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MONTANA

K-12 & SCHOOL CHOICE SURVEY

What Do Voters Say About K-12 Education?

Polling Paper No. 10

June 19, 2012

With questions on state performance, education spending and taxes, charter schools, virtual schools, tax-credit scholarships, education savings accounts, and school vouchers

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THE FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR Educational Choice

www.edchoice.org

Survey Project & Profile

Title:	Montana K-12 & School Choice Survey
Survey Organization:	Braun Research, Inc. (BRI)
Survey Sponsor:	The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice
Release Partners:	Montana Family Foundation, Montana Policy Institute
Interview Dates:	April 12 to 19, 2012
Interview Method:	Live Telephone | 80% landline and 20% cell phone
Interview Length:	12 minutes (average)
Language(s):	English
Sample Frame:	Registered Voters
Sampling Method:	Dual Frame; Probability Sampling; Random Digit Dial (RDD)
Sample Size:	MONTANA = 604
Split Sample Sizes:	"Split A" = 302; "Split B" = 302
Margins of Error:	MONTANA = ± 4.0 percentage points Each Split Sample = ± 5.6 percentage points
Response Rates:	Landline (LL) = 17.2% Cell Phone = 17.5%
Weighting?	Yes (Age, Gender, Race, and Ethnicity)
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	31
Democrat	20
Republican	37
Independent	31
Urban	14
Suburban	10
Small Town	37
Rural	38
18 - 29	18
30 - 39	14
40 - 49	17
50 - 64	29
65 & Over	21
Hispanic	2
Not Hispanic	97
Asian	0
Black	0
Native American	5
Other	1
White	92
Catholic	18
Jewish	0
Mormon	3
Muslim	0
Protestant	53
None	16
Under $25,000	15
$25,000 - $49,999	26
$50,000 - $74,999	22
$75,000 - $124,999	19
$125,000 - $200,000	5
Over $200,000	2
< HS Graduate	5
HS Graduate	23
Tech, Trade, Vocational	5
Some College	29
≥ College	37
Male	51
Female	50

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Montana's K-12 Profile

Average State Rank on NAEP [1]	10
High School Graduation Rate [2]	82%
# Regular Public School Students [4]	141,807
# Charter School Students [4]	NA
# Private School Students [5]	7,404
% Regular Public School Students [6]	95.0%
% Charter School Students [6]	NA
% Private School Students [6]	5.0%
# School Districts [3]	422
# Regular Public Schools [3]	828
# Charter Schools [3]	NA
# Private Schools [5]	99
Online Learning Climate [7]	Weak
% Free and Reduced-Price Lunch [3]	40%
% Individualized Education Program (IEP) [3]	12%
% English Language Learners (ELL) [3]	3%
$ Revenue Per Student [8]	$11,318
$ "Total" Per Student Spending [8]	$11,530
$ "Current" Per Student Spending [8]	$10,189

Montana 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 4th grade reading (#10); 4th grade math (#18); 8th grade reading (#5); 8th grade math (#5).

   URL: nationsreportcard.gov/data_tools.asp

2. Reported high school graduation rates, determined by the Average Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) on the National Center for Education Statistics section on the U.S. Department of Education website. Data for 2008-2009 school year.

   URL: nces.ed.gov/ccd

3. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD). Data for the 2009-2010 school year.

   URL: nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states

4. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD). Data for the 2009-2010 school year.

   URL: nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch

5. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Universe Survey (PSS). Data for 2009–2010 school year.

   URL: nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/index.asp

6. Percentages are meant for general impressions only. State-level data on home-school students are generally unreliable, and this subpopulation of students could not be included in this table. Due to rounding, percentage totals may be slightly greater or less than 100%.

7. 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, 2011), Table 2.

   URL: kpk12.com/cms/wp-content/uploads/KeepingPace2011.pdf

8. Frank Johnson, Lei Zhou, and Nanae Nakamoto, *Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: School Year 2008–09 (Fiscal Year 2009)* (NCES 2011-329). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics (June 2011).

   URL: nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011329.pdf

   "Total Expenditures" data include dollars spent on instruction, instruction-related, support services, and other elementary/secondary current expenditures, plus expenditures on long-term debt service, facilities and construction, and other programs. The latter may include expenditures for community services, adult education, community colleges, private schools, and other programs that are not considered expenditures on public K-12 education.

   "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.

   For this survey and report, when we generally refer to "per student spending," we refer to the spending definition and subsequent calculations including only "current expenditures."

Overview

The "Montana K-12 & School Choice Survey" project, commissioned by the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice and conducted by Braun Research, Inc. (BRI), measures Montana registered voters' familiarity and views on a range of K-12 education topics and school choice reforms. We report response *levels* and *differences* (often using the modifying term "net") of voter opinion, and the *intensity* of responses.

Where do Montanans stand on important issues and policy proposals in K-12 education? We try to provide some observations and insights in this paper. We report our key findings in the following section.

A randomly selected and statistically representative sample of Montana voters recently responded to 19 substantive questions and 11 demographic questions. A total of 604 telephone interviews were conducted in English from April 12 to 19, 2012, 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.

In this project we included four 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. The purpose is to see if particular wording, or providing a new piece of information, can significantly influence opinion on a given topic. For this survey, we were particularly interested in how wording can affect responses to questions on education spending, taxes, and digital learning—all salient issues in Montana state politics and policy discussions.

Key Findings:

- **More than three of four registered voters in Montana (77%) are paying attention to issues in K-12 education. Nearly one of four voters (23%) say they pay "very little" or no attention.**

  See Question 1

  In the poll, Montanans who say they pay "a lot" of attention (39%) to K-12 education issues outnumber those who say they pay no attention (5%) by nearly an eight-to-one ratio.

  Middle-age and older voters (ages 30 to 49, and 50 and older, respectively) clearly pay closer attention to these issues than younger voters. About 4 of 10 voters 30 and older are engaged on K-12 education issues, saying they pay "a lot" of attention. By comparison, about one-fifth of younger voters (age 18 to 29) say the same.

- **Montanans are more likely to think that K-12 education is heading in the "right direction" (49%) compared to being on the "wrong track" (38%).**

  See Question 2

  A couple demographics pop out. Democrats (58%) are significantly more positive than Republicans (46%) about the direction of K-12 education in Montana. Middle-age voters (age 30 to 49) are significantly more likely to be negative than younger and older voters (voters saying "wrong track"45% vs. 30% and 36%, respectively).

- **Montana voters give high marks to the state's public school system (60% say "good" or "excellent"; 38% say "fair" or "poor").**

  See Question 3

  Urban voters are more likely to express positive ratings (68%) and significantly less likely to give negative ratings (31%) when compared to rural voters. About half of

voters in rural areas (55%) said the public school system is "good" or "excellent." And roughly 43% of these voters gave ratings of "fair" or "poor."

Democrat responses are significantly different than both Republicans and Independents. About 7 of 10 Democrats (72%) gave positive ratings to the state's public school system, which is much greater than the proportions of Independents (60%) and Republicans (55%) saying the same. Conversely, 28% of Democrats described the public school system as "fair" or "poor." But about 4 of 10 Independents (37%) and Republicans (43%) offered negative ratings.

Age appears to matter on this question. Older voters (65%) are more positive than younger (54%) and significantly moreso than middle-age voters (54%). Conversely, the latter age groups (46% and 42%, respectively) are significantly more negative than older voters (32%).

- **Based on survey responses, Montana voters do not know how much is spent per student in public schools. There is an awareness gap.**

See Question 4

Approximately $10,189 is spent on each student in Montana's public schools, and only 11% of respondents could estimate the correct per-student spending range for the state (this dollar figure reflects "current expenditures" per student). Nearly one-fifth of all respondents (20%) thought that less than$4,000 is being spent per student in the state's public schools. Another 44% of voters said they "don't know" and did not offer a spending number.[1]

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[1] "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 Frank Johnson, Lei Zhou, and Nanae Nakamoto, *Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: School Year 2008–09 (Fiscal Year 2009)* (NCES 2011-329). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics (June 2011).

