

RHODE ISLAND _____

K-12 & SCHOOL CHOICE SURVEY

What do voters say about
K-12 education?

_____ **Polling Paper No. 17**

Paul **DiPerna**

OCTOBER 2013

With questions on state performance, education spending, grades and preferences for different types of schools, and views on private schools, charter schools, school vouchers, education savings accounts, tax-credit scholarships, and taxes

The Friedman Foundation
for Educational Choice
edchoice.org ←



Survey Project & Profile

Title:	Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey
Survey Organization:	Braun Research, Inc. (BRI)
Survey Sponsor:	The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice
Release Partner(s):	Rhode Island Center for Freedom & Prosperity
Interview Dates:	June 24 to July 8, 2013
Interview Method:	Live Telephone 70% landline and 30% cell phone
Interview Length:	12 minutes (average)
Language(s):	English
Sample Frame:	Registered Voters
Sampling Method:	Dual Frame; Probability Sampling; Random Digit Dial (RDD)
Population Samples:	RHODE ISLAND = 602 Providence = 359 South/East = 243
Margins of Error:	RHODE ISLAND = ± 4.0 percentage points Providence = ± 5.2 percentage points South/East = ± 6.3 percentage points
Response Rates:	Landline (LL) = 14.6% Cell Phone = 11.0%
Weighting?	Yes (Age, Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Region, and Landline/Cell)
Oversampling?	No

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The author is responsible for overall polling design; question wording and ordering; this paper's analysis, charts, and writing; and any unintentional errors or misrepresentations.

Survey Demographics

Percent (%) of State Sample	
K-12 Parent	25
Democrat	30
Republican	12
Independent	47
Urban	19
Suburban	40
Small Town	27
Rural	12
18 to 24	11
25 to 34	11
35 to 44	18
45 to 54	20
55 to 64	18
65 & Over	21
Hispanic	7
Not Hispanic	93
Asian	1
Black	6
Mixed Race	2
Native American	1
White	89
Catholic	49
Jewish	2
Mormon	0
Muslim	0
Protestant	23
Other	2
None	19
Under \$20,000	12
\$20,000 to \$39,999	13
\$40,000 to \$59,999	12
\$60,000 to \$79,999	13
\$80,000 to \$99,999	11
\$100,000 to \$149,999	12
\$150,000 or more	11
Male	46
Female	54

October 29, 2013

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Rhode Island's K-12 Profile

Average State Rank on NAEP ¹	23
High School Graduation Rate ²	76.4%
# Regular Public School Students ³	139,822
# Charter School Students ⁴	3,971
# Private School Students ⁶	20,819
% Regular Public School Students ⁷	84.9%
% Charter School Students ⁷	2.4%
% Private School Students ⁷	12.7%
# School Districts ³	32
# Regular Public Schools ³	325
# Charter Schools ⁵	14
# Private Schools ⁶	147
Online Learning Climate ⁸	Weak
% Free and Reduced-Price Lunch ³	38.9%
% Individualized Education Program (IEP) ³	13.8%
% English Language Learners (ELL) ³	4.4%
\$ Revenue Per Student ⁹	\$15,846
\$ "Total" Per Student Spending ⁹	\$16,108
\$ "Current" Per Student Spending ⁹	\$14,948
\$ "Instructional" Per Student Spending ⁹	\$9,210

Rhode Island Profile Notes

1. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Average of four rankings (rounded upward to nearest single digit) based on 2011 state scale scores for fourth-grade reading (#19); fourth-grade math (#22); eighth-grade reading (#28); eighth-grade math (#25).
URL: nationsreportcard.gov/data_tools.asp
2. Reported high school graduation rates, determined by the Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) on the National Center for Education Statistics section on the U.S. Department of Education website. Data for 2009-2010 school year.
URL: nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013309/tables/table_01.asp
3. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD). Data for the 2010-2011 school year.
URL: nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states
4. National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. Data for the 2010-2011 school year.
URL: dashboard.publiccharters.org/dashboard/students/page/overview/state/RI/year/2011
5. National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. Data for the 2010-2011 school year.
URL: dashboard.publiccharters.org/dashboard/schools/page/overview/state/RI/year/2011
6. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Universe Survey (PSS). Data for 2009–2010 school year. This count excludes schools with less than 5 students.
URL: nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/privateschoolsearch
7. Percentages are meant for general impressions only. Due to rounding, percentage totals may be slightly greater or less than 100%.
8. Author rating (Weak, Moderate, or Strong), based on John Watson, Amy Murin, Lauren Vashaw, Butch Gemin, and Chris Rapp, *Keeping Pace with K-12 Online Learning: An Annual Review of State-Level Policy and Practice*, (Evergreen Education Group, 2012), Table 1, p. 15.
URL: kpk12.com/cms/wp-content/uploads/KeepingPace2012.pdf
9. Stephen Q. Cornman, *Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: School Year 2010–11 (Fiscal Year 2011)* (NCES 2013-305). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics (July 2013).
URL: nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013342.pdf

Overview

The “Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey” project, commissioned by the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice and conducted by Braun Research, Inc. (BRI), measures Rhode Island registered voters’ familiarity and views on a range of K-12 education topics and school choice reforms. We report response levels and differences of voter opinion, as well as the intensity of those responses.

Where do Rhode Islanders stand on important issues and policy proposals in K-12 education? We try to provide some brief observations and insights in this paper.

A randomly selected and statistically representative sample of Rhode Island voters responded to 20 substantive questions and 11 demographic questions. A total of 602 telephone interviews were conducted in English from June 24 to July 8, 2013, by means of both landline and cell phone. Statistical results have been weighted to correct for known demographic discrepancies. The margin of sampling error for the statewide sample is ± 4.0 percentage points.

In this project we also included two split-sample experiments. A split-sample design is a systematic way of comparing the effects of two or more alternative wordings for a given question. In one case, the purpose was to see if providing a new piece of information about education spending can significantly influence opinion on the topic — a salient issue in Rhode Island’s state politics and representing an undercurrent in education policy discussions. In another experiment, we sought to measure the effect of word substitution.

Our polling paper has four sections. The first section summarizes key findings. We call the second section “Survey Snapshots,” which offers charts highlighting the core findings of the project. The third section describes the survey’s methodology, summarizes response statistics, and presents additional technical information on call dispositions for landline and cell phone interviews. The fourth section displays the survey questions and results (“topline numbers”), allowing the reader to follow the interview as it was conducted, with respect to question wording and ordering.

Key Findings

- ▶ **Clearly, the economy and jobs are of the utmost concern to Rhode Islanders right now. More than half of survey respondents (52%) indicated this area as the state’s most pressing issue. Education (9%) ranks in second place in a statistical tie (i.e. within the margin of error) with taxes (12%) and healthcare (9%).**

See Question 1

Some statistically significant differences emerge when comparing within demographic categories. For example, Republicans (65%) are more likely to say the economy and jobs are a priority, compared to Democrats (50%). Education is a relatively higher priority for political liberals (16%) and moderates (9%) than it is for conservatives (3%).

- ▶ **More than seven out of 10 voters in Rhode Island (72%) are paying attention to issues in K-12 education. Nearly three out of 10 (28%) said they pay “very little” or no attention.**

See Question 2

Voters who said they pay “a lot” of attention (39%) to K-12 education issues outnumber those who said they pay no attention (7%) by nearly six to one.

Parents of school-age children are clearly engaged.¹ About seven out of 10 school parents (71%) in the survey said they pay “a lot” of attention to educational issues, a figure that is more than double the proportion of non-schoolers (29%) giving the same response.

¹ For this paper, we use the label “school parents” to refer to those respondents who said they have one or more children in preschool through high school. We use the label “non-schoolers” for respondents without children, or who may have children that are not in the specific grade range PK-12.

Urbanites (51%) and suburbanites (41%) are significantly more likely to pay close attention to these issues compared to voters living in small towns (32%) across the state. Democrats (46%) are more likely to be tuned in to K-12 education issues than Republicans (35%) and Independents (36%). Likewise, a greater proportion of liberals (50%) said they are following educational issues, compared to moderates (38%) and conservatives (36%). Middle-age voters are paying a lot closer attention than young voters (22%) and older voters (38%).²

- ▶ **Rhode Islanders are much more likely to think that K-12 education has gotten off on the “wrong track” (52%), compared to the one-third of voters (32%) who say it is heading in the “right direction.”**

See Question 3

More than half of the voters who live in Providence (53%) and half of voters living in the southern and eastern regions (hereafter termed “South/East”) have a negative view of the direction for K-12 education in Rhode Island. The most optimistic demographic groups saying “right direction” include small town voters (38%) and self-described conservatives (39%). The groups who are most pessimistic saying “wrong track” include school parents (60%), Republicans (66%), and religious Protestants (60%).

- ▶ **Six out of 10 respondents gave negative ratings to the state’s public school system (35% said “good” or “excellent”; 60% said “fair” or “poor”).**

See Question 4

Few statistically significant differences stand out among demographic groups. Majorities in all observed groups gave negative responses about Rhode Island’s public school system. Relatively speaking, higher proportions of Democrats (35%) and Independents (38%) gave positive responses, compared to

² For terminology in this paper, “young voters” reflect respondents who are age 18 to 34; “middle-age voters” are 35 to 54; and “older voters” are 55 and older.

Republicans (18%). Urbanites (71%) and suburbanites (61%) are more likely to hold negative views than small town residents (51%).

- ▶ **Based on open-end survey responses, Rhode Island voters do not know how much is spent per student in the public schools. There is very low awareness about public spending on K-12 education.**

See Question 5

More than \$13,800 is spent on each student in Rhode Island’s public schools, and only one out of 10 respondents (10%) could estimate the correct per-student spending range for the state (this dollar figure reflects “current expenditures” per student). About 51% of respondents thought that \$12,000 or less was being spent per student in the state’s public schools. Another 29% of voters said they “don’t know” and did not offer a spending number.

When considering “total expenditures” per student (\$13,815 in 2010-11), which is another definition for educational spending, voter estimates appear even more dramatically off target.³

Eight out of ten survey respondents (80%) either underestimated educational spending per student (for either definition), or they could not give an answer or guess. No matter how one defines expenditures (per student), it is clear voters are poorly informed about how money is spent on K-12 education.

³ “Current Expenditures” data include dollars spent on instruction, instruction-related support services, and other elementary/secondary current expenditures, but exclude expenditures on long-term debt service, facilities and construction, and other programs. “Total Expenditures” includes the latter categories.

See Stephen Q. Cornman, Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: School Year 2010–11 (Fiscal Year 2011) (NCES 2013-305). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics (July 2013).

