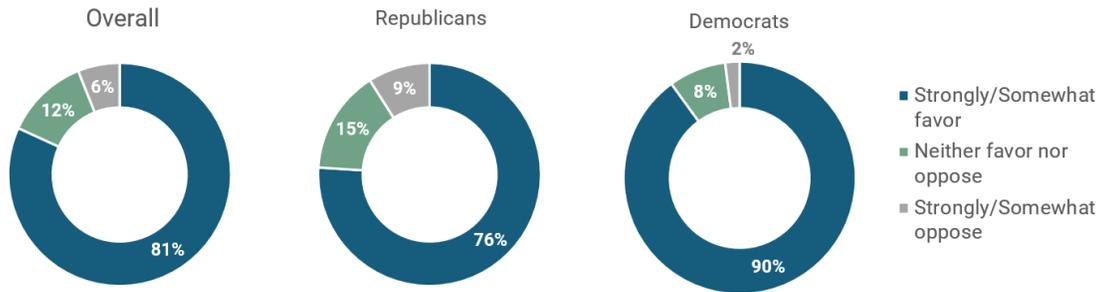


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With this widespread concern, 81% of Americans support government-funded summer school or tutoring for students who have fallen behind academically during the coronavirus pandemic, including significant majorities of both Republicans and Democrats.

### Most adults support government-funded summer school or tutoring for students who have fallen behind academically during the coronavirus pandemic, including majorities of Republicans and Democrats.

Percent of adults



**Question:** Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose each of the following government-funded policies?

**Source:** UChicago/AP-NORC poll conducted February 25 - March 1, 2021 with 1,076 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