URL: nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011329.pdf

When considering "total expenditures" per student ($11,530 in 2008-2009), which is another definition for educational spending, voter estimates are still off-target.

Of the 337 respondents who offered an estimate or guess to this question, more than 8 of 10 voters (82%) either underestimated "total" educational spending per student, or they could not give an answer or guess. No matter how one defines expenditures (per student), voters are woefully uninformed about how money is spent in K-12 education.

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

See Questions 5A and 5B

We asked two slightly different questions about the level of public school funding in Montana. On version 5A, 43% of voters said that public school funding is "too low." However, on version 5B, which included a sentence referring to data on per-student funding in Montana ($10,189), the proportion of voters saying "too low" shrank by six percentage points, effectively a 14% reduction.

Montanans are likely to change their views on public school funding – at least when initially saying it is "too low" – if given accurate per-student spending information. The implication that opinion can turn on a single piece of data is important for political sound bites that focus on aggregate levels of public spending rather than how the money is allocated and spent per student.

- **A plurality of voters (47%) would prefer state taxes to "stay about the same," rather than increase or decrease taxes to fund public schools. A majority of voters (52%) say they prefer to keep local taxes about the same.**

See Questions 6A and 6B

Considering the statewide sample, approximately 67% of voters want taxes to stay the same or decrease at both the state and local levels. Solid majorities of voters across nearly all demographic groups either support keeping taxes about the same or decreasing them.

A respondent's political party identification does matter on this question. By far, Democrats are most likely to want tax increases at the state level (58%) and local level (45%), especially compared to Republican voters on state taxes (22% want an increase) and local taxes (15% want an increase). Generally speaking, Independent responses averaged between Republicans and Democrats.

- **When asked for a preferred school type, Montanans would choose first a regular public school (50%). A private school option is the second-most frequently cited preference (28%). Even when considering the relative popularity of public schools, there is still a glaring disconnect between voters' school preferences and actual enrollment patterns in the state.**

See Questions 7 and 8

Approximately 5% of Montana's K-12 student population attends private schools, but in our survey interviews, 28% of respondents would select a private school as a first option. Approximately 95% of the state's students attend regular public schools, but a substantially lower percentage of voters (50%) would choose a regular public school as their first choice. Montana does not have a charter school law, so no students attend public charter schools. That said, there is still a proportion of Montana voters (9%) that would like to send their child to a charter school. About 10% of voters said he/she would opt to homeschool their child.

In a follow-up question, roughly equal numbers of respondents in our survey prioritize a "better education" and "socialization" (13% each impression) as the key attribute they are looking for in the selection of their preferred school. The next most

important attribute, as suggested by about 9% of all respondents, is "individual attention" and "one-on-one" learning.

Some caution. 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 our survey.

- **Montana voters are much more likely to favor charter schools (54%), rather than oppose such schools (21%). The net support for charter schools is very large (+33 net percentage points).**

See Questions 9 and 10

Montana registered a large positive net score (+33 net) supporting charter schools. The enthusiasm is also quite positive (+11 intensity). In other words, voters are more likely to say they "strongly favor" charter schools (21%) compared to those who say they "strongly oppose" (10%) such schools.

Charter schools enjoy majority support across nearly all examined demographic groups. However, where a voter lives can point to some differences in support levels. For example, suburban voters (62%) are significantly more favorable toward charter schools than voters living in small towns (49%).

Democrats differ from Republicans and Independents. Republicans (60%) and Independents (56%) are more supportive of charter schools than Democrats (46%). Republicans (14%) are also significantly less likely to oppose charters than Democrats (32%) and Independents (24%).

Intensity of support for charters is greatest among parents, urban and suburban voters, Republicans, younger and middle-age voters, and households earning $75,000 or more. There is relatively weaker intensity (but still positive) among small-town voters, older voters (age 50 & Over), and households earning between

$50,000 and $74,999. Democrats exhibit a mildly negative attitude (-3 intensity) toward charter schools.

- **Montanans are slightly less likely to be supportive of virtual or online schools. In a split-sample experiment, we asked identical questions but alternated the terms "virtual school" and "online school."**

See Questions 11, 12A, 12B

When using "virtual school" in question 12A, a plurality opposes the concept (47% oppose; -6 net). On the other hand, when using the term "online school," we observe a statistical tie (44% favor vs. 47% oppose; -3 net).

In this data, we provide some caution for virtual/online school advocates. On either question, those voters who hold strongly negative views on virtual/online schools double the proportion of supporters, as defined in this questionnaire (12A: 24% "strongly oppose" vs. 11% "strongly favor"; 12B: 29% "strongly oppose" vs. 15% "strongly favor"). The intensity on either split question is negative (-13 intensity for 12A; -14 intensity for 12B).

- **Voters solidly support "tax-credit scholarships." The percentage of those who favor (59% or 60%, depending on the question version) is more than double the number of people who say they oppose the policy (28% and 26%, respectively). No matter the wording of the question, we measure very positive reactions (+31 net and +34 net).**

See Questions 13A, 13B, and 14

Based on our split-sample experiment results, it appears adding definition and context for voters does not affect the view of the average Montana voter.

In a follow-up and open-ended question, we asked for the reason why a respondent chose his/her view regarding tax-credit scholarships. Most

frequently, he/she would say some combination of "choice," "freedom," or "flexibility," and that the scholarship system was a "good idea." Greater than 10% of voters stated either of these items.

- **Montana voters support an "education savings account" system (called an "ESA"). The percentage of those who favor ESAs (55%) is much larger than the proportion who say they oppose (31%) the policy. The net score is large (+24 net) with some enthusiasm (+7 intensity).**

See Question 15

Majorities support ESAs across nearly all examined demographics. Net support is highest among parents (+45 net), young voters (+51 net), middle-age voters (+37 net), and households earning less than $75,000 (+30 net).

Enthusiasm for this kind of policy is highest among parents (+31 intensity), urban residents (+15 intensity), young and middle-age voters (+20 intensity), Republicans (+14 intensity), and households earning less than $75,000 (+12 intensity).

- **Just over half of Montana voters (52%) said they support school vouchers, compared to 39% of voters who say they oppose such a school choice system. The margin of support is more than three times the margin of error: + 13 net percentage points.**

See Questions 16 and 17

The levels of support for vouchers vary a bit among demographic groups, but with the exception of a few groups, net favorability is in double digits.

Net support for school vouchers is highest among parents (+35 net), urban voters (+20 net), Republicans (+34 net), young voters (+38 net), middle-age voters (+19 net), and households earning less than $50,000 (+18 net). Groups significantly

less inclined to support vouchers are non-parents (+3 net), suburban voters (- 1 net), Democrats (- 28 net), and older voters (- 1 net).

Enthusiasm for this kind of policy is highest among parents (+22 intensity), urban voters (+15 intensity), Republicans (+18 intensity), young and middle-age voters (+15 intensity), and households earning less than $25,000 (+13 intensity).

Some demographic differences appear based on parent status, age, and political party identification. Parents (63%) are significantly more likely to favor school vouchers, compared to Non-Parents (47%). The latter group (44%) is also much more likely to be opposed, compared to Parents (28%). Young (64%) and middle-age (56%) voters are significantly more supportive of vouchers compared to older voters (45%). Conversely, older voters (46%) are significantly more likely to oppose school vouchers compared to young voters (26%) and middle-age voters (37%). Republicans (62%) and Independents (54%) are much more likely to support vouchers compared to Democrats (33%)

When comparing school choice policy ideas, the enthusiasm for school vouchers (+4 intensity) is roughly the same as detected for ESAs (+7 intensity), and less than charter schools (+11 intensity). Of the reforms we asked about, there appears to be the most intensity for tax-credit scholarships (+15 intensity, when averaging the two question versions).