URL: nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013342.pdf

- ▶ **When given the latest per-student spending information, voters are significantly less likely to say public school funding is at a level that is “too low,” compared to answering without having such information.**

See Questions 6A and 6B

In an experiment, we asked two slightly different questions about the level of public school funding in Rhode Island. On version 6A, 46% of voters said that public school funding was “too low.” However, on version 6B, which included a sentence referring to data on per-student funding in Rhode Island (\$13,815), the proportion of voters saying “too low” shrank by 20 percentage points to 26%, effectively a 45% reduction in that specific response.

Voters are likely to change their views on public school funding—at least for those who believe it is “too low” – if given accurate per-student spending information. This implication that opinion can turn on a single piece of data is important when considering political soundbites that focus on aggregate levels of public spending rather than how the money is allocated and spent per student.

- ▶ **By a decisive margin, a majority of Rhode Islanders (57%) prefer considering “total expenses” when it comes to school finance, a spending definition that includes items such as construction and capital costs, interest payments on debt, and pensions. About one-third of respondents (34%) said they would rather prefer “operating expenses” or “current expenses,” which exclude these finance items.**

See Questions 7A and 7B

In a simple experiment, we asked essentially the same question while employing a single word substitution to generate a comparison for spending terminology – “operating expenses” versus “current expenses.” The bottom line is pretty clear that there is no detectable difference between the terms “operating expenses” and “current expenses.”

- ▶ **Rhode Island voters are much more likely to give grades A or B to private/parochial schools in their communities, compared to the local public schools. When considering only those respondents who actually gave a grade, the local private schools (79% give an A or B) fare even better than public schools (44% give an A or B).**

See Questions 8A, 8B, and 8C

Approximately 43% of voters give an A or B to local public schools, while 67% give an A or B to local private/parochial schools. Only 3% of voters give a D or F grade to private schools, and 16% gave the same low grades to public schools. It should be noted that higher proportions of voters did not express a view for private schools (17%) or charter schools (37%), compared to the proportion that did not grade public schools (4%).

- ▶ **When asked for a preferred school type, 54% of Rhode Islanders would choose a private school first. A public school option is the second most frequently cited preference (29%). One out of 10 voters (10%) would prefer to send their child to a charter school (10%). An additional 4% of voters would like to homeschool their child. There is a clear disconnect between voters' school preferences and actual enrollment patterns in the state. Rhode Islanders have a variety of schooling preferences.**

See Questions 9 and 10

Approximately 13% of Rhode Island's K-12 student population attend private schools, but in our survey interviews, 54% of respondents would select a private school as a first option. About 85% of the state's students attend regular public schools, but a much lower percentage of the state's voters (29%) would choose a regular public school as a first choice. Approximately 2% of Rhode Island's students attend a public charter school, but in our survey about 10% of

respondents said they would like to send their child to a charter school. Another 4% said homeschool would be the best way to educate their child.

In a follow-up question, respondents in our survey prioritize “better education/quality” (20%) as the key attribute they are looking for in the selection of their preferred school. The second most cited school attribute was “teachers/teaching” (13%). Some caution is warranted when analyzing this item in the questionnaire. These characteristics appear to be a higher priority over others on the list. However, any of these qualities may or may not attract more urgency as a second or third priority, which we do not explore in this survey.

- ▶ **Rhode Island voters are nearly three times as likely to favor charter schools (62%), rather than oppose such schools (22%). The margin of support for charter schools is large (+40 percentage points). Prior to this survey, we estimate that about one-third of voters (33%) were not familiar with charter schools.**

See Questions 11 and 12

We asked a pair of questions about charter schools. The initial question asked for an opinion without offering any definition. On this baseline question, 52% of voters said they favored charters and 14% said they opposed them. In the follow-up question, respondents were given a definition for a charter school. With this basic definition, support rose 10 points to 62%, and opposition increased eight points to 22%.

Considering the definition question, Rhode Island registered large positive margin of support (+40 points) favoring charter schools. The intensity is firmly in the positive direction (+20 points). Voters are more likely to say they “strongly favor” charter schools (30%) compared to those who said they “strongly oppose” (10%) such schools.

When looking at various demographics, there are very few discernible differences among groups. The margin of support tends to be positive by at least +35 points.

Nearly all groups show about 60% support for charter schools. However, voters in rural communities (51%) appear to be an exception. The groups most likely to favor charters are suburbanites (67%), Republicans (67%), conservatives (72%), and middle-income voters (66%). The groups more inclined to oppose charters are rural voters (31%) and political liberals (30%).⁴

The most intense support for charter schools is found among conservatives (+27 points) and Protestants (+28 points). We do not pick up any negative intensity among the observed demographic groups.

The proportion of “don’t know” responses shrinks by 17 points (33% to 16%) while comparing the baseline item to the definition item.

- ▶ **A majority of Rhode Islanders (56%) said they support school vouchers, compared to 33% of voters who said they oppose such a school choice system. The margin of support (+23 points) is almost six times the survey’s margin of error.**

See Questions 13 and 14

The interview sequence asking about school vouchers mirrored the approach taken for charter schools. In the first question, respondents were asked for their views on vouchers without offering any definition or other context. On this baseline question, 40% of Rhode Islanders said they favored vouchers and 23% said they opposed the policy. In the follow-up question, respondents were given a proper definition for a school voucher system, and voter support rose 16 points to 56%, and opposition increased 10 points to 33%.

⁴ For this paper, “low-income” refers to respondents with annual household incomes less than \$40,000; “middle-income” refers to respondents with annual household incomes at least equal to \$40,000 but less than \$80,000; “high-income” refers to respondents with annual household incomes at least equal to or greater than \$80,000.

The positive differential increases substantially when considering the response changes moving from the baseline to definition question for vouchers (baseline = +16 points; definition = +23 points). Among voters, the positive intensity for vouchers (+9 points) is in the positive direction like it is for charter schools.

The proportion of “don’t know” responses shrinks by 27 points (37% to 10%) while comparing the baseline item to the definition item.

The demographic groups most likely to favor school vouchers are school parents (62%), urbanites (63%), Republicans (65%), conservatives (67%), and low-income earners (63%). The groups that are least likely to support vouchers are Independents (51%), liberals (49%), older voters (52%), and high-income earners (52%).

The groups that stand out on vouchers reflect those having the highest margins of support, include school parents (+32 points), urbanites (+36 points), Republicans (+39 points), political conservatives (+43 points), young voters (+40 points), and low-income earners (+41 points). In relative contrast, the smallest margins are among Independents (+14 points) and high-income earners (+11 points). No observed group shows a negative margin of support-opposition.

The intensity for vouchers does vary quite a bit among demographic groups. Most intensely supportive are school parents (+19 points), urbanites (+19 points), rural voters (+18 points), conservatives (+27 points), young voters (+20 points), low-income earners (+26 points), and Protestants (+19 points). Liberals (-5 points) are the most intensely negative against vouchers.

- ▶ **Voters clearly prefer universal access to school vouchers rather than eligibility that is based solely on financial need.**

See Questions 15 and 16

Six out of 10 voters (62%) said they agree with the statement that “school vouchers should be available to all families, regardless of incomes and special needs.”

Approximately 38% of respondents “strongly agree” with that statement. One-third (33%) of voters disagree with that statement; 21% said they “strongly disagree.”

It was not very surprising that the opposite resulted when we asked if Rhode Island voters agree with the statement that “school vouchers should only be available to families based on financial need.” Only 32% of respondents agreed with that statement; 16% of respondents said they “strongly agree” about means-testing vouchers. A solid majority (63%) said they disagree with means-testing the system, and 42% said they “strongly disagree.”

- ▶ **Rhode Island voters are more likely to support an “education savings account” system (“ESA”). The percentage of those who favor ESAs (46%) is significantly greater than the proportion who say they oppose this type of public policy (35%).**

See Question 17

The demographic groups most likely to favor ESAs are school parents (55%), rural voters (57%), conservatives (54%), young voters (53%), low-income earners (55%), and Protestants (53%). Older voters and those without any religious affiliation (39% for both groups) are least likely to support ESAs.

The groups having the highest margins of support for ESAs are school parents (+28 points), rural voters (+26 points), conservatives (+26 points), young voters (+23 points), low-income earners (+28 points), and Protestants (+24 points). In relative contrast, there currently appears to be some ambivalence toward ESAs among suburbanites and those without religious affiliation (i.e., there is no difference between positive and negative responses). Older voters (-2 points) are mildly negative on ESAs.

Like school vouchers, the intensity for ESAs varies across demographic groups and some seem counterintuitive, considering responses to other school choice questions. Most intensely supportive are school parents (+14 points), rural voters

(+19 points), Democrats (+7 points), conservatives (+7 points), younger voters (+9 points), middle-age voters (+8 points), and low-income earners (+19 points). Those groups most intensely negative are older voters (-15 points), middle-income earners (-8 points), high-income earners (-9 points), and those without any religious affiliation (-8 points).

Some 19% of respondents did not express an opinion about ESAs.

- ▶ **By a two-to-one margin, voters support the school choice policy financing “tax-credit scholarships.” The percentage of those who favor (57%) is twice as large as the number of people who say they oppose such a school choice reform (28%). The margin of support is very large, roughly +29 percentage points. Likewise, voters are more likely to be intensely favorable toward tax-credit scholarships (+12 points).**

See Question 18

Groups most likely to favor tax-credit scholarships are rural voters (63%), Republicans (67%), conservatives (65%), and young voters (65%). Liberal voters (50%) and those without a religious affiliation (48%) are the least likely to support tax-credit scholarships in Rhode Island.

The groups having the highest margins of support for tax-credit scholarships include voters living in Providence (+35 points), young voters (+42 points), and Protestants (+44 points). By contrast, those without religious affiliation (+14 points) have the smallest favor-oppose margin.

Most intensely supportive of tax-credit scholarships are school parents (+21 points), rural voters (+19 points), young voters (+22 points), middle-age voters (+17 points), and Protestants (+25 points). Older voters (+2 points) and those without a religious affiliation (+1 points) are least likely to be enthusiastic about tax-credit scholarships.

Respondents who did not express an opinion reached 14%.

- ▶ **Most Rhode Islanders (56%) believe the level of taxation is unfair in their state, but no majority emerges when asked about which specific tax should be eliminated to improve the situation. A possible path toward tax reform – having implications for education funding – appears to be a toss-up between eliminating the sales tax (33%) or the state income tax (28%).**

See Questions 19 and 20

On the first question about tax fairness, it is clear that intensity runs in the negative direction: 31% said “not at all fair” vs. 3% who said “very fair.”

The demographic groups most likely to say the current tax levels are unfair include rural voters (64%), Republicans (73%), Independents (62%), conservatives (61%), moderates (60%), and middle-income voters (64%).