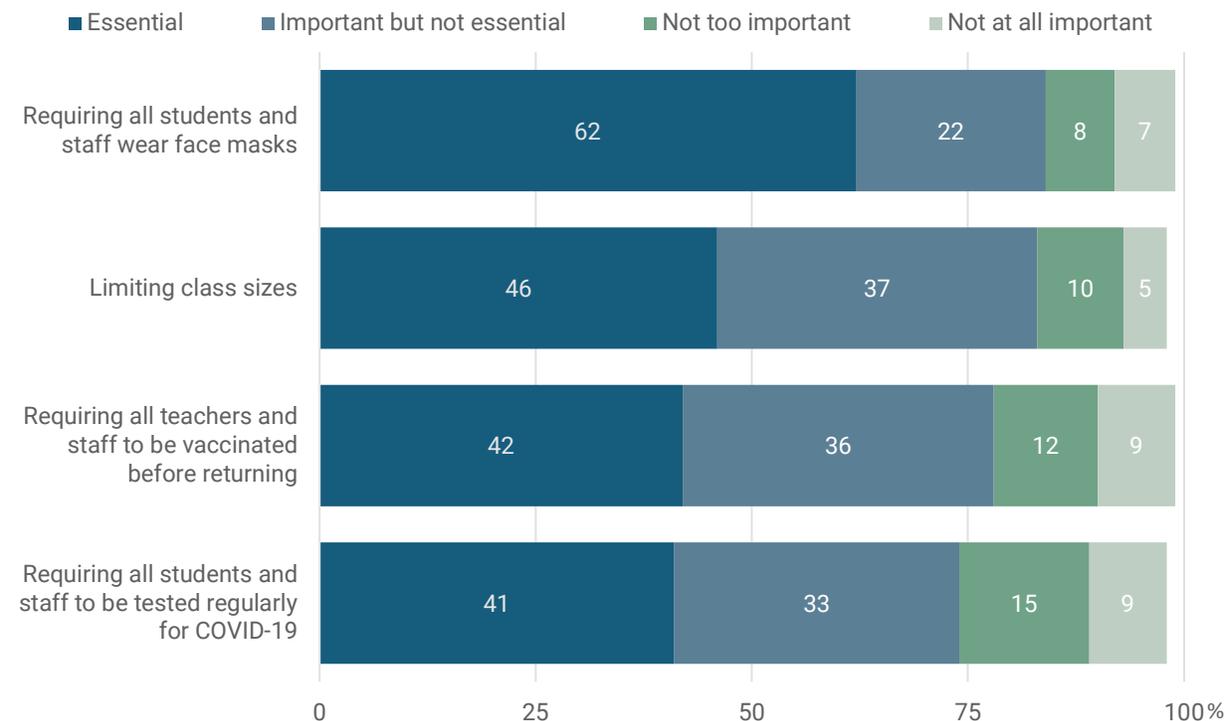


### MOST AMERICANS BELIEVE SAFETY MEASURES ARE IMPORTANT FOR RETURNING TO IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION, BUT LESS THAN HALF FIND MOST OF THESE MEASURES ESSENTIAL.

As schools begin to reopen around the country, most Americans think wearing face masks, requiring frequent testing, limiting class sizes, and requiring teachers to be vaccinated are important for a safe return to in-person instruction. However, the only measure that the majority of Americans say is essential is requiring masks.

### A majority say it is essential to wear masks when returning to in-person instruction, less than half say other measures are essential.

Percent of adults



**Question:** How important are each of the following measures for K-12 schools to offer in-person instruction?

**Source:** UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll conducted February 25 - March 1, 2021, with 1,076 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



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While parents and those without school-age children agree on the other safety measures, parents place less importance on regular testing. Just a third of parents say requiring all students and staff to be tested regularly for COVID-19 is essential to reopening, compared to 44% of those without school-age children.

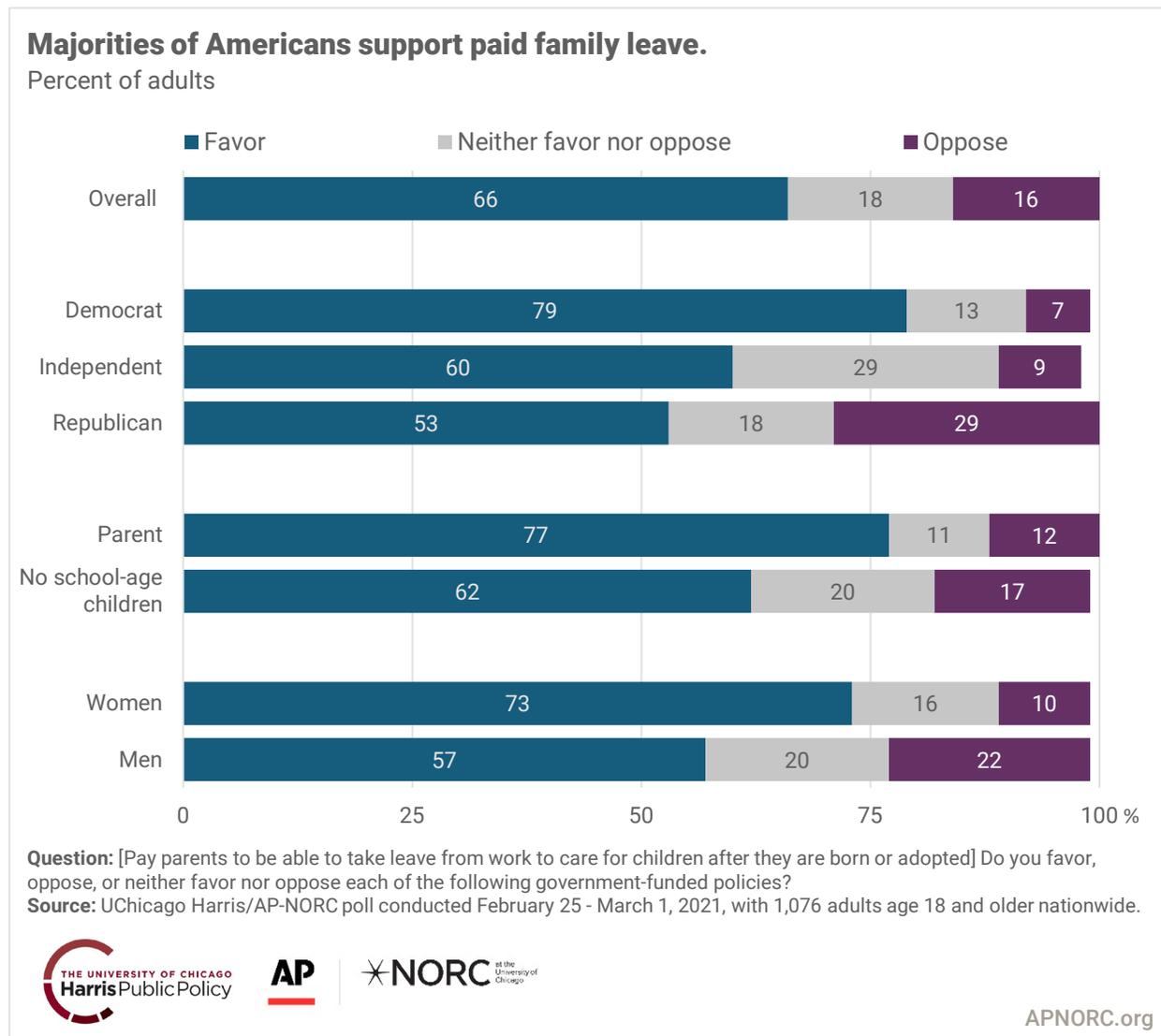
Hispanic Americans are more likely than white Americans to say face masks (92% vs. 81%), regular testing (80% vs. 70%), and limiting class sizes (94% vs. 80%) are essential or important for returning to school. African Americans are also more likely to emphasize regular testing compared to white adults (84% vs. 70%).