In a follow-up and open-ended question, we asked for the reason why a respondent chose his/her view regarding school vouchers. Most frequently, he/she would say "choice," "freedom," or "flexibility." Approximately 23% of voters offered one of these similar terms.

- **Montanans overwhelmingly prefer universal access to vouchers and scholarships, compared to access based solely on financial need.**

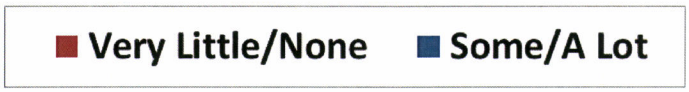
See Questions 18 and 19

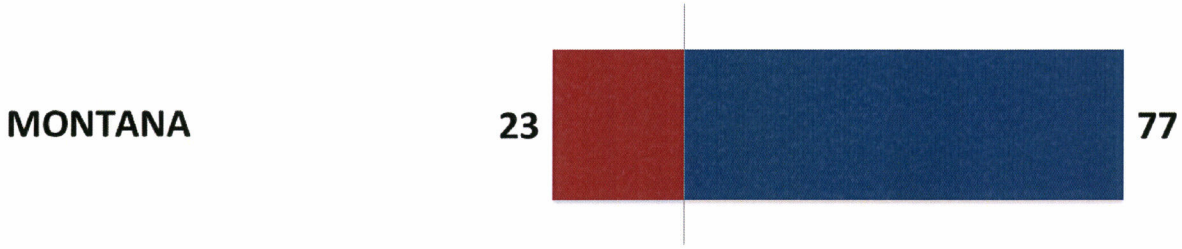
Six of 10 voters (63%) say they agree with the statement that "school vouchers or scholarships should be available to all families, regardless of incomes and special needs." Four of 10 respondents (40%) "strongly agree" with this statement. Almost one of three (31%) disagree with this statement; 20% say they "strongly disagree."

Four of 10 Montanans (40%) say they agree with the statement that "school vouchers or scholarships should only be available to families based on financial need." Only 19% of all respondents "strongly agree" with this statement. More than half (53%) say they disagree with means-testing vouchers, and 32% say they "strongly disagree."

Survey Snapshots

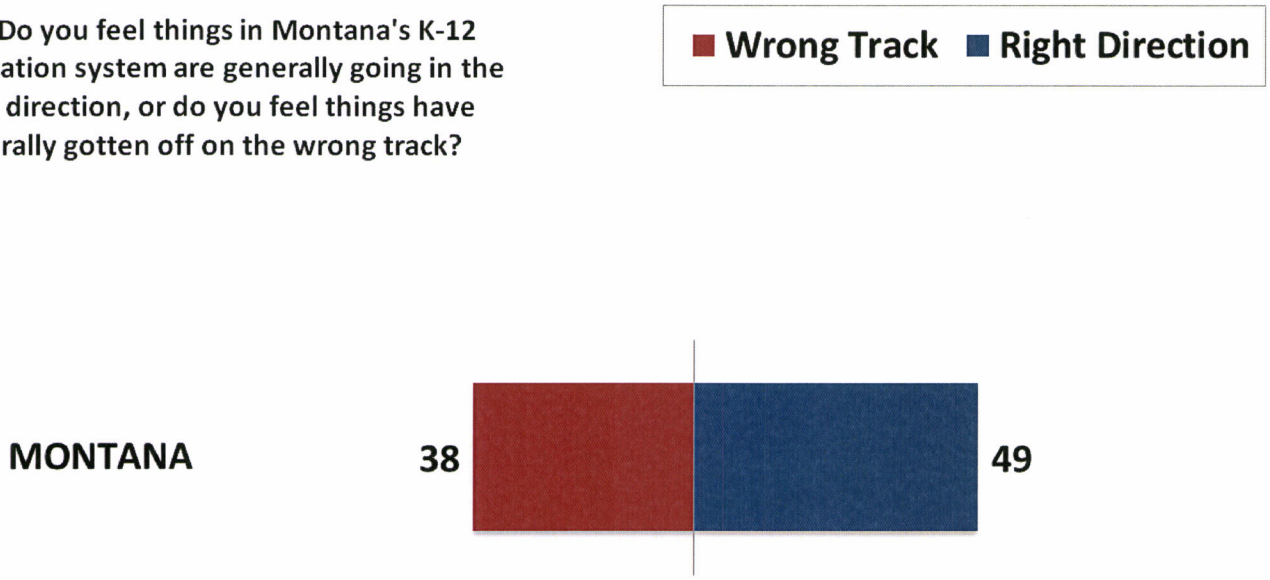
Q1. How much attention do you pay to issues involving K-12 education?





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

Q2. Do you feel things in Montana'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?



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

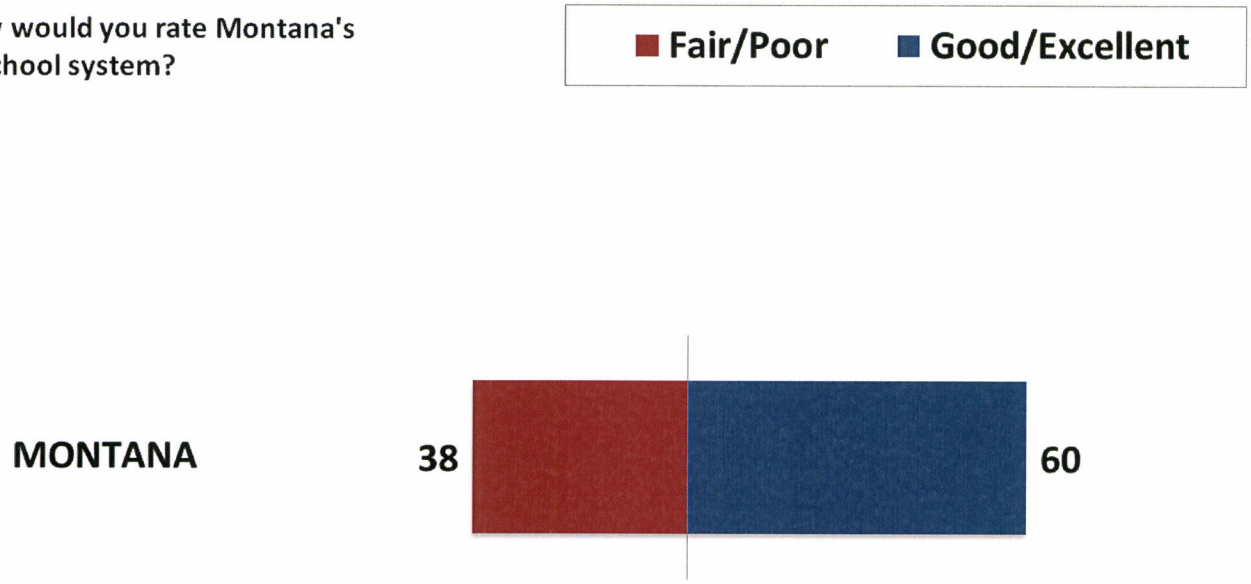
Q2. Do you feel things in Montana's K-12 education system are generally going in the right direction, or do you feel things have generally gotten off on the wrong track?