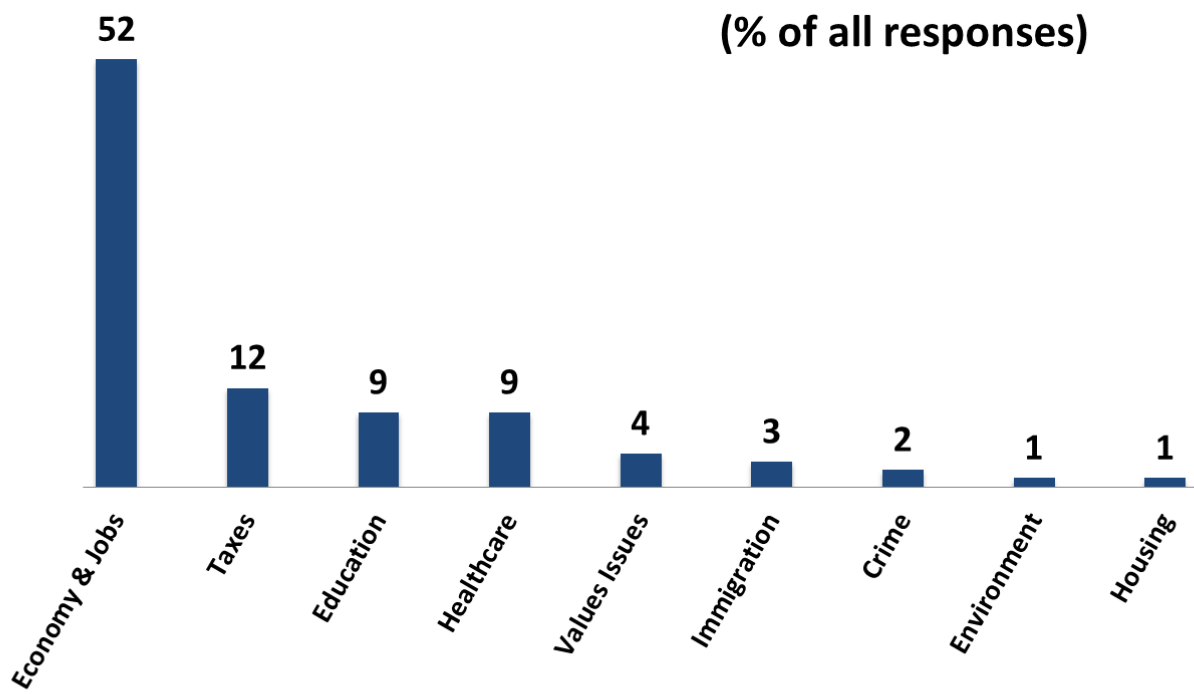
The groups most likely to say state tax levels are fair include urbanites (44%), Democrats (53%), liberals (50%), young voters (46%), and low-income earners (47%).

In a follow-up question, a plurality of respondents (33%) in our survey thought eliminating the sales tax would help boost the economy. Older voters and low-income earners (41% each) appeared to be the strongest supporters of this idea. Nearly three out of 10 respondents (28%) supported the suggestion of eliminating the state income tax. More than any other group, school parents (43%) liked this idea. Approximately 15% favored eliminating the corporate tax. Most demographic groups supported getting rid of this tax at around the state average; 18% of voters did not think that eliminating one of these three taxes could help boost the state economy. More than any other groups, young voters (28%) shared this particular view.



Survey Snapshots

Q1. Which of the following do you see as the most important issue facing the state... ?



FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey, Q1.*

Q2. How much attention do you pay to issues involving K-12 education?

■ Very Little/None ■ Some/A Lot

RHODE ISLAND

28

72

Providence

25

75

South/East

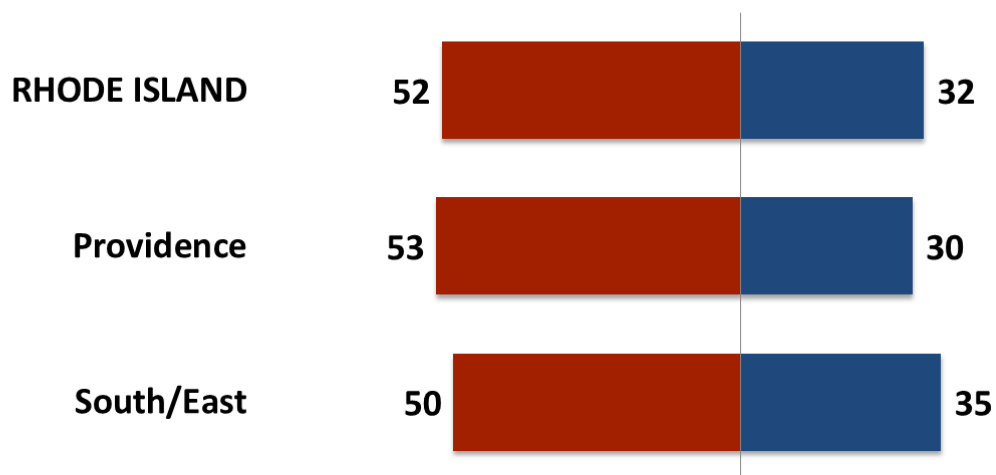
32

68

FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey, Q2.*

Q3. Do you feel things in Rhode Island's K-12 education system are generally going in the right direction, or do you feel things have generally gotten off on the wrong track?

■ **Wrong Track** ■ **Right Direction**



FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey, Q3.*

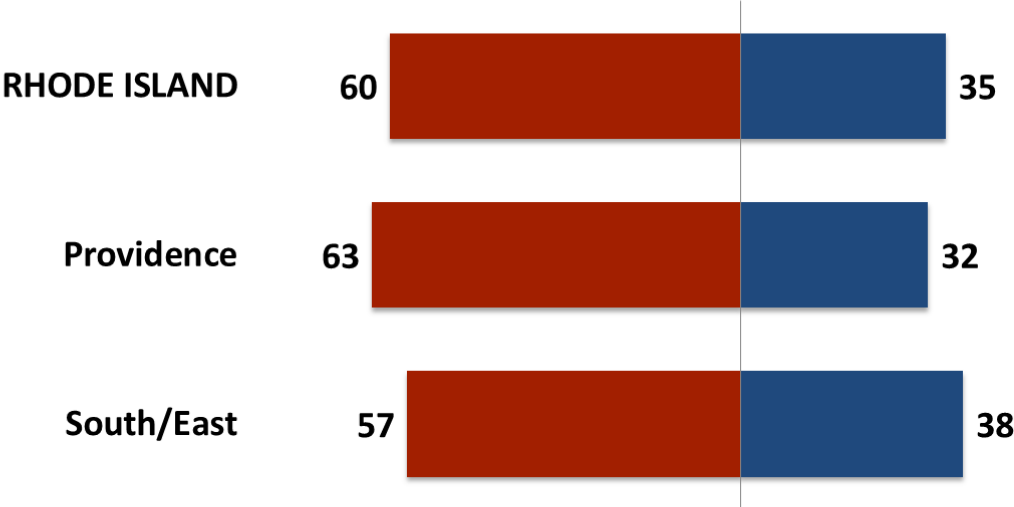
Q3. Do you feel things in Rhode Island’s K-12 education system are generally going in the right direction, or do you feel things have generally gotten off on the wrong track?

	Right Direction %	Wrong Track %	Diff	N=
ALL RESPONDENTS	32	52	- 20	602
School Parent	28	60	- 32	135
Non-Schooler	34	48	- 14	462
COMMUNITY				
Urban	27	51	- 24	111
Suburban	31	53	- 22	236
Small Town	38	48	- 10	168
Rural	33	54	- 21	75
PARTY ID				
Democrat	35	48	- 13	182
Republican	26	66	- 40	70
Independent	35	47	- 12	284
IDEOLOGY				
Liberal	27	58	- 31	139
Conservative	39	53	- 14	175
Moderate	34	45	- 11	247
AGE GROUP				
18 to 34	26	55	- 29	89
35 to 54	30	56	- 26	197
55 & Over	37	46	- 9	299
HOUSEHOLD INCOME				
Under \$40,000	33	49	- 16	138
\$40,000 to \$79,999	26	58	- 32	151
\$80,000 & Over	37	48	- 11	209
RELIGION				
Catholic	36	47	- 11	292
Protestant	25	60	- 35	131
None	34	51	- 17	113

NOTE: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in the United States and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews. All other statistical results reported in this table and report reflect weighted data, a standard procedure to correct for known demographic discrepancies.

SOURCE: Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, *Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q3.

Q4. How would you rate Rhode Island's public school system?



FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q4.

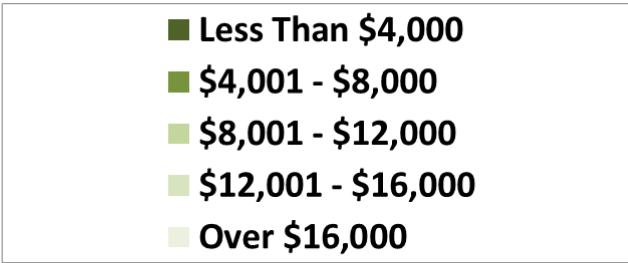
Q4. How would you rate Rhode Island's public school system?

	Good/Excellent %	Fair/Poor %	Diff	Intensity	N=
ALL RESPONDENTS	35	60	- 25	- 14	602
School Parent	36	63	- 27	- 15	135
Non-Schooler	34	60	- 26	- 14	462
COMMUNITY					
Urban	27	71	- 44	- 22	111
Suburban	35	61	- 26	- 13	236
Small Town	40	51	- 11	- 10	168
Rural	34	62	- 28	- 17	75
PARTY ID					
Democrat	35	57	- 22	- 9	182
Republican	18	79	- 61	- 27	70
Independent	38	58	- 20	- 14	284
IDEOLOGY					
Liberal	41	54	- 13	- 16	139
Conservative	33	64	- 31	- 20	175
Moderate	34	60	- 26	- 9	247
AGE GROUP					
18 to 34	33	64	- 31	- 16	89
35 to 54	36	59	- 23	- 14	197
55 & Over	34	60	- 26	- 14	299
HOUSEHOLD INCOME					
Under \$40,000	29	66	- 37	- 16	138
\$40,000 to \$79,999	36	57	- 21	- 9	151
\$80,000 & Over	36	60	- 24	- 14	209
RELIGION					
Catholic	36	58	- 22	- 13	292
Protestant	28	66	- 38	- 18	131
None	35	61	- 26	- 15	113

NOTE: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in the United States and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews. All other statistical results reported in this table and report reflect weighted data, a standard procedure to correct for known demographic discrepancies. Based on Gallup's "Positive Intensity Score," Intensity is measured by subtracting the combined percentages of "fair" and "poor" responses from the combined percentages of "good" and "excellent" responses. The difference indicates the enthusiasm behind the positive or negative ratings.

SOURCE: Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, *Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q4.