### VAST MAJORITY BELIEVE THAT TIME SPENT WITH PARENTS IS KEY TO LONG-TERM SUCCESS, AND SUPPORT IS HIGH FOR PAID PARENTAL LEAVE TO FACILITATE THAT TIME.

Eighty-two percent of adults say that the time a child spends with their parent is extremely or very important for their success as adults. And, two-thirds of Americans support a government-funded policy to provide paid parental leave after childbirth or adoption.

Belief in the importance of parent time is nearly universal, with more than 8 in 10 of both those with and without school-age children, as well as both Republicans and Democrats, saying it is very important.

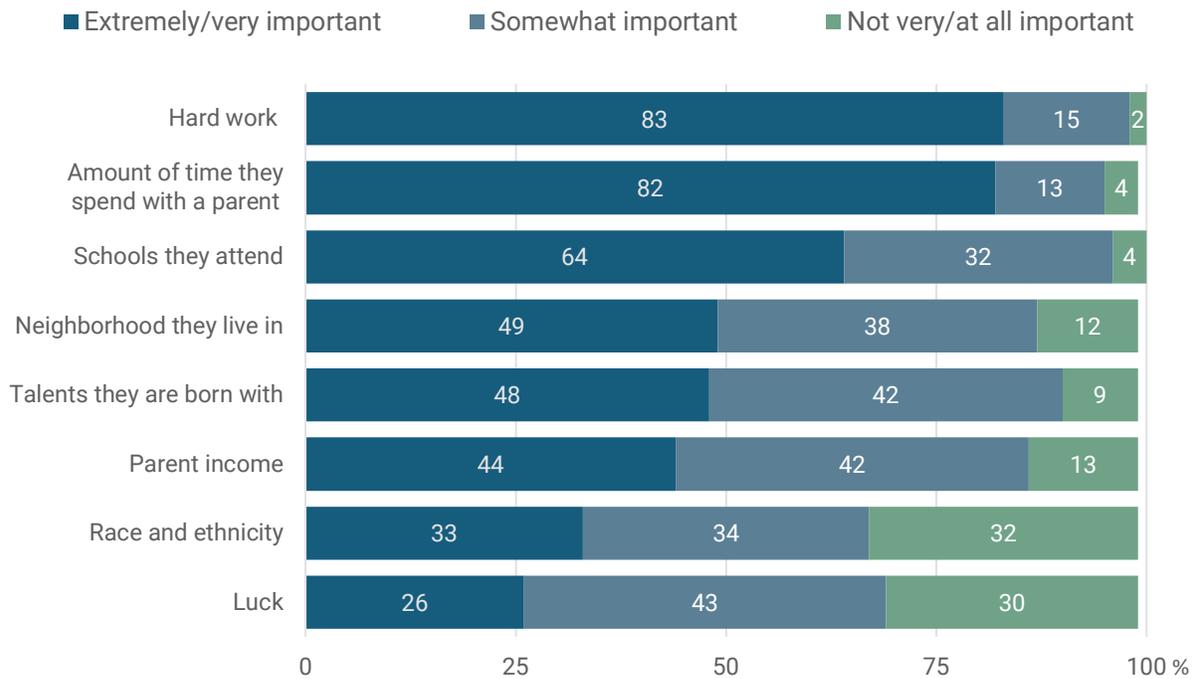
Despite this consensus, there are differences across groups when it comes to supporting paid family leave. While a majority of Republicans express support for this policy, Democrats express much higher levels of support. Parents of school-age children are also more supportive of paid leave than those without.