	Right Direction %	Wrong Track %	Net	N=
ALL VOTERS	**49**	**38**	**+ 11**	**604**
Parent	49	42	**+ 7**	187
Non-Parent	48	35	**+ 13**	432
COMMUNITY				
Urban	54	37	**+ 17**	83
Suburban	51	43	**+ 8**	63
Small Town	50	33	**+ 17**	224
Rural	45	40	**+ 5**	229
PARTY ID				
Democrat	58	30	**+ 28**	122
Republican	46	40	**+ 6**	221
Independent	50	35	**+ 15**	188
AGE GROUP				
18 – 29	47	30	**+ 17**	111
30 – 49	45	45	**even**	191
50 & Over	52	36	**+ 16**	298
HOUSEHOLD INCOME				
Under $25,000	46	35	**+ 11**	89
$25,000 - $49,999	44	37	**+ 7**	159
$50,000 - $74,999	58	34	**+ 24**	134
$75,000 - $124,999	52	38	**+ 14**	115
$125,000 & Over	39	51	**- 12**	45
RACE/ETHNICITY				
Hispanic	63	25	**+ 38**	13
Native American	50	37	**+ 13**	30
White	48	38	**+ 10**	545

NOTE: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its registered voter population size in the state and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. Reference to Whites refers to the non-Hispanic component of the self-identified white population. Reference to Hispanics includes self-identification as "Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin or descent." We do not report subgroups that represent a proportion less than 2% of the statewide sample.

SOURCE: Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, *Montana K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q2.

Q3. How would you rate Montana's public school system?



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

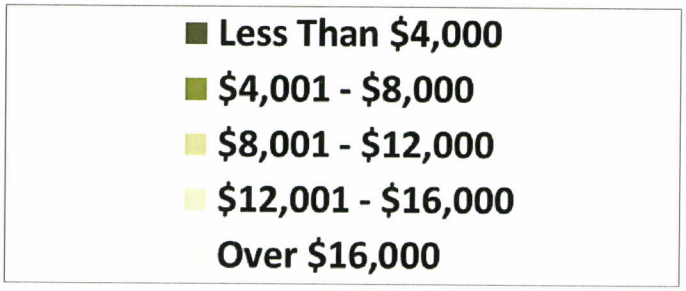
Q3. How would you rate Montana's public school system?

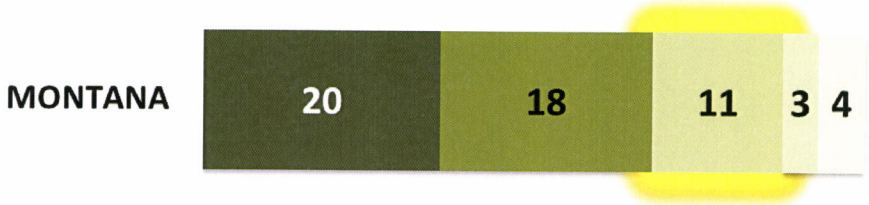
	Good/Excellent %	Fair/Poor %	Net	Intensity	N=
ALL VOTERS	**60**	**38**	**+ 22**	**+ 9**	**604**
Parent	56	43	**+ 13**	**+ 9**	187
Non-Parent	62	35	**+ 27**	**+ 8**	432
COMMUNITY					
Urban	68	31	**+ 37**	**+ 16**	83
Suburban	56	40	**+ 16**	**+ 10**	63
Small Town	63	34	**+ 29**	**+ 12**	224
Rural	55	43	**+ 12**	**+ 3**	229
PARTY ID					
Democrat	72	28	**+ 44**	**+ 12**	122
Republican	55	43	**+ 12**	**+ 4**	221
Independent	60	37	**+ 23**	**+ 14**	188
AGE GROUP					
18 – 29	54	46	**+ 8**	**+ 2**	111
30 – 49	54	42	**+ 12**	**+ 11**	191
50 & Over	65	32	**+ 33**	**+ 10**	298
HOUSEHOLD INCOME					
Under $25,000	53	44	**+ 9**	**+ 6**	89
$25,000 - $49,999	62	35	**+ 27**	**+ 10**	159
$50,000 - $74,999	67	31	**+ 36**	**+ 11**	134
$75,000 - $124,999	59	39	**+ 20**	**+ 12**	115
$125,000 & Over	54	45	**+ 9**	**+ 1**	45
RACE/ETHNICITY					
Hispanic	57	32	**+ 25**	**+ 14**	13
Native American	47	53	**- 6**	**+ 3**	30
White	61	37	**+ 24**	**+ 9**	545

NOTE: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its registered voter population size in the state and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. Reference to Whites refers to the non-Hispanic component of the self-identified white population. Reference to Hispanics includes self-identification as "Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin or descent." We do not report subgroups that represent a proportion less than 2% of the statewide sample. 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, *Montana K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q3.

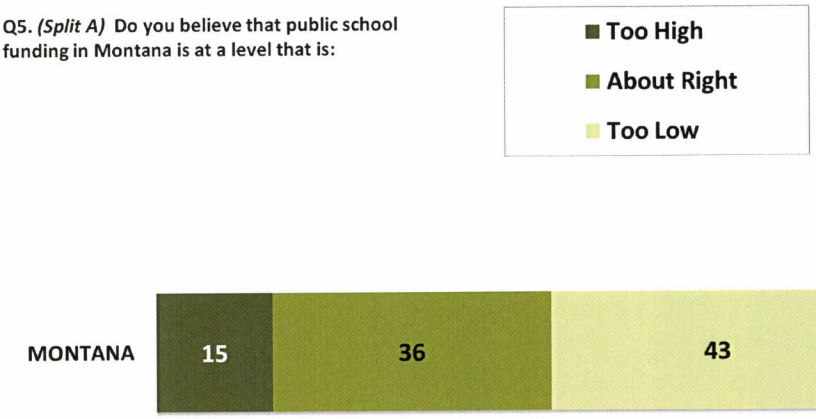
Q4. How much do you think is spent per year on each student in Montana's public schools? Your estimate (to the nearest thousand dollars) will represent the combined expenditures of local, state, and federal governments.





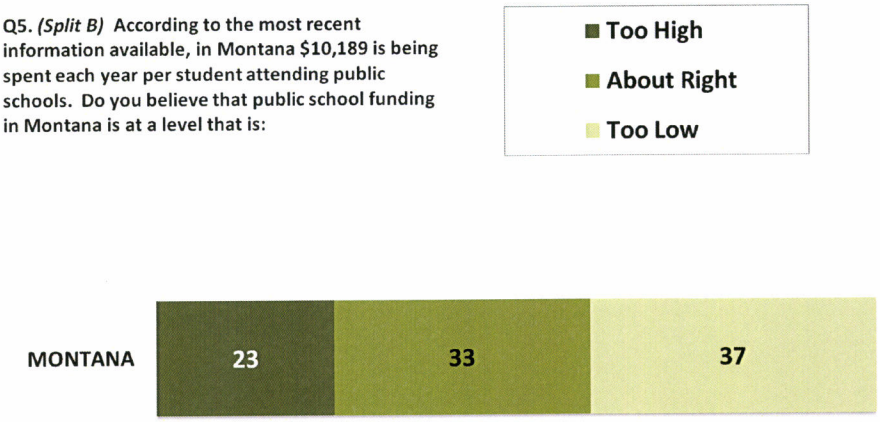
FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Montana K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q4.

Q5. *(Split A)* Do you believe that public school funding in Montana is at a level that is:



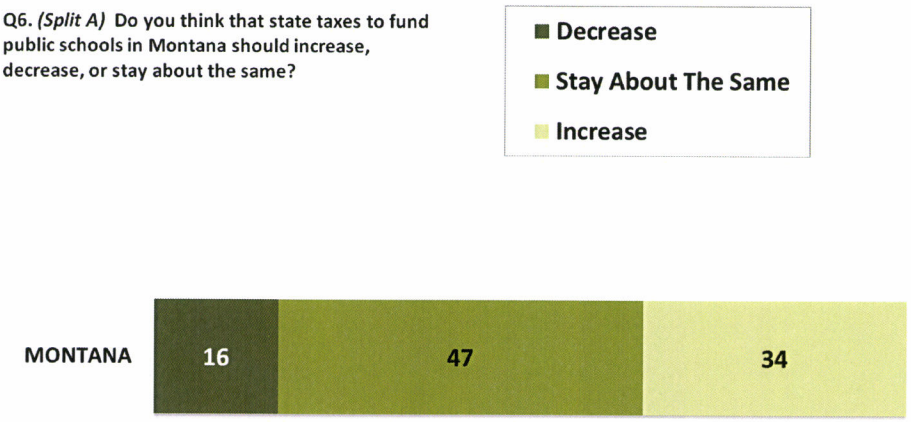
FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Montana K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q5A.