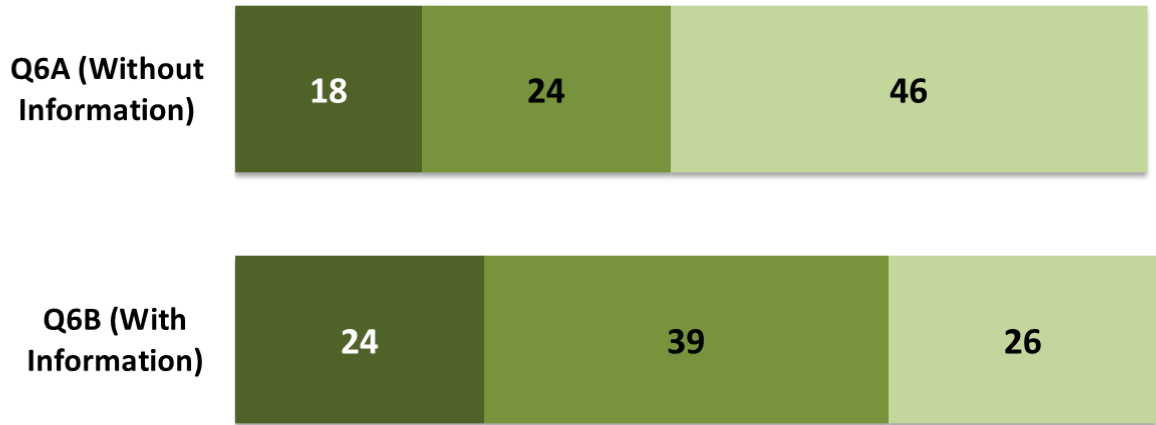
Q5. How much do you think is spent per year on each student in Rhode Island's public schools? Your estimate (to the nearest thousand dollars) will represent the combined expenditures of local, state, and federal governments.



FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q5.

Q6-Split A. Do you believe that public school funding in Rhode Island is at a level that is:

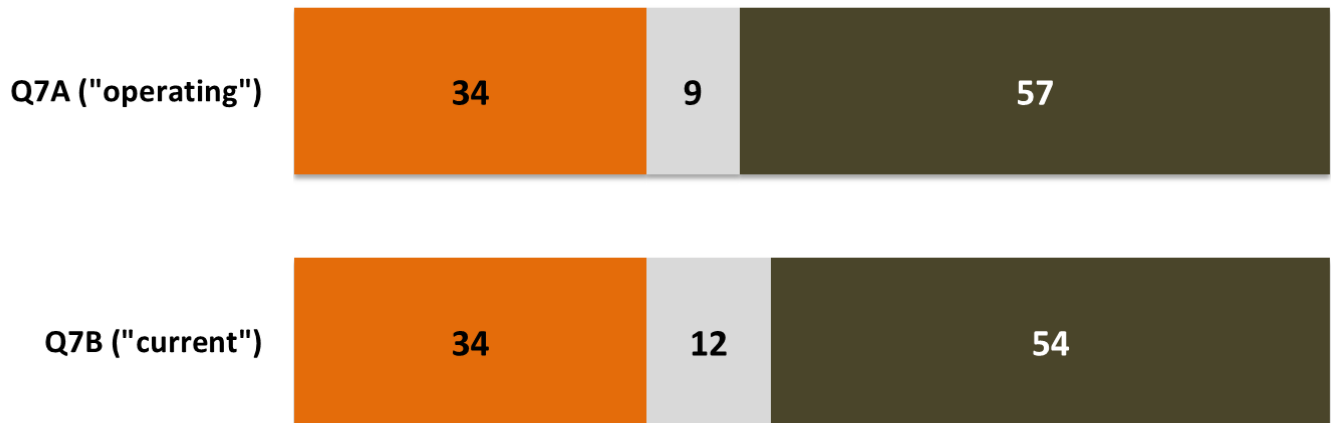
Q6-Split B. According to the most recent information available, in Rhode Island \$13,815 is being spent each year per student attending public schools. Do you believe that public school funding in Rhode Island is at a level that is:



FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q6A and Q6B.

Q7. Each year state officials and the media report public school spending per student. In your view, would you prefer they report [(Split A) "operating expenses"; (Split B) "current expenses"] related to day-to-day activities, excluding items like construction, interest payments on debt, and pensions; or would you prefer that they report "total expenses," including those items?

- Prefer "Operating/Current Expenses"
- DK
- Prefer "Total Expenses"

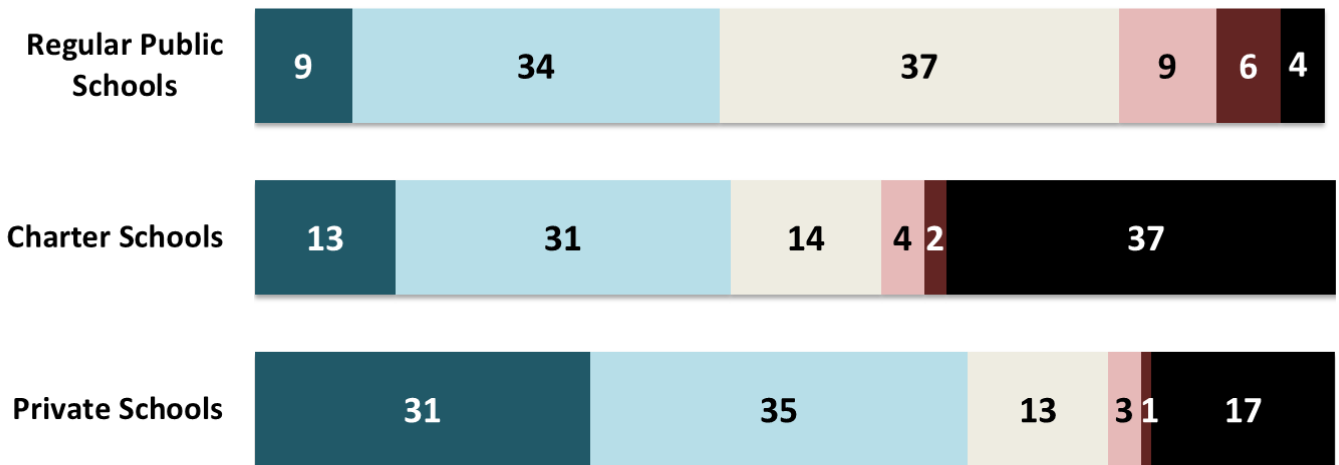


FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q7A and Q7B.

Q8. In thinking about the schools in your area, what grade would you give...



(% of all responses)

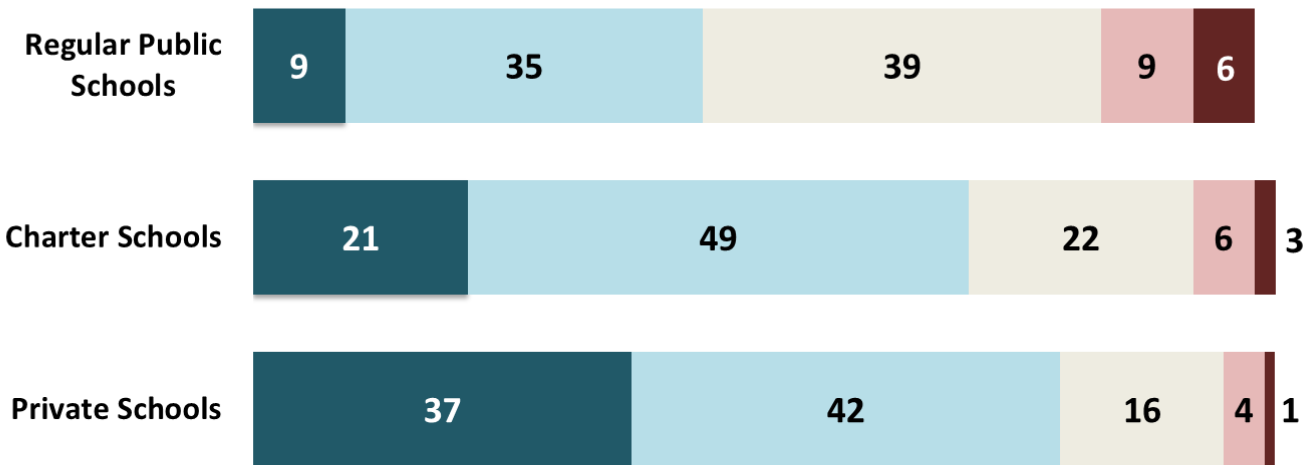


FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey, Q8.*

Q8. In thinking about the schools in your area, what grade would you give...



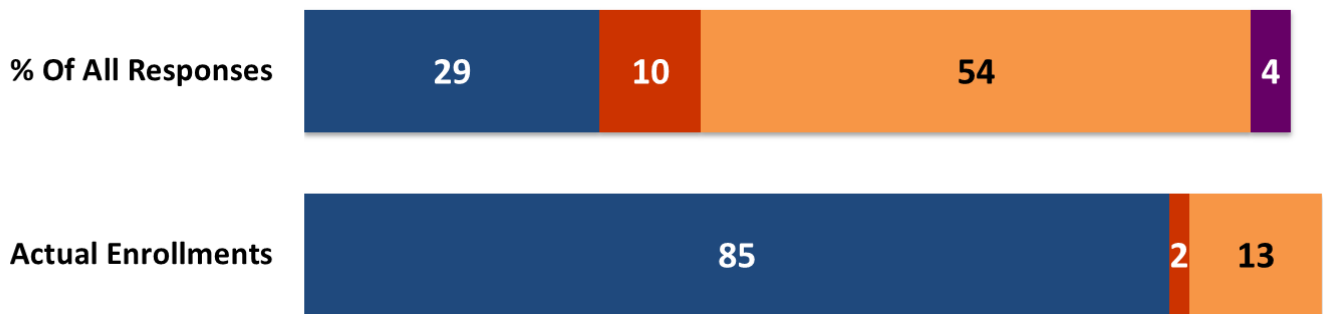
(% of only responses giving grades)



FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey, Q8.*

Q9. If it were your decision and you could select any type of school, what type of school would you select in order to obtain the best education for your child?

- Regular Public School
- Charter School
- Private School
- Homeschool



FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey, Q9.*

Q9. If it were your decision and you could select any type of school, what type of school would you select in order to obtain the best education for your child?

	Charter School %	Homeschool %	Private School %	Public School %	N=
ALL RESPONDENTS	10	4	54	29	602
School Parent	11	5	53	27	135
Non-Schooler	10	4	53	30	462
COMMUNITY					
Urban	14	5	60	17	111
Suburban	11	3	51	32	236
Small Town	8	4	54	33	168
Rural	10	7	52	31	75
PARTY ID					
Democrat	12	2	53	30	182
Republican	7	6	60	24	70
Independent	10	5	53	31	284
IDEOLOGY					
Liberal	7	4	50	37	139
Conservative	12	5	60	20	175
Moderate	11	4	50	32	247
AGE GROUP					
18 to 34	13	4	50	32	89
35 to 54	9	6	53	29	197
55 & Over	11	2	55	29	299
HOUSEHOLD INCOME					
Under \$40,000	12	5	54	25	138
\$40,000 to \$79,999	12	6	48	33	151
\$80,000 & Over	8	3	54	35	209
RELIGION					
Catholic	9	3	62	24	292
Protestant	13	6	46	34	131
None	10	7	46	33	113

NOTE: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in the United States and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews. All other statistical results reported in this table and report reflect weighted data, a standard procedure to correct for known demographic discrepancies.