In addition to spending time with their parents, Americans overwhelmingly agree that hard work is key to children’s future success, while just a quarter say luck is extremely or very important.

### Hard work and time spent with a parent are seen as key to children's success.

Percent of adults



**Question:** Some children grow up to be more successful than others. How important are each of the following to children's success in adulthood?

**Source:** UChicago Harris/AP-NORC poll conducted February 25 - March 1, 2021, with 1,076 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



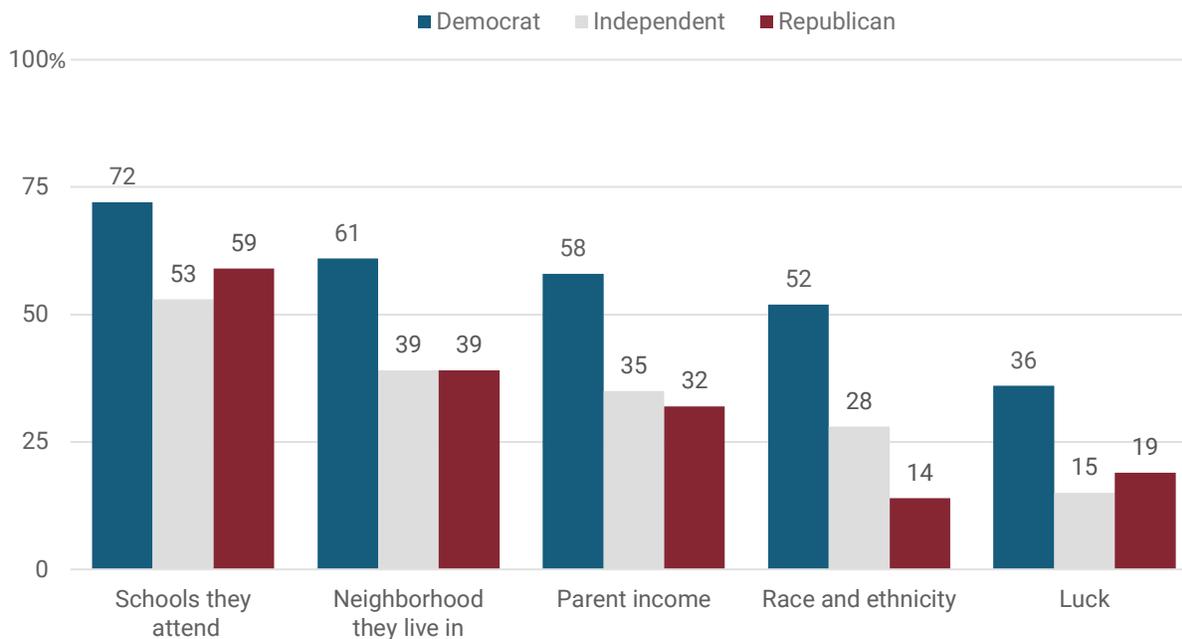
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Just 24% of white adults say race or ethnicity is important to future success, compared to 43% of Hispanic and 64% of Black adults.

And while there is widespread agreement amongst both Republicans and Democrats that spending time with a parent and hard work are both key to future success, other potential factors such as parental income, race and ethnicity, and luck break down across partisan lines.