Q5. *(Split B)* According to the most recent information available, in Montana $10,189 is being spent each year per student attending public schools. Do you believe that public school funding in Montana is at a level that is:



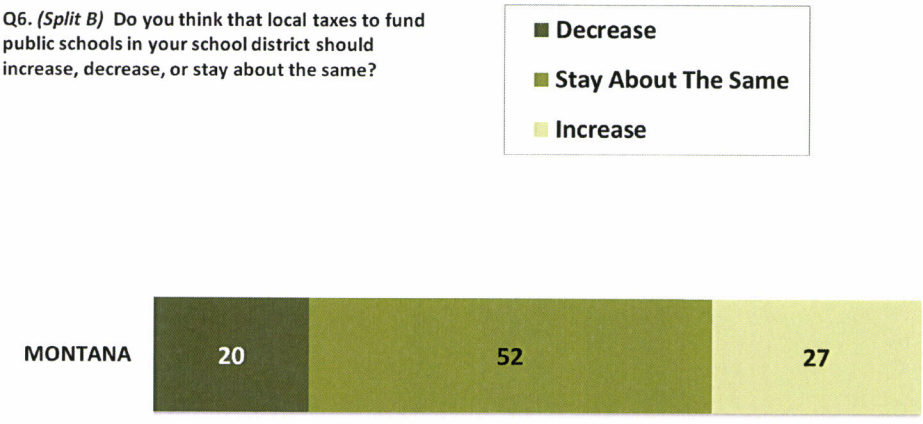
FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Montana K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q5B.

Q6. *(Split A)* Do you think that state taxes to fund public schools in Montana should increase, decrease, or stay about the same?



FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Montana K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q6A.

Q6. *(Split B)* Do you think that local taxes to fund public schools in your school district should increase, decrease, or stay about the same?



FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Montana K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q6B.

Q7. 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?

FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Montana K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q7.

Q7. 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 %	Regular Public School %	N=
ALL VOTERS	**9**	**10**	**28**	**50**	**604**
Parent	11	12	31	41	187
Non-Parent	9	9	26	54	432
COMMUNITY					
Urban	12	7	34	46	83
Suburban	8	8	29	52	63
Small Town	7	10	25	54	224
Rural	11	12	27	47	229
PARTY ID					
Democrat	14	1	20	63	122
Republican	7	12	37	42	221
Independent	11	12	25	48	188
AGE GROUP					
18 – 29	7	11	32	48	111
30 – 49	8	15	29	44	191
50 & Over	11	7	25	54	298
HOUSEHOLD INCOME					
Under $25,000	10	20	18	47	89
$25,000 - $49,999	12	8	23	51	159
$50,000 - $74,999	6	10	29	53	134
$75,000 - $124,999	7	5	35	51	115
$125,000 & Over	14	10	35	39	45
RACE/ETHNICITY					
Hispanic	15	37	0	47	13
Native American	13	3	36	36	30
White	9	10	28	51	545

NOTE: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its registered voter population size in the state and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. Reference to Whites refers to the non-Hispanic component of the self-identified white population. Reference to Hispanics includes self-identification as "Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin or descent." We do not report subgroups that represent a proportion less than 2% of the statewide sample.

SOURCE: Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, *Montana K-12 & School Choice Survey* , Q7.

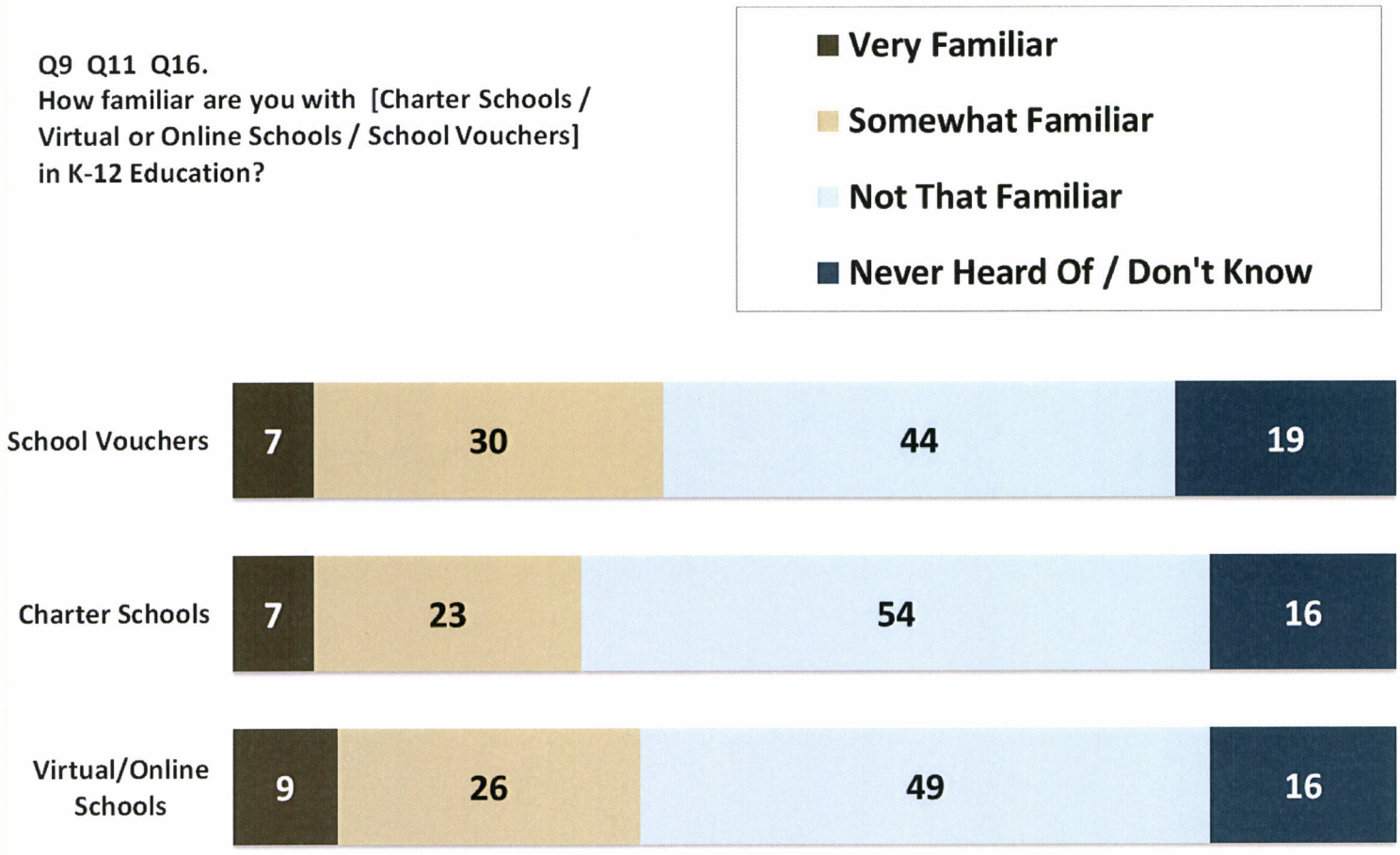
Q8. What is the most important characteristic or attribute that would cause you to choose a [INSERT SCHOOL TYPE FROM PREVIOUS QUESTION] for your child? Please use one word, or a very short phrase.