SOURCE: Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, *Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q9.

Q10. What is the most important characteristic or attribute that would cause you to choose a [INSERT SCHOOL TYPE FROM PREVIOUS QUESTION] for your child? Please use one word, or a very short phrase.

Top 15 | Specific impressions offered by respondents in the statewide sample. Numbers represent counts (n), not percentages.

BETTER EDUCATION / QUALITY	120
BETTER TEACHERS / TEACHERS / TEACHING	78
INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION / ONE-ON-ONE	54
DISCIPLINE / STRUCTURE	49
CLASS SIZE / STUDENT-TEACHER RATIO	43
SOCIALIZATION / PEERS / OTHER KIDS	37
ENVIRONMENT / CULTURE / COMMUNITY	33
ACADEMICS / CURRICULUM	31
MORALS / VALUES / ETHICS	28
OUTCOMES / RESULTS / GRADUATION RATE	20
COST / TUITION / AFFORDABILITY	18
RESOURCES / FUNDING	16
DIVERSITY / VARIETY	15
ALMA MATER / SOCIAL NETWORK	12
RELIGION / RELIGIOUS REASONS	12

SOURCE: Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, *Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q10.

Q11. Based on what you know, or have heard from others... In general, do you favor or oppose “charter schools”?

■ Oppose ■ Favor

Q12. Charter schools are public schools that have more control over their own budget, staff, and curriculum, and are exempt from many existing public school regulations. With this information, do you generally favor or oppose charter schools?

Baseline (Q11)



With Definition (Q12)



FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q11 and Q12.

Q12. Charter schools are public schools that have more control over their own budget, staff, and curriculum, and are exempt from many existing public school regulations. In general, do you favor or oppose charter schools?

	Favor %	Oppose %	Diff	Intensity	N=
ALL RESPONDENTS	62	22	+ 40	+ 14	602
School Parent	65	21	+ 44	+ 22	135
Non-Schooler	62	22	+ 40	+ 20	462
COMMUNITY					
Urban	59	19	+ 40	+ 20	111
Suburban	67	19	+ 48	+ 27	236
Small Town	65	23	+ 42	+ 17	168
Rural	51	31	+ 20	+ 7	75
PARTY ID					
Democrat	60	20	+ 40	+ 21	182
Republican	67	17	+ 50	+ 18	70
Independent	64	24	+ 40	+ 20	284
IDEOLOGY					
Liberal	60	30	+ 30	+ 15	139
Conservative	72	18	+ 54	+ 27	175
Moderate	60	21	+ 39	+ 20	247
AGE GROUP					
18 to 34	60	21	+ 39	+ 22	89
35 to 54	61	24	+ 37	+ 20	197
55 & Over	64	20	+ 44	+ 20	299
HOUSEHOLD INCOME					
Under \$40,000	62	21	+ 41	+ 22	138
\$40,000 to \$79,999	66	24	+ 42	+ 20	151
\$80,000 & Over	62	24	+ 38	+ 21	209
RELIGION					
Catholic	61	23	+ 38	+ 18	292
Protestant	64	22	+ 42	+ 28	131
None	66	21	+ 45	+ 18	113

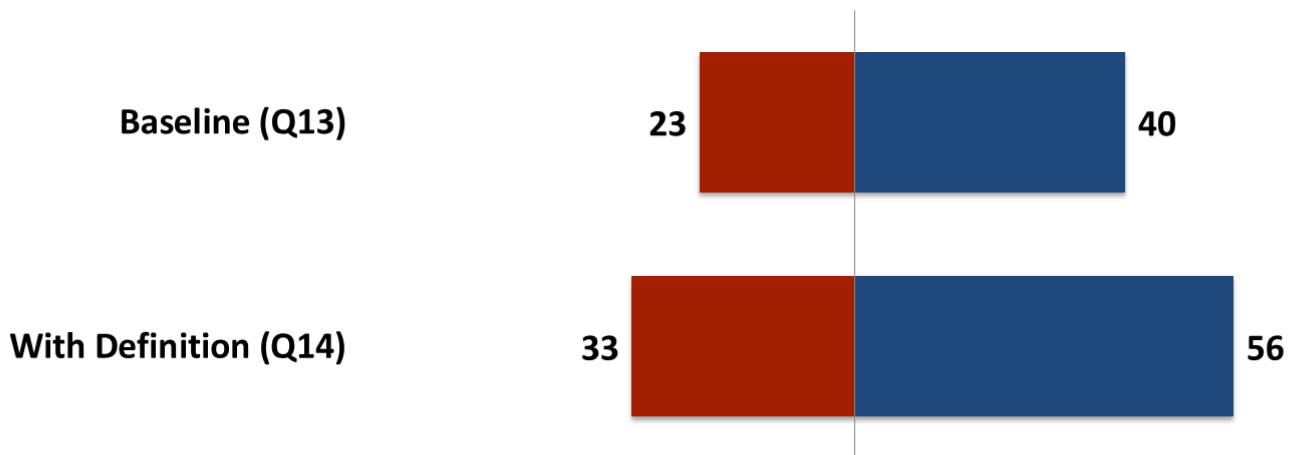
NOTE: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in the United States and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews. All other statistical results reported in this table and report reflect weighted data, a standard procedure to correct for known demographic discrepancies. Based on Gallup's "Positive Intensity Score," Intensity is measured by subtracting the percentage of "strongly oppose" responses from the percentage of "strongly favor" responses. The difference indicates enthusiasm behind the support or opposition for a given policy or proposal.

SOURCE: Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, *Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q12.

**Q13. Based on what you know, or have heard from others...
In general, do you favor or oppose “school vouchers”?**

■ Oppose ■ Favor

Q14. A school voucher system allows parents the option of sending their child to the school of their choice, whether that school is public or private, including both religious and non-religious schools. If this policy were adopted, tax dollars currently allocated to a school district would be allocated to parents in the form of a “school voucher” to pay partial or full tuition for their child’s school. In general, do you favor or oppose a school voucher system?



FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q13 and Q14.

Q14. A school voucher system allows parents the option of sending their child to the school of their choice, whether that school is public or private, including both religious and non-religious schools. If this policy were adopted, tax dollars currently allocated to a school district would be allocated to parents in the form of a “school voucher” to pay partial or full tuition for their child’s school. In general, do you favor or oppose a school voucher system?

	Favor %	Oppose %	Diff	Intensity	N=
ALL RESPONDENTS	56	33	+ 23	+ 9	602
School Parent	62	30	+ 32	+ 19	135
Non-Schooler	54	34	+ 20	+ 7	462
COMMUNITY					
Urban	63	27	+ 36	+ 19	111
Suburban	54	35	+ 19	+ 7	236
Small Town	53	37	+ 16	+ 2	168
Rural	60	33	+ 27	+ 18	75
PARTY ID					
Democrat	54	36	+ 18	+ 7	182
Republican	65	26	+ 39	+ 15	70
Independent	51	37	+ 14	+ 5	284
IDEOLOGY					
Liberal	49	48	+ 1	- 5	139
Conservative	67	24	+ 43	+ 27	175
Moderate	53	34	+ 19	+ 5	247
AGE GROUP					
18 to 34	62	22	+ 40	+ 20	89
35 to 54	58	36	+ 22	+ 9	197
55 & Over	52	36	+ 16	+ 5	299
HOUSEHOLD INCOME					
Under \$40,000	63	22	+ 41	+ 26	138
\$40,000 to \$79,999	58	34	+ 24	+ 10	151
\$80,000 & Over	52	41	+ 11	+ 1	209
RELIGION					
Catholic	57	30	+ 27	+ 12	292
Protestant	57	34	+ 23	+ 19	131
None	53	38	+ 15	- 3	113

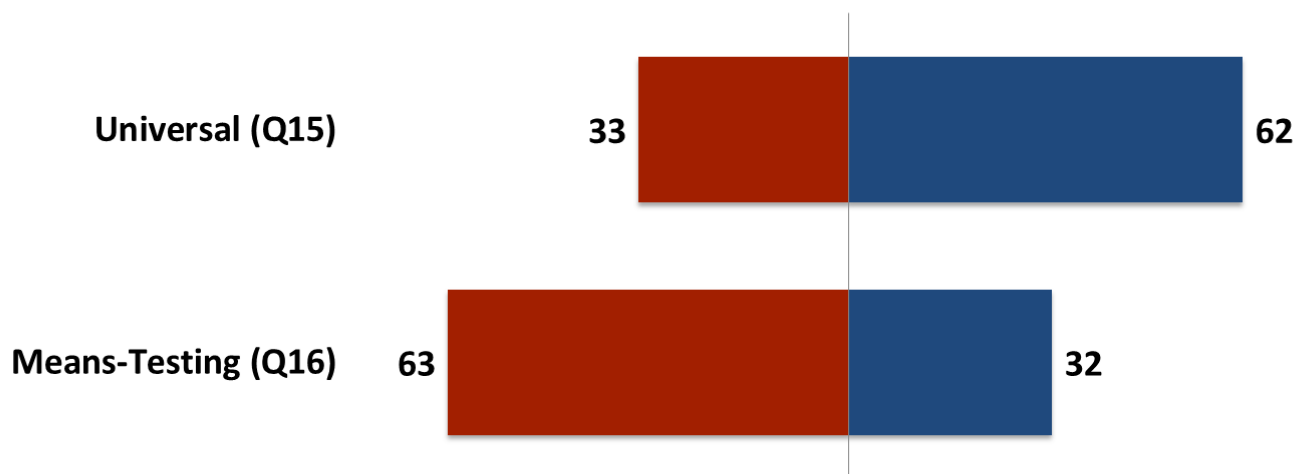
NOTE: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in the United States and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews. All other statistical results reported in this table and report reflect weighted data, a standard procedure to correct for known demographic discrepancies. Based on Gallup's "Positive Intensity Score," Intensity is measured by subtracting the percentage of "strongly oppose" responses from the percentage of "strongly favor" responses. The difference indicates enthusiasm behind the support or opposition for a given policy or proposal.

SOURCE: Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, *Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q14.

Q15. Some people believe that school vouchers *should be available to all families, regardless of incomes and special needs*. Do you agree or disagree with that statement?