### Partisan differences emerge on some indicators of future success.

Percent of adults who say extremely or very important



**Question:** Some children grow up to be more successful than others. How important are each of the following to children’s success in adulthood?

**Source:** UChicago Harris/AP-NORC poll conducted February 25 - March 1, 2021, with 1,076 adults age 18 and older nationwide



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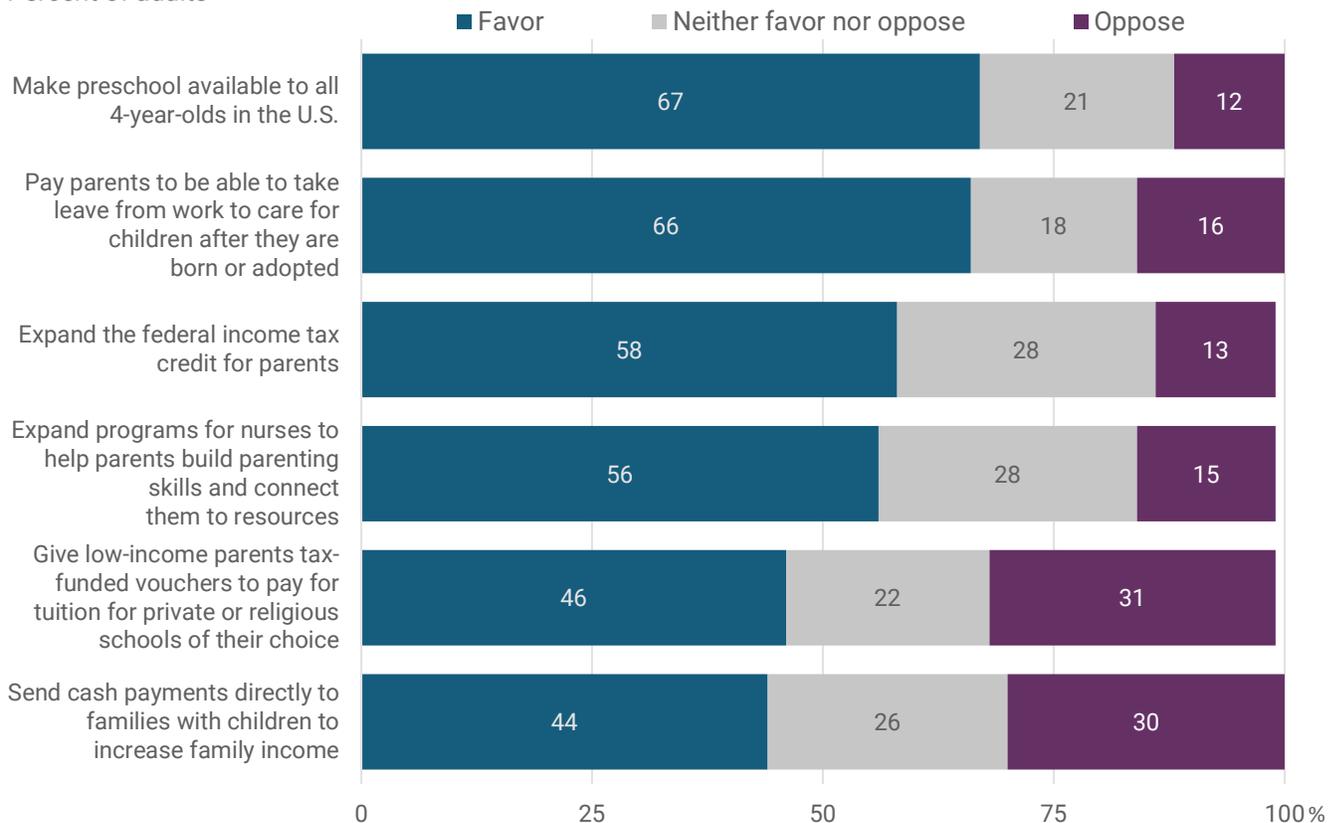
## THERE IS MIXED PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR POLICIES AIMED AT HELPING PARENTS AND CHILDREN.

When it comes to potential policies designed to help parents and children, Americans express varying levels of support.