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

BETTER EDUCATION / QUALITY	80
SOCIALIZATION / PEERS / OTHER KIDS	78
INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION / ONE-ON-ONE	55
BETTER TEACHERS / TEACHERS / TEACHING	49
DIVERSITY / VARIETY	35
CURRICULUM / ACADEMICS	34
CLASS SIZE / STUDENT-TEACHER RATIO	33
RELIGION / RELIGIOUS REASONS	25
DISCIPLINE / STRUCTURE	24
ENVIRONMENT / CULTURE / COMMUNITY	24
PUBLIC SCHOOL: POSITIVE MENTIONS	19
ALMA MATER / SOCIAL NETWORK	17
SAFETY / LESS DRUGS, VIOLENCE, BULLYING	17
COST / TUITION / AFFORDABILITY	16
MORALS / VALUES / ETHICS	14

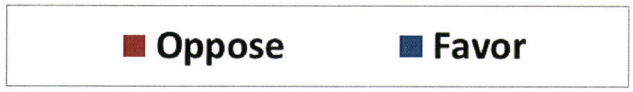
SOURCE: Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, *Montana K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q8.

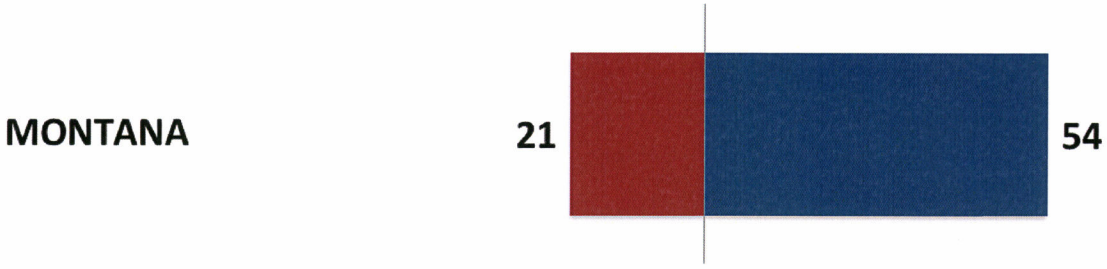
Q9 Q11 Q16.
How familiar are you with [Charter Schools / Virtual or Online Schools / School Vouchers] in K-12 Education?



FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Montana K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q9, Q11, Q16.

Q10. 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?





FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Montana K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q10.

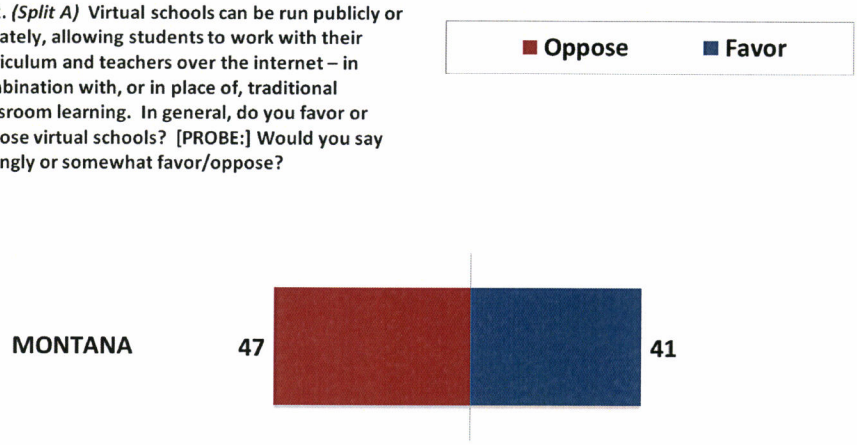
Q10. Charter schools are public schools that have more control over their own budget, staff, and curriculum, and are exempt from many existing public school regulations. In general, do you favor or oppose charter schools? [PROBE:] Would you say strongly or somewhat favor/oppose?

	Favor %	Oppose %	Net	Intensity	N=
ALL VOTERS	**54**	**21**	**+ 33**	**+ 11**	**604**
Parent	60	16	**+ 44**	**+ 14**	187
Non-Parent	52	24	**+ 28**	**+ 9**	432
COMMUNITY					
Urban	59	23	**+ 36**	**+ 18**	83
Suburban	62	22	**+ 40**	**+ 18**	63
Small Town	49	22	**+ 27**	**+ 5**	224
Rural	56	20	**+ 36**	**+ 12**	229
PARTY ID					
Democrat	46	32	**+ 14**	**- 3**	122
Republican	60	14	**+ 46**	**+ 22**	221
Independent	56	24	**+ 32**	**+ 12**	188
AGE GROUP					
18 – 29	62	14	**+ 48**	**+ 14**	111
30 – 49	54	20	**+ 34**	**+ 13**	191
50 & Over	52	25	**+ 27**	**+ 8**	298
HOUSEHOLD INCOME					
Under $25,000	61	17	**+ 44**	**+ 10**	89
$25,000 - $49,999	55	18	**+ 37**	**+ 15**	159
$50,000 - $74,999	59	22	**+ 37**	**+ 6**	134
$75,000 - $124,999	47	30	**+ 17**	**+ 12**	115
$125,000 & Over	60	28	**+ 32**	**+ 18**	45
RACE/ETHNICITY					
Hispanic	70	18	**+ 52**	**+ 32**	13
Native American	70	20	**+ 50**	**+ 13**	30
White	53	22	**+ 31**	**+ 10**	545

NOTE: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its registered voter population size in the state and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. Reference to Whites refers to the non-Hispanic component of the self-identified white population. Reference to Hispanics includes self-identification as "Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin or descent." We do not report subgroups that represent a proportion less than 2% of the statewide sample. 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.

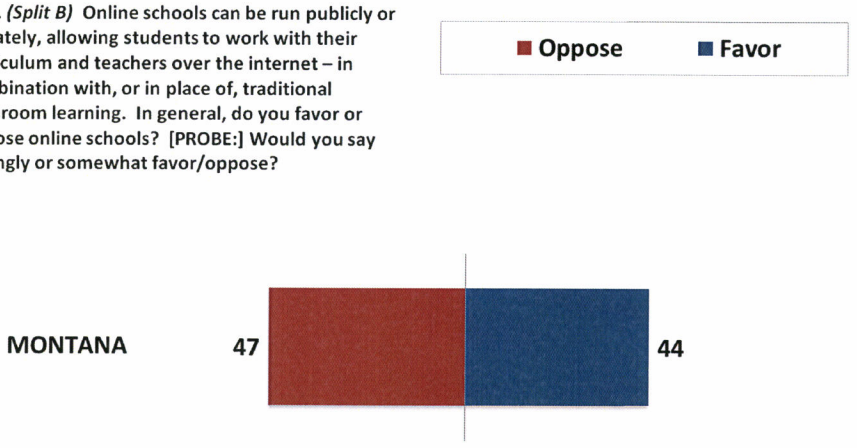
SOURCE: Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, *Montana K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q10.

Q12. *(Split A)* Virtual schools can be run publicly or privately, allowing students to work with their curriculum and teachers over the internet – in combination with, or in place of, traditional classroom learning. In general, do you favor or oppose virtual schools? [PROBE:] Would you say strongly or somewhat favor/oppose?