■ Disagree ■ Agree

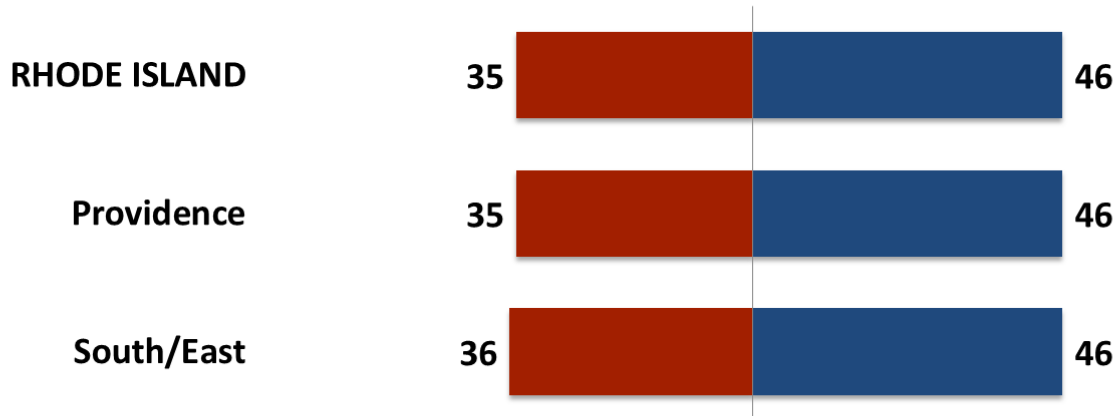
Q16. Some people believe that school vouchers *should only be available to families based on financial need*. Do you agree or disagree with that statement?



FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q15 and Q16.

Q17. An "education savings account" - often called an "ESA" - allows parents to withdraw their child from a public district or charter school, and receive a payment into a government-authorized savings account with restricted, but multiple uses. Parents can then use these funds to pay for private school tuition, virtual education programs, private tutoring or saving for future college expenses. In general, do you favor or oppose this kind of "savings account system"?

■ Oppose ■ Favor



FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey, Q17.*

Q17. An "education savings account" - often called an "ESA" - allows parents to withdraw their child from a public district or charter school, and receive a payment into a government-authorized savings account with restricted, but multiple uses. Parents can then use these funds to pay for private school tuition, virtual education programs, private tutoring or saving for future college expenses. In general, do you favor or oppose this kind of "savings account system"?

	Favor %	Oppose %	Diff	Intensity	N=
ALL RESPONDENTS	46	35	+ 11	- 1	602
School Parent	55	27	+ 28	+ 14	135
Non-Schooler	44	38	+ 6	- 6	462
COMMUNITY					
Urban	46	28	+ 18	+ 3	111
Suburban	42	42	even	- 10	236
Small Town	50	33	+ 17	+ 1	168
Rural	57	32	+ 25	+ 19	75
PARTY ID					
Democrat	46	33	+ 13	+ 7	182
Republican	45	37	+ 8	- 6	70
Independent	47	37	+ 10	- 6	284
IDEOLOGY					
Liberal	40	39	+ 1	- 6	139
Conservative	54	27	+ 27	+ 7	175
Moderate	49	38	+ 11	- 1	247
AGE GROUP					
18 to 34	53	30	+ 23	+ 9	89
35 to 54	49	32	+ 17	+ 8	197
55 & Over	39	41	- 2	- 15	299
HOUSEHOLD INCOME					
Under \$40,000	55	28	+ 27	+ 19	138
\$40,000 to \$79,999	45	41	+ 4	- 8	151
\$80,000 & Over	46	39	+ 7	- 9	209
RELIGION					
Catholic	48	37	+ 11	+ 2	292
Protestant	53	29	+ 24	+ 4	131
None	39	39	even	- 8	113

NOTE: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its adult population size in the United States and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. The subgroup sample sizes displayed in the far right column represent the unweighted number of interviews. All other statistical results reported in this table and report reflect weighted data, a standard procedure to correct for known demographic discrepancies. Based on Gallup's "Positive Intensity Score," Intensity is measured by subtracting the percentage of "strongly oppose" responses from the percentage of "strongly favor" responses. The difference indicates enthusiasm behind the support or opposition for a given policy or proposal.

SOURCE: Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, *Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q17.

Q18. A “tax credit” allows an individual or business to reduce the final amount of a tax owed to government. Some states give tax credits to individuals and businesses if they contribute money to nonprofit organizations that distribute private school scholarships. A “tax-credit scholarship system” allows parents the option of sending their child to the school of their choice, whether that school is public or private, including both religious and non-religious schools. In general, do you favor or oppose a tax-credit scholarship system?

■ Oppose ■ Favor

RHODE ISLAND

28

57

Providence

25

60

South/East

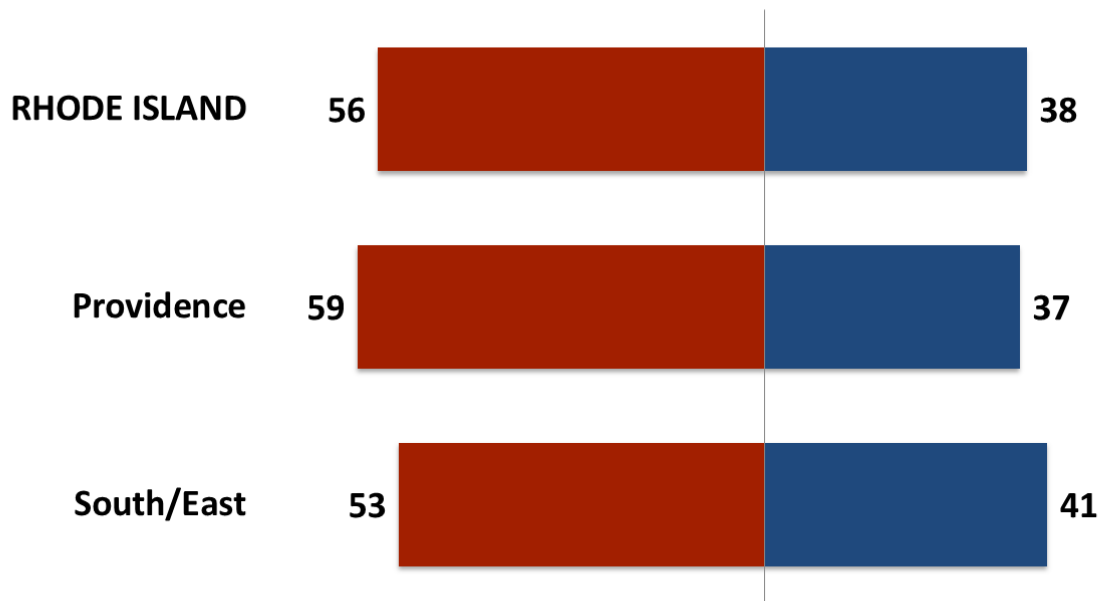
33

54

FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey, Q18.*

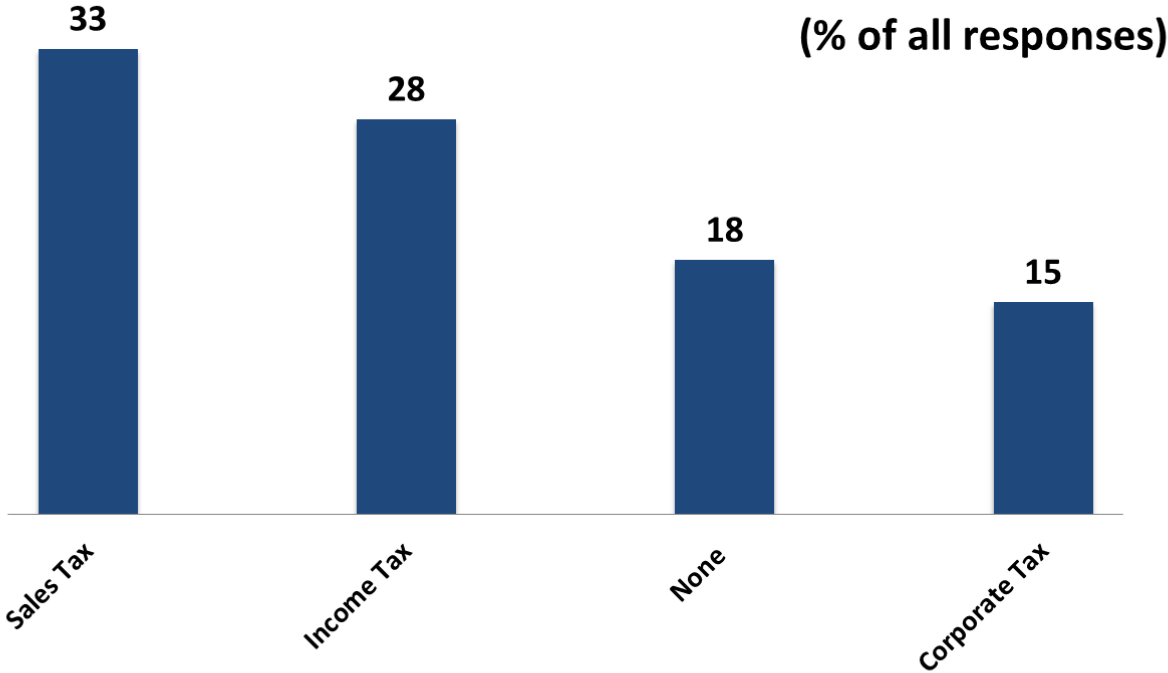
Q19. How fair do you think is the level of taxation in Rhode Island? Overall would you say state taxes are [ROTATE] very fair, somewhat fair, not too fair, not at all fair?

■ Not Fair ■ Fair



FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey, Q19.*

Q20. If the state of Rhode Island were to eliminate one of its major taxes in order to help boost the economy, which of the following taxes would you prefer to target?



FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q20.

Methods Summary

The “Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey” project, commissioned by the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice and conducted by Braun Research, Inc. (BRI), interviewed a statistically representative sample of registered voters in the state of Rhode Island. Methodology included probability sampling and random-digit dial. The statewide sample includes a total of **602** telephone interviews completed in English from June 24 to July 8, 2013, by means of both landline and cell phone. Statistical results were weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies.

The margin of sampling error for the statewide sample is ± 4.0 percentage points.

BRI’s live callers conducted all phone interviews. For this entire project, a total of **6,848** calls were made in Rhode Island. Of these calls, **2,699** were unusable phone numbers (disconnected, fax, busy, non-residential, or non-answers, etc.); **3,478** were usable numbers but eligibility unknown (including refusals and voicemail); **49** cell phone numbers were usable but not eligible for this survey; **20** people did not complete the survey. The average response rate of the landline interviews was **14.6%**. The average response rate of the cell phone interviews was **11.0%**.

Details on call dispositions, landline and cell phone response rates, and weighting are discussed in the following sections.