Two-thirds of adults favor government polices making preschool available to all children in the United States, while less than half support tax-funded vouchers or sending cash payments directly to families with children.

## Two-thirds of Americans support paid leave and universal preschool, while other policies to help families have mixed support.

Percent of adults



**Question:** Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose each of the following government-funded policies?

**Source:** UChicago Harris/AP-NORC poll conducted February 25 - March 1, 2021, with 1,076 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



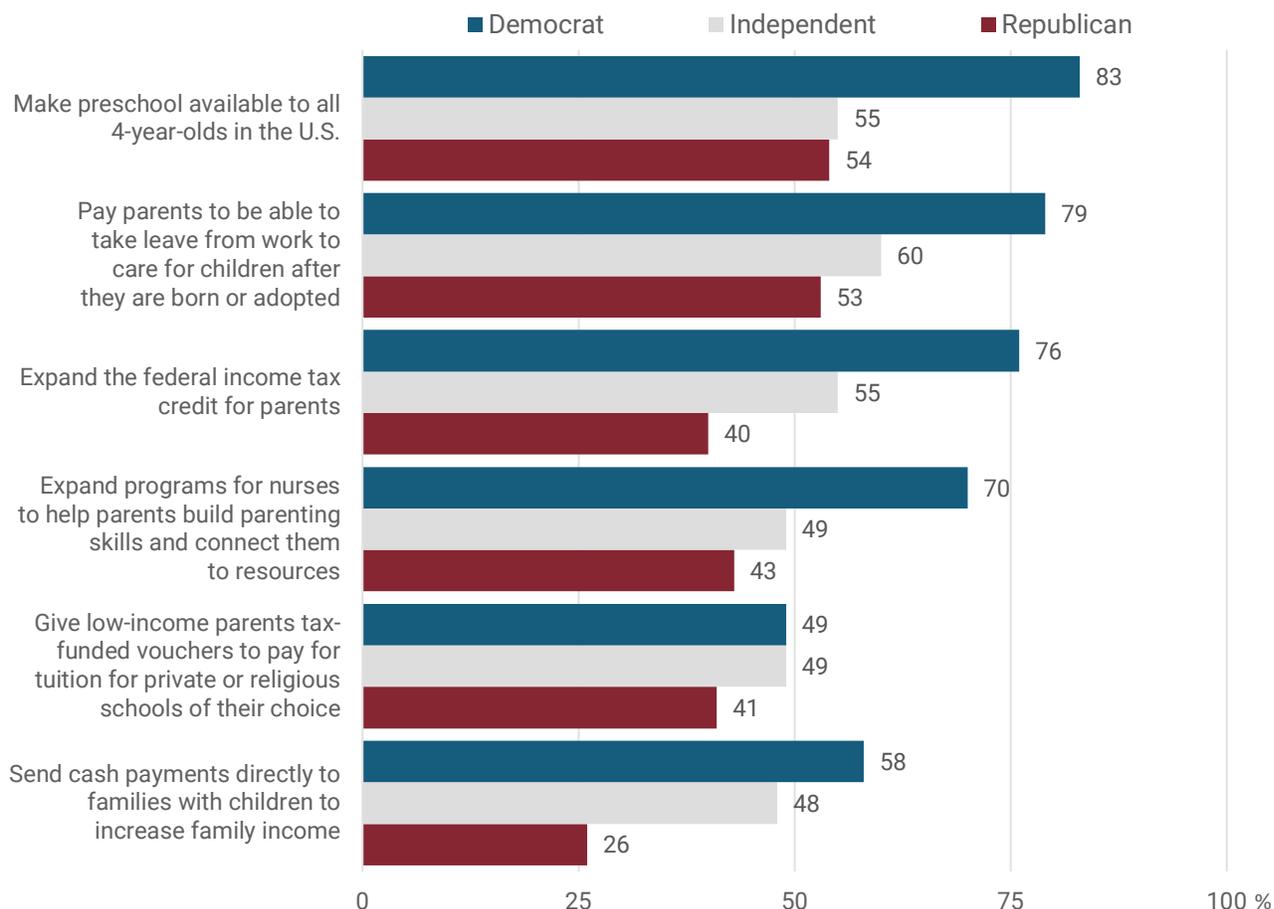
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Fifty-one percent of parents with school-age children support sending cash payments to parents, compared to 41% of those without school-age children. And Americans making less than \$50,000 a year are also more supportive than those making more than \$100,000 of policies to increase family income, both by tax credits (61% vs. 51%) and by sending cash directly (49% vs. 31%).