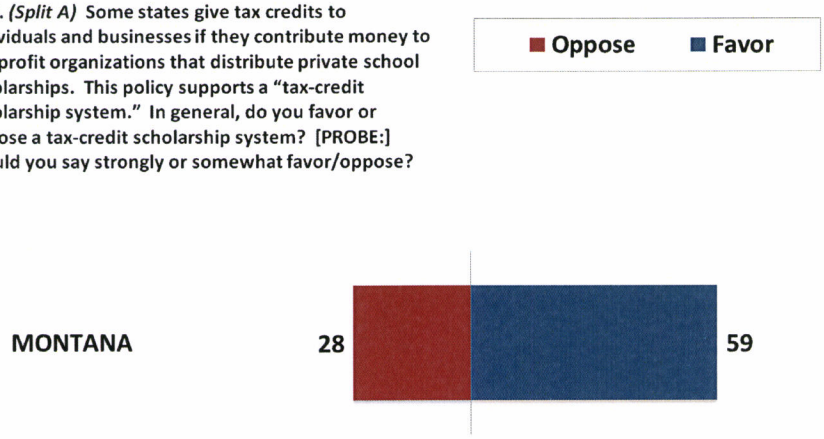
FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Montana K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q12A.

Q12. *(Split B)* Online schools can be run publicly or privately, allowing students to work with their curriculum and teachers over the internet – in combination with, or in place of, traditional classroom learning. In general, do you favor or oppose online schools? [PROBE:] Would you say strongly or somewhat favor/oppose?



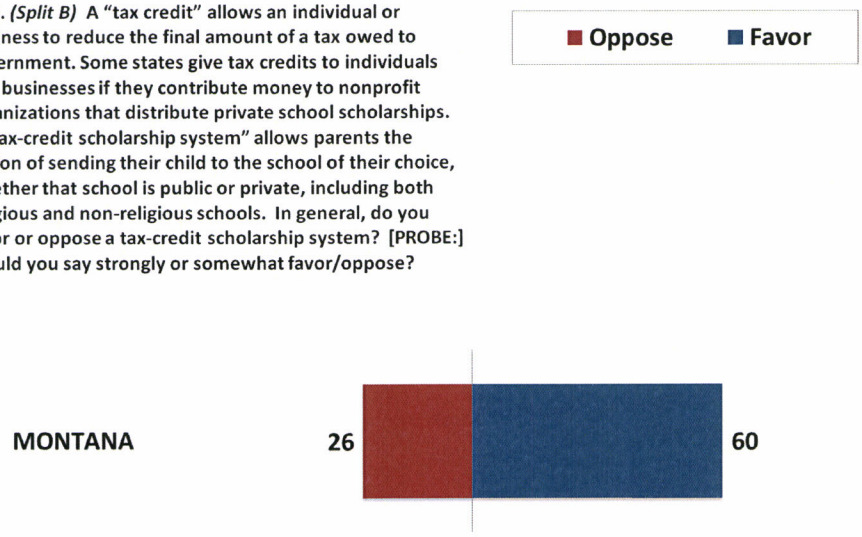
FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Montana K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q12B.

Q13. *(Split A)* Some states give tax credits to individuals and businesses if they contribute money to nonprofit organizations that distribute private school scholarships. This policy supports a "tax-credit scholarship system." In general, do you favor or oppose a tax-credit scholarship system? [PROBE:] Would you say strongly or somewhat favor/oppose?



FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Montana K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q13A.

Q13. *(Split B)* 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?



FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Montana K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q13B.

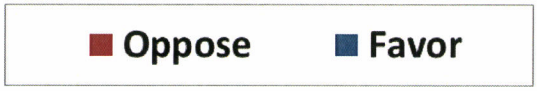
Q14. What is the most important reason that would cause you to choose your previous response relating to tax-credit scholarships? Please use a few words, or a very short phrase.

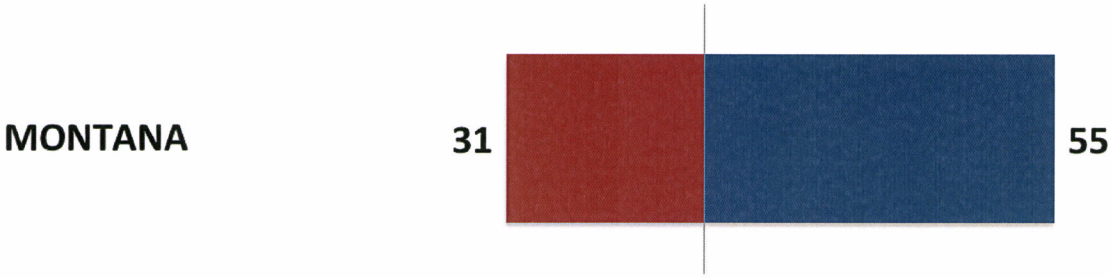
Top 10 | Specific impressions offered by respondents in the statewide sample. Numbers represent counts (n), not percentages.

CHOICE / FLEXIBILITY / FREEDOM	57
GOOD IDEA	54
BETTER EDUCATION / QUALITY	34
FUNDS / RESOURCES FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS ONLY	27
HELPS LESS FORTUNATE	26
BAD IDEA	23
OPPORTUNITIES	23
HURTS PUBLIC SCHOOLS	19
BENEFITS BUSINESS	17
UNFAIR	17

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

Q15. An "education savings account" 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?





FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE, *Montana K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q15.

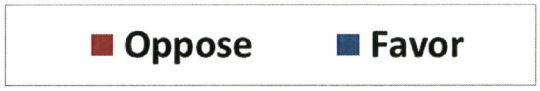
Q15. An "education savings account" allows parents to withdraw their child from a public district or charter school, and receive a payment into a government-authorized savings account with restricted, but multiple uses. Parents can then use these funds to pay for private school tuition, online education 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?

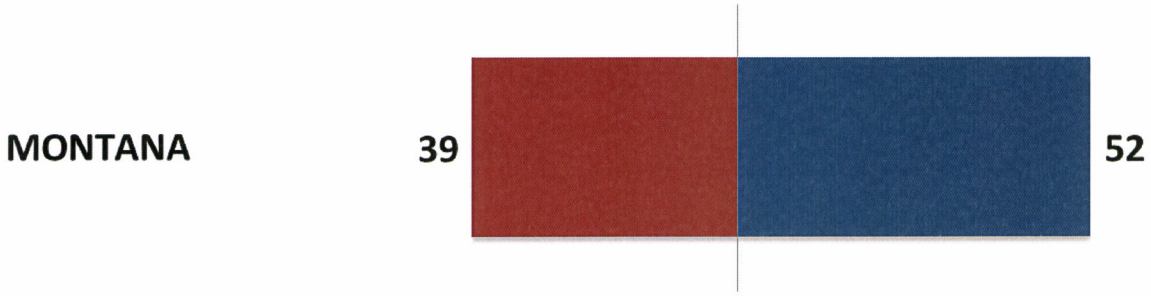
	Favor %	Oppose %	Net	Intensity	N=
ALL VOTERS	**55**	**31**	**+ 24**	**+ 7**	**604**
Parent	65	20	**+ 45**	**+ 31**	187
Non-Parent	51	36	**+ 15**	**- 4**	432
COMMUNITY					
Urban	59	31	**+ 28**	**+ 15**	83
Suburban	55	36	**+ 19**	**+ 6**	63
Small Town	53	30	**+ 23**	**+ 2**	224
Rural	56	32	**+ 24**	**+ 9**	229
PARTY ID					
Democrat	47	36	**+ 11**	**+ 3**	122
Republican	63	25	**+ 38**	**+ 14**	221
Independent	52	36	**+ 16**	**+ 2**	188
AGE GROUP					
18 – 29	68	17	**+ 51**	**+ 18**	111
30 – 49	63	26	**+ 37**	**+ 20**	191
50 & Over	46	40	**+ 6**	**- 5**	298
HOUSEHOLD INCOME					
Under $25,000	62	28	**+ 34**	**+ 8**	89
$25,000 - $49,999	58	28	**+ 30**	**+ 13**	159
$50,000 - $74,999	58	29	**+ 29**	**+ 13**	134
$75,000 - $124,999	51	37	**+ 14**	**+ 1**	115
$125,000 & Over	54	33	**+ 21**	**+ 5**	45
RACE/ETHNICITY					
Hispanic	44	55	**- 11**	**+ 7**	13
Native American	69	24	**+ 45**	**+ 38**	30
White	55	31	**+ 24**	**+ 6**	545

NOTE: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its registered voter population size in the state and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. Reference to Whites refers to the non-Hispanic component of the self-identified white population. Reference to Hispanics includes self-identification as "Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin or descent." We do not report subgroups that represent a proportion less than 2% of the statewide sample. 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 the enthusiasm behind the support or opposition for a given policy or proposal.