Sample Design

A combination of landline and cellular random-digit-dial (RDD) samples was used to represent registered voters in Rhode Island who have access to either a landline or cellular telephone. Both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International, LLC (SSI) according to BRI specifications.

SSI starts with a database of all listed telephone numbers, updated on a four- to six-week rolling basis, 25 percent of the listings at a time. All active blocks—contiguous groups of 100

phone numbers for which more than one residential number is listed—are added to this database. Blocks and exchanges that include only listed business numbers are excluded.

Numbers for the landline sample were drawn with equal probabilities from active blocks (area code + exchange + two-digit block number) that contained three or more residential directory listings. The cellular sample was not list-assisted, but was drawn through a systematic sampling from dedicated wireless 100-blocks and shared service 100-blocks with no directory-listed landline numbers.

Contact Procedures

Interviews were conducted from June 24 to July 8, 2013. As many as eight attempts were made to contact every sampled telephone number. The sample was released for interviewing in replicates, which are representative subsamples of the larger sample. Using replicates to control the release of sample ensures that complete call procedures are followed for the entire sample. Calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chance of making contact with potential respondents. Each phone number received at least one daytime call.

We have noticed over the last several years response rates have been declining for consumer polls. Generally, running surveys over a longer period of time will boost these response rates. However, lower response rates do not lead to lower reliability of the data. For example, polls with a sample size of 1,200 respondents run over a two-day period with response rates of 3% or 4% have been acceptable for public release.

The survey's margin of error is the largest 95% Confidence Interval for any estimated proportion based on the total sample—the one around 50%. The overall margin of error for this survey is $\pm 4.0\%$. This means that in 95 of every 100 samples drawn using the same methodology, estimated proportions based on the entire sample will be no more than 4.0 percentage points away from their true values in the population.

It is critical to note that the margin of sampling error (MSE) is higher when considering the number of respondents for a given demographic subgroup. For example, the MSE for a subgroup of 150 respondents is ± 8.0 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, question wording, ordering, and other practical difficulties when conducting surveys may introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion research.

Call Dispositions and Response Rates

Rhode Island Statewide Call Dispositions					
<u>SUMMARY</u>			<u>DETAIL</u>		
Landline	Cell Phone		Landline	Cell Phone	
4,600	2,248	Total	989	714	Disconnected
4,600	2,248	Released	12	0	Fax
0	0	Unreleased	41	9	Government/Business
3,300	1,516	Usable	2	0	Cell Phone
1,300	732	Unusable	0	0	Non Landline
3,300	1,104	Qualified	1,044	723	Unusable
71.2%	67.5%	Est. Usability	848	27	No Answer
100.0%	72.5%	Est. Eligibility	57	0	Busy
14.6%	11.0%	Est. Response	905	27	Usability Unknown
			481	121	Complete
			12	8	Break-Off
			493	129	Usable/Eligible
			903	597	Refused
			14	11	Language Barrier
			716	418	Voice Mail
			406	239	Call Back-Retry
			114	55	Strong Refusal
			5	0	Privacy Manager
			2,158	1,320	Usable/Eligible Unknown
			-	-	Under 18
			-	49	Terminate
			0	49	Usable/Ineligible
			14.6%	11.0%	Response Rate

Weighting Procedures and Analysis

Weighting is generally used in survey analysis to compensate for sample designs and patterns of non-response that might bias results. In this study, the sample demographics were balanced to population parameters. Using weighting targets, we weighted to registered voter statistics for the state of Rhode Island: we used the dual landline/cell weighting method first; then, we weighted on Age, Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Region.

The weighted and unweighted data are available on request.

All weighting measures are based on Census Bureau statistics for the state of Rhode Island.

Special note: We calculated age distributions from date-of-birth information on file from the state's respective registered voter database, as supplied by Aristotle International.

About the Author

Paul DiPerna (paul@edchoice.org) is Research Director for the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice in Indianapolis. He joined the foundation in September 2006. DiPerna's research interests include surveys and polling on K-12 education and school choice policies. His other responsibilities include directing and managing all research projects commissioned by the foundation. DiPerna has traveled to 27 states for his work, making numerous presentations on survey findings and giving talks discussing school choice policies for audiences including public officials, policy professionals, the media, academics, and advocates.

Previously, DiPerna served as the assistant director for the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. His six years at Brookings included projects evaluating the federal Blue Ribbon Schools Program and analyzing student achievement in charter schools. DiPerna was a research analyst for the first five issues of the Brown Center Report on American Education (2000-2004). He also managed and coordinated the activities of the National Working Commission on Choice in K-12 Education (2001-2005).

A native of Pittsburgh, DiPerna earned an M.A. in political science from the University of Illinois (2000) and B.A. from the University of Dayton (1996).

Acknowledgements

A number of people made significant contributions during the course of this survey project. Justin Katz and our friends at the Rhode Island Center for Freedom & Prosperity have given us invaluable insights and context at the local/state level. We would like to thank the team at Braun Research who assisted in project development, and for their excellent work in conducting the interviews and collecting the data. I appreciate the time and commitments from Paul Braun, Cynthia Miller, and Dave Oshman. Finally, we are of course grateful to the respondents who generously agreed to participate in our survey interviews.

About the Survey Organization

Braun Research, Inc. (BRI)

The Braun Research network of companies, founded in 1995, combined employ 37 full-time and more than 267 part-time employees engaged in data collection via telephone, and internet for various survey research firms, government and advertising agencies, local community organizations, local and national business groups, foundations, universities and academic entities, as well as religious organizations. In 18 years, Braun Research has conducted more than 8,900 research projects by telephone, internet, and mail worldwide.

Nationally-known research firms have hired Braun Research, including the Gallup Organization, the Pew Research Center, the Eagleton Poll, Mathematica Policy Research, and *The Washington Post*. Braun Research has worked for the New Jersey Department of Health and Human Services, as well as other government agencies including the United States Departments of the Treasury and Defense, and the Center for Disease Control.

Braun Research is a well-respected firm employing techniques and standards approved by various survey research academic organizations and other affiliations including those with whom Braun is an active member, including AAPOR (American Association for Public Opinion Research), MRA/CMOR (Market Research Association/Council on Marketing and Opinion Research), and CASRO (Council on American Survey Research Organizations).

Braun's services on behalf of other research firms are up to standards required by various professional associations where Braun enjoys membership, and in some cases, participates actively. Paul Braun is a member of the MRA/CMOR committees on response rate improvement and in launching a seal of quality for the industry. Paul Braun is recognized as a leader in the field by colleagues who asked him to serve on these committees. He has served as President of the New Jersey Chapter of AAPOR.

About the Survey Sponsor

The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice

The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and nonpartisan organization, solely dedicated to advancing Milton and Rose Friedman's vision of school choice for all children. First established as the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation in 1996, the Foundation continues to promote school choice as the most effective and equitable way to improve the quality of K-12 education in America. The Foundation is dedicated to research, education, and outreach on the vital issues and implications related to choice and competition in K-12 education.

Commitment to Methods & Transparency

The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice is committed to research that adheres to high scientific standards, and matters of methodology and transparency are taken seriously at all levels of our organization. We are dedicated to providing high-quality information in a transparent and efficient manner.

All individuals have opinions, and many organizations (like our own) have specific missions or philosophical orientations. Scientific methods, if used correctly and followed closely in well-designed studies, should neutralize these opinions and orientations. Research rules and methods minimize bias. We believe rigorous procedural rules of science prevent a researcher's motives, and an organization's particular orientation, from pre-determining results. If research adheres to proper scientific and methodological standards, its findings can be relied upon no matter who has conducted it. If rules and methods are neither specified nor followed, then the biases of the researcher or an organization may become relevant, because a lack of rigor opens the door for those biases to affect the results.

Our authors take full responsibility for research design, analysis, charts, and any unintentional errors or misrepresentations. They welcome any and all questions related to methods and findings.

About the Survey Release Partner

Rhode Island Center for Freedom & Prosperity

The Rhode Island Center for Freedom and Prosperity is Rhode Island's leading free-enterprise public policy think tank. A nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, the RI Center for Freedom is dedicated to providing concerned citizens, the media, and public officials with empirical research data, while also advancing free-market solutions to public policy issues in the state.

Rhode Island K-12 & School Choice Survey “Toplines”

Interview Dates: June 24 to July 8, 2013
Sample Frame: Registered Voters
Population Samples: RHODE ISLAND = 602
Providence = 359
South/East = 243

Margins of Error: RHODE ISLAND = ± 4.0 percentage points
Providence = ± 5.2 percentage points
South/East = ± 6.3 percentage points

Displayed numbers in tables are percentages, unless otherwise noted.

Due to rounding, percentage totals for a given question may be slightly greater or less than 100%.

“For this brief interview, if you are completely unsure about your answer or have no feelings for an answer, you can say ‘I Don’t Know.’” [ENTER AS “DK”]

[CODE GENDER OF RESPONDENT; DO NOT ASK, UNLESS GENDER IS IN QUESTION]

	Male	Female
RHODE ISLAND	46	54

1. Which of the following do you see as the most important issue facing the state of Rhode Island right now?

[RANDOMIZE RESPONSES 1-9 TO AVOID BIAS]

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	Crime	Economy & Jobs	Education	Environment	Healthcare	Housing	Immigration	Values Issues	Taxes
RHODE ISLAND	2	52	9	1	9	1	3	4	12
Providence	4	51	10	1	9	2	3	3	12
South/East	1	55	7	1	9	1	3	4	13

2. How much attention do you pay to issues involving K-12 education?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	A Lot	Some	Very Little	None	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	39	33	21	7	< 1
Providence	39	36	19	6	< 1
South/East	40	28	24	7	< 1

3. Do you feel things in Rhode Island’s K-12 education system are generally going in the right direction, or do you feel things have generally gotten off on the wrong track?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	Right Direction	Wrong Track	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	32	52	16
Providence	30	53	17
South/East	35	50	15

4. How would you rate Rhode Island’s public school system?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	2	32	44	17	5
Providence	3	29	42	21	5
South/East	2	36	46	11	5

5. How much do you think is spent per year on each student in Rhode Island's public schools? Your estimate (to the nearest thousand dollars) will represent the combined expenditures of local, state, and federal governments.