Democrats view each policy more favorably than Republicans, other than school vouchers, which both Democrats and Republicans view about equally.

## Democrats are more supportive of policies aimed to help families, but universal preschool and paid family leave are most popular policies for both parties.

Percent of adults



**Question:** Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose each of the following government-funded policies?

**Source:** UChicago Harris/AP-NORC poll conducted February 25 - March 1, 2021, with 1,076 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



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## A MAJORITY OF AMERICANS SAY THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY HAS IMPROVED THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, BUT HALF ALSO SAY THIS HAS INCREASED INEQUALITY.

The use of computers and learning applications in schools has increased in recent years, a trend that was greatly accelerated as schools moved to virtual formats during the pandemic.

Fifty-two percent of Americans say that the use of technology to teach children has made the quality of education better, 17% say it has not made much of a difference, and 28% say it has made it worse.

While a majority view technology as a positive overall, half of Americans say that technology has also increased inequalities in education between high- and low-income children in this country. Thirty-one percent say it has not made much of a difference, and 17% say it has decreased inequalities.

Those with and without school-age children do not have different views on the use of technology in schools.

Americans' views about whether technology has improved the quality of education is not strongly tied to beliefs about technology's impact on inequalities. Among those who say technology has improved the quality of education, 57% believe it has increased inequalities. Similarly, among those who say technology has not improved the quality of education, 53% report it has increased inequalities.

As the coronavirus outbreak has caused many schools to take place entirely or partially online, 69% of Americans support a government-funded program to provide students with laptop or tablet computers in order to help them complete their schoolwork at home. Democrats are more supportive than independents and Republicans (86%, 64%, and 53%, respectively).

## STUDY METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted by the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research with funding from NORC at the University of Chicago. Staff from Harris Public Policy and The AP-NORC Center collaborated on all aspects of the study.

Data were collected using the AmeriSpeak Omnibus®, a monthly multi-client survey using NORC's probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The survey was part of a larger study that included questions about other topics not included in this report. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97% of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings.

Interviews for this survey were conducted between February 25 and March 1, 2021, with adults age 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,076 completed the survey—1,019 via the web and 57 via telephone. Interviews were conducted in English. The final stage completion rate is 23.8%, the weighted household panel response rate is 19.5%, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 75.0%, for a cumulative response rate of 3.5%. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.1 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

The overall margin of sampling error for the 273 completed interviews with parents of school-age children is +/- 7.8 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level including the design effect.

Once the sample has been selected and fielded, and all the study data have been collected and made final, a poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any noncoverage or under- and oversampling resulting from the study-specific sample design. Poststratification variables included age, gender, census division, race/ethnicity, and education. Weighting variables were obtained from the 2020 Current Population Survey. The weighted data reflect the U.S. population of adults age 18 and over.

A topline with full question wordings is available at [www.apnorc.org](http://www.apnorc.org). For more information, email [info@apnorc.org](mailto:info@apnorc.org).

## ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO HARRIS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

One of the largest graduate professional schools at the University of Chicago, Harris Public Policy has been driven by the belief that evidence-based research, not ideology or intuition, is the best guide for public policy. For more than three decades, our exceptional community of scholars, students, and alumni have applied this exacting perspective to the world's most pressing problems using the latest tools of social science. Through our undergraduate and graduate programs, we empower a new generation of data-driven leaders to create a positive social impact throughout our global society. For more information, visit <https://harris.uchicago.edu/>.

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- NORC at the University of Chicago is one of the oldest and most respected, independent research institutions in the world.

The two organizations have established The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals. For more information, visit [www.apnorc.org](http://www.apnorc.org).