SOURCE: Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, *Montana K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q15.

Q17. 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?





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

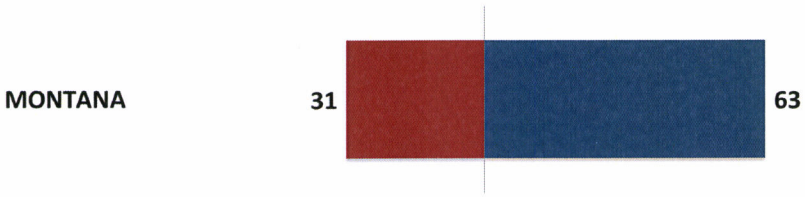
Q17. A school voucher system allows parents the option of sending their child to the school of their choice, whether that school is public or private, including both religious and non-religious schools. If this policy were adopted, tax dollars currently allocated to a school district would be allocated 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?

	Favor %	Oppose %	Net	Intensity	N=
ALL VOTERS	**52**	**39**	**+ 12**	**+ 4**	**604**
Parent	63	28	**+ 35**	**+ 22**	187
Non-Parent	47	44	**+ 3**	**- 5**	432
COMMUNITY					
Urban	56	36	**+ 20**	**+ 15**	83
Suburban	45	46	**- 1**	**- 7**	63
Small Town	50	38	**+ 12**	**+ 3**	224
Rural	54	39	**+ 15**	**+ 3**	229
PARTY ID					
Democrat	33	61	**- 28**	**- 23**	122
Republican	62	28	**+ 34**	**+ 18**	221
Independent	54	39	**+ 15**	**+ 5**	188
AGE GROUP					
18 – 29	64	26	**+ 38**	**+ 23**	111
30 – 49	56	37	**+ 19**	**+ 11**	191
50 & Over	45	46	**- 1**	**- 8**	298
HOUSEHOLD INCOME					
Under $25,000	62	34	**+ 28**	**+ 13**	89
$25,000 - $49,999	57	34	**+ 13**	**+ 6**	159
$50,000 - $74,999	47	43	**+ 4**	**+ 2**	134
$75,000 - $124,999	48	44	**+ 4**	**- 6**	115
$125,000 & Over	56	39	**+ 17**	**+ 6**	45
RACE/ETHNICITY					
Hispanic	81	18	**+ 63**	**+ 45**	13
Native American	67	33	**+ 34**	**+ 13**	30
White	51	40	**+ 11**	**+ 2**	545

NOTE: Please consider that each subgroup has a unique margin of error based on its registered voter population size in the state and the sample size (N) obtained in this survey. We advise strong caution when interpreting results for subgroups with small sample sizes. Reference to Whites refers to the non-Hispanic component of the self-identified white population. Reference to Hispanics includes self-identification as "Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin or descent." We do not report subgroups that represent a proportion less than 2% of the statewide sample. 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 the enthusiasm behind the support or opposition for a given policy or proposal.

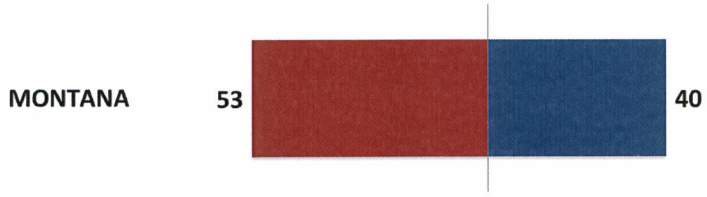
SOURCE: Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, *Montana K-12 & School Choice Survey*, Q17.

Q18. Some people believe that school vouchers or scholarships 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?



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

Q19. Some people believe that school vouchers or scholarships 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?



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

Methods Summary

The "Montana 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 Montana. Methodology included probability sampling and random-digit dial. The statewide sample includes a total of **604** telephone interviews completed in English from April 12 to 19, 2012, by means of both landline and cell phone.

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 **5,882** calls were made in Montana. Of these calls, **1,393** were unusable phone numbers (disconnected, fax, busy, non-residential, or non-answers, etc.); **2,863** were usable numbers but eligibility unknown (including refusals and voicemail); **100** cell phone numbers were usable but not eligible for this survey; **34** people did not complete the survey. The average response rate of the landline interviews was **17.2%**. The average response rate of the cell phone interviews was **17.5%**.

Details on each sample's call dispositions, landline and cell phone response rates, and weighting are discussed in following sections.

Sample Design

A combination of landline and cellular random-digit-dial (RDD) samples was used to represent registered voters in Montana 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 April 12 to 19, 2012. 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 ± 4.0 percent. 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 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

Montana Statewide Call Dispositions

SUMMARY

Landline	Cell Phone	
4,369	1,513	Total
4,369	1,513	Released
0	0	Unreleased
3,294	1,195	Usable
1,075	318	Unusable
2,811	686	Qualified
69.7%	78.7%	Est. Usability
90.5%	57.1%	Est. Eligibility
17.2%	17.5%	Est. Response

DETAIL

Landline	Cell Phone	
771	315	Disconnected
97	1	Fax
204	2	Government/Business
-	0	Non Cell Phone
3	-	Non Landline
1,075	318	Unusable
730	17	No Answer
87	1	Busy
817	18	Usability Unknown
484	120	Complete
21	13	Break-Off
505	133	Usable/Eligible
713	229	Refused
19	1	Language Barrier
698	545	Voice Mail
386	117	Call Back-Retired
102	52	Strong Refusal
1	0	Privacy Manager
1,919	944	Usable/Eligible Unknown
-	74	Under 18
53	26	Not Registered in State
53	100	Usable/Ineligible
17.2%	17.5%	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. The sample was balanced to reflect the targeted population representation by Age, Gender, Race, and Ethnicity. The weighted and unweighted results are available on request.

All weighting measures are based on 2010 Census Bureau statistics for the state of Montana. Weighting targets have been imposed for Age, Gender, Race, and Ethnicity.

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. DiPerna joined the Foundation in September 2006, and his research includes surveys and polling on K-12 education issues. He also manages and edits all other research projects commissioned by the Foundation. DiPerna previously served as assistant director for the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution, working there for more than six years. He was a research analyst for the first five issues of the Brown Center Report on American Education (2000-2004), and managed the activities of the National Working Commission on Choice in K-12 Education (2001-2005). DiPerna has presented research at the American Sociological Association annual meeting, and he has written or co-authored articles for *Education Week*, The Huffington Post, *Washington Examiner*, First Monday, and *Education Next*. In 2008, he authored a textbook chapter in the "Handbook of Research on Web Log Analysis."

A native of Pittsburgh, DiPerna attended the University of Dayton as an undergraduate and received an M.A. in political science from the University of Illinois.

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About the Survey Organization

Braun Research, Inc. (BRI)

The Braun Research network of companies, founded in 1995, combined employ 40 full-time and more than 465 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 17 years, Braun Research has conducted more than 8,300 research projects by telephone, internet, and mail worldwide.

In addition to the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, other 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

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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 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 Partners

Montana Family Foundation

The Montana Family Foundation is a nonprofit, research and education organization dedicated to supporting, protecting and strengthening Montana families.

Montana Policy Institute

The Montana Policy Institute is a free market think tank focused on Montana issues and Montana solutions. MPI's goal is to become the premier resource for free market, individual freedom educational and informational products.