[OPEN-END. BASED ON RESPONSE, SELECT ONE OF THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES]

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE, OFFERING RANGE CATEGORIES. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]

	Less than \$4,000	\$4,001 – \$8,000	\$8,001 – \$12,000	\$12,001 – \$16,000	Over \$16,000	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	16	17	19	10	10	29
Providence	19	18	16	10	11	27
South/East	11	16	23	10	9	31

6. *(Split A)* Do you believe that public school funding in Rhode Island is at a level that is:

[ROTATE “TOO HIGH” AND “TOO LOW”]

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	Too High	About Right	Too Low	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	18	24	46	12
Providence	16	21	51	12
South/East	20	26	41	12

6. **(Split B)** According to the most recent information available, in Rhode Island \$13,815 is being spent each year per student attending public schools. Do you believe that public school funding in Rhode Island is at a level that is:

[ROTATE “TOO HIGH” AND “TOO LOW”]

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	Too High	About Right	Too Low	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	24	39	26	12
Providence	23	39	27	11
South/East	26	38	22	14

7. **(Split A)** Each year state officials and the media report public school spending per student. In your view, would you prefer they report OPERATING expenses related to day-to-day activities, excluding items like construction, interest payments on debt, and pensions; OR would you prefer that they report TOTAL expenses, including those items?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	Strongly Prefer “Operating”	Somewhat Prefer “Operating”	Somewhat Prefer “Total”	Strongly Prefer “Total”	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	21	13	19	38	9
Providence	16	15	21	38	10
South/East	26	12	16	39	9

**[IF NEEDED/REQUESTED, MORE INFO FOR “OPERATING” EXPENSES OR “DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES”:
“This includes expenses such as salaries, wages, and benefits for teachers, support staff, and administration.”]**

7. **(Split B)** Each year state officials and the media report public school spending per student. In your view, would you prefer they report CURRENT expenses related to day-to-day activities, excluding items like construction, interest payments on debt, and pensions; OR would you prefer that they report TOTAL expenses, including those items?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	Strongly Prefer “Current”	Somewhat Prefer “Current”	Somewhat Prefer “Total”	Strongly Prefer “Total”	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	17	17	16	39	12
Providence	17	15	14	41	13
South/East	18	20	19	33	10

**[IF NEEDED/REQUESTED, MORE INFO FOR “CURRENT” EXPENSES OR “DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES”:
“This includes expenses such as salaries, wages, and benefits for teachers, support staff, and administration.”]**

8. In thinking about the schools in your area, what grade would you give...

[GRADE OPTIONS: A, B, C, D, or F]

[ROTATE “REGULAR PUBLIC SCHOOLS,” “CHARTER SCHOOLS,” “PRIVATE OR PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS”]

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

RHODE ISLAND	A	B	C	D	F	DK/Ref (VOL.)
Regular Public Schools	9	34	37	9	6	4
Charter Schools	13	31	14	4	2	37
Private Schools	31	35	13	3	1	17

9. If it were your decision and you could select any type of school, what type of school would you select in order to obtain the best education for your child?

[RANDOMIZE RESPONSES TO AVOID BIAS]

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]

	Charter School	Homeschool	Private School	Regular Public School	Virtual School	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	10	4	54	29	< 1	2
Providence	10	5	56	25	< 1	3
South/East	11	3	49	35	< 1	2

10. What is the most important characteristic or attribute that would cause you to choose a **[INSERT SCHOOL TYPE FROM PREVIOUS QUESTION]** for your child? Please use one word, or a very short phrase.

[OPEN-END. IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

Top 15 | Specific impressions offered by respondents in the statewide sample. Numbers represent counts (n), not percentages.

RHODE ISLAND

BETTER EDUCATION / QUALITY	120
BETTER TEACHERS / TEACHERS / TEACHING	78
INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION / ONE-ON-ONE	54
DISCIPLINE / STRUCTURE	49
CLASS SIZE / STUDENT-TEACHER RATIO	43
SOCIALIZATION / PEERS / OTHER KIDS	37
ENVIRONMENT / CULTURE / COMMUNITY	33
ACADEMICS / CURRICULUM	31
MORALS / VALUES / ETHICS	28
OUTCOMES / RESULTS / GRADUATION RATE	20
COST / TUITION / AFFORDABILITY	18
RESOURCES / FUNDING	16
DIVERSITY / VARIETY	15
ALMA MATER / SOCIAL NETWORK	12
RELIGION / RELIGIOUS REASONS	12
<hr/>	
OTHER RESPONSES	107
DK / NO RESPONSE / REFUSED	12

“For the remainder of this interview, if you are completely unsure about your answer or have no feelings for an answer, feel free to say ‘I Don’t Know.’” [ENTER AS “DK”]

11.Based on what you know, or have heard from others... In general, do you favor or oppose “charter schools”?

[PROBE:] Would you say strongly or somewhat favor/oppose?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	25	27	7	8	33
Providence	27	24	6	8	35
South/East	23	31	8	7	32

12. Charter schools are public schools that have more control over their own budget, staff, and curriculum, and are exempt from many existing public school regulations. In general, do you favor or oppose charter schools?

[PROBE:] Would you say strongly or somewhat favor/oppose?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	30	32	12	10	16
Providence	31	30	12	10	17
South/East	29	35	12	9	15

13. Based on what you know, or have heard from others... In general, do you favor or oppose “school vouchers”?

[PROBE:] Would you say strongly or somewhat favor/oppose?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	21	19	10	13	37
Providence	22	20	9	12	38
South/East	20	17	12	14	36

14. A school voucher system allows parents the option of sending their child to the school of their choice, whether that school is public or private, including both religious and non-religious schools. If this policy were adopted, tax dollars currently allocated to a school district would be allocated to parents in the form of a “school voucher” to pay partial or full tuition for their child’s school. In general, do you favor or oppose a school voucher system?

[PROBE:] Would you say strongly or somewhat favor/oppose?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	31	25	11	22	10
Providence	34	23	12	20	11
South/East	27	28	10	26	9

[RANDOMIZE QUESTIONS 15 AND 16]

15. Some people believe that school vouchers should be available to all families, regardless of incomes and special needs. Do you agree or disagree with that statement?

[PROBE:] Would you say strongly or somewhat agree/disagree?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	38	24	12	21	6
Providence	40	24	10	21	5
South/East	35	23	14	21	6

16. Some people believe that school vouchers should only be available to families based on financial need. Do you agree or disagree with that statement?

[PROBE:] Would you say strongly or somewhat agree/disagree?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	16	16	21	42	5
Providence	16	15	22	43	4
South/East	15	18	19	41	7

17. An "education savings account" – often called an ESA – allows parents to withdraw their child from a public district or charter school, and receive a payment into a government-authorized savings account with restricted, but multiple uses. Parents can then use these funds to pay for private school tuition, online education programs, private tutoring or saving for future college expenses. In general, do you favor or oppose this kind of “savings account system”?

[PROBE:] Would you say strongly or somewhat favor/oppose?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	22	25	13	23	19
Providence	25	22	13	23	19
South/East	17	29	13	23	18

18. A “tax credit” allows an individual or business to reduce the final amount of a tax owed to government. Some states give tax credits to individuals and businesses if they contribute money to nonprofit organizations that distribute private school scholarships. A “tax-credit scholarship system” allows parents the option of sending their child to the school of their choice, whether that school is public or private, including both religious and non-religious schools. In general, do you favor or oppose a tax-credit scholarship system?

[PROBE:] Would you say strongly or somewhat favor/oppose?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	27	31	13	15	14
Providence	27	33	12	12	15
South/East	26	28	15	18	13

“Now thinking about taxes in Rhode Island...”

19. How fair do you think is the level of taxation in **Rhode Island**? Overall would you say state taxes are...

[READ IN ORDER]

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	Very Fair	Somewhat Fair	Not Too Fair	Not At All Fair	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	3	35	26	31	6
Providence	3	33	27	31	5
South/East	3	38	24	30	6

20. If the state of Rhode Island were to eliminate one of its major taxes in order to help boost the economy, which of the following taxes would you prefer to target?

[RANDOMIZE RESPONSES TO AVOID BIAS]

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]

	Sales Tax	Income Tax	Corporate Tax	None	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	33	28	15	18	7
Providence	36	26	13	19	6
South/East	28	32	17	16	7

“Now the following questions should be pretty quick, and for statistical purposes only....”

21. Are you currently the parent or guardian of a child who lives with you, and who is in any grade from preschool through high school?

[IF NEEDED: IF CHILD IS CURRENTLY ENROLLED OR ENTERING PRESCHOOL IN THE UPCOMING SCHOOL YEAR, ENTER "YES"]

[IF NEEDED: IF YOUNGEST CHILD JUST GRADUATED IN 2013, ENTER "NO"]

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	Yes	No < PK	No > HS	No Children	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	25	2	33	39	1

22. Generally speaking, do you usually consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?

[Code for Democrat, Republican, Independent, Libertarian, Other, or “DK”]

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	Democrat	Republican	Independent	Other	Libertarian (VOL.)	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	30	12	47	6	< 1	5

23. How would you describe your views on most political matters? Generally, do you think of yourself as liberal (or progressive), moderate, or conservative? [Rotate Liberal and Conservative]

[Code only for Liberal (or Progressive), Moderate, Conservative, or “DK”]

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	Liberal or Progressive	Moderate	Conservative	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	21	42	29	8

24. How would you best describe where you live?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]

	Urban	Suburban	Small Town	Rural	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	19	40	27	12	2

25. Which of the following age categories do you fall in?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]

	18 to 34	35 to 54	55 & Over	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	22	37	40	1

26. Are you, yourself, of Hispanic or Latino origin, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or some other Spanish background?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]

	Hispanic	Not Hispanic	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	7	93	< 1

27. Which of the following best describes your race?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]

	American Indian, Native American	Asian, Pacific Islander, Asian American	Black, African American	Mixed Race	White	Other	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	1	1	6	2	89	1	< 1

28. What is your religion, if any? [DO NOT READ CATEGORIES]

[IF GIVEN SPECIFIC PROTESTANT DENOMINATION, SIMPLY CODE PROTESTANT]

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]

	Catholic	Jewish	Mormon	Muslim	Protestant	Other	None	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	49	2	< 1	< 1	23	2	19	6

29. What is the last grade or class that you completed in school? **[DO NOT READ CATEGORIES]**

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

- None (Grades 1-8)
- High School Incomplete (Grades 9-11)
- High school Graduate (Grade 12 or GED Certificate)
- Technical, Trade, or Vocational School (AFTER High School)
- Some College (Associate’s Degree, No 4-Yr Degree)
- College Graduate (Bachelor’s Degree or Other 4-Yr Degree)
- Post-Graduate Training or Professional Schooling After College (Toward a Master's Degree, Ph.D.; Law, Medical School)

	Grades 1 to 8	Grades 9 to 11	HS Graduate	Technical/ Vocational	Some College	College Graduate	Post- Graduate	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	1	5	20	2	22	26	22	2

30. Please stop me when I read the category that best describes your current annual household income, before taxes?

[IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS “DK”]

	Under \$40,000	\$40,000 to \$79,999	\$80,000 & Over	DK/Ref (VOL.)
RHODE ISLAND	25	25	33	17

[PLEASE MAKE THE FOLLOWING TEXT AVAILABLE TO INTERVIEWERS ANYTIME A RESPONDENT ASKS ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE SURVEY SPONSOR OR FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION]

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