

ALABAMA

# Public Opinion Survey

2020



*Alabama Public Opinion Survey: 2020 Edition*

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# Alabama Public Opinion Survey: 2020 Edition

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**Public Affairs  
Research Council  
of Alabama**



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**Note:**

The Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama conducted its annual public opinion survey in January 2020, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.





## Executive Summary

PARCA's 2020 public opinion survey finds, once again, aversion to certain taxes, support for public education, and mistrust in state government. At the same time, the survey finds a lack of consensus in how the state should respond to other critical issues facing the state.

### Taxes

Alabamians have a strong aversion to taxes but may not fully understand their tax burden.

- 57% believe they pay the same or more taxes than people like themselves in other states. See page 9.
- 51% say upper-income earners pay too little. The percent of respondents who believe upper-income earners pay too little has dropped in each of the last four years. See page 10.
- 49% say lower-income earners pay too much, up from 40% in 2016. See page 10.
- 48% say they pay the right amount of taxes, compared to 45% in 2010. See page 10.

### Public Education

Alabamians believe education is the most important service state government provides.

- 78% believe the state spends too little on education, compared to 74% in 2019 and 68% in 2013. See page 20.
- 69% support increasing taxes to support education, but no single tax increase option garners majority support. See page 21.

Alabamians value local control of schools.

- 87% say the local board (45%) or state board of education (42%) should set school calendars, while only 3% say the legislature should decide. See page 25.

- 59% say local boards of education are best suited to decide how education dollars are spent. See page 24.

Other notable education findings:

- 76.5% believe that taxes on Internet sales should be distributed to local schools in the same way as sales tax revenue from brick-and-mortar sales. See page 22.
- 66% say any potential lottery revenue should be restricted to the Education Trust Fund. See page 23.
- 59% oppose using state tax credits to fund private school scholarships. See page 26.
- 49% say charter schools provided expanded opportunities rather than diverting funds from other schools, but almost 25% don't know or have no opinion. See page 27.
- 41% say new education funding should be prioritized to increasing teacher compensation. See page 23.

### **Trust in State Government**

Alabamians' trust in state government improved slightly compared to 2019 but is still well below rates reported in the early 2000s.

- 80% support keeping the General Fund and Education Trust Fund separate, down from 82%, but still well above the 69% reported in 2016. See page 19.
- 66% believe state government officials do not care about their opinions, down from 69% last year. This compares to a low of 55% in 2008 and a high of 74% in 2010. See page 30.
- 55% believe they have no say in state government, down from 57% last year, but well above the low of 43% in 2008. See page 31.

## **Policy Preferences**

Alabamians express a wide variety of opinions on pressing policy issues. We asked respondents to choose their preferred policy response or policy action to such issues as prison overcrowding, taxes, education, and healthcare. Each of these six questions offered multiple responses from a range of perspectives. No single policy proposal garnered a majority response. The closest was a proposal to expand mental health services for the homeless, identified as the most important response to homelessness by 45% of respondents.

## Introduction

The Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama (PARCA) conducted its annual public opinion survey of Alabama residents between January 3 and February 6, 2020. Both cell and landline telephone numbers were included in a statewide random digit dialed (RDD) sample. The 422 completed interviews resulted in a margin of error of +/- 4.77%. Responses were weighted by race, gender, and age to match state demographics. Toplines at the end of this report contain exact question wording.

The 2020 PARCA survey includes a mix of repeated and new questions. This allows for examination of trends and identification of continuities of opinion over time, as well as snapshots of opinion on current issues of importance to both state residents and policymakers. Most polls discussed in media reports highlight dramatic shifts in opinion or polarization of subpopulations. PARCA surveys tend to demonstrate something different. On many important issues, there is broad agreement across subpopulations, and often opinion and policy preferences are consistent over time. The results presented below are tested for statistical significance across demographics, region, political affiliation, and related factors. When substantial differences exist, they are reported.

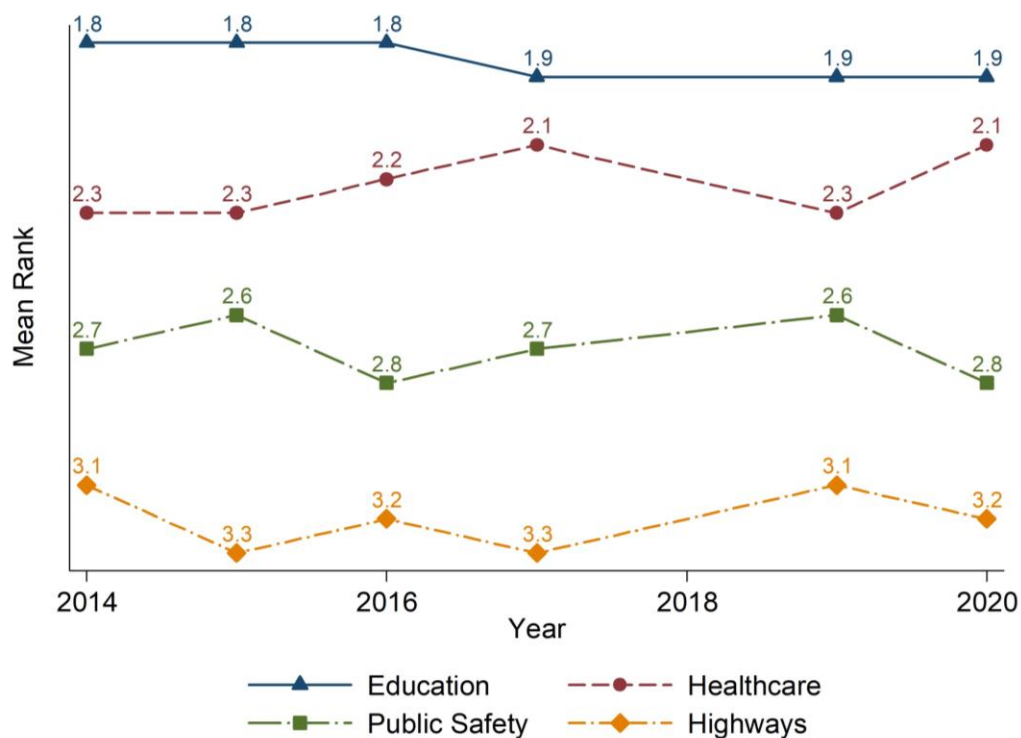
## Survey Results

### State Budget Priorities

**Key Finding: Education ranked as the most important state service.**

For the last several years, we have asked respondents to rank the importance of the major areas of state spending: education, healthcare, highways, and public safety, including prisons. The areas are listed in random order, and respondents are asked to rank the most important service area as number one, the next as number two, and so on until all areas are ranked. The average ranks from 2014 to 2020 are presented in Figure 1. The question was not asked in 2018. With rankings, lower numbers represent higher priorities, so education has consistently been identified as the most important service the state provides. Just as consistently, healthcare, public safety, and highways have followed in that order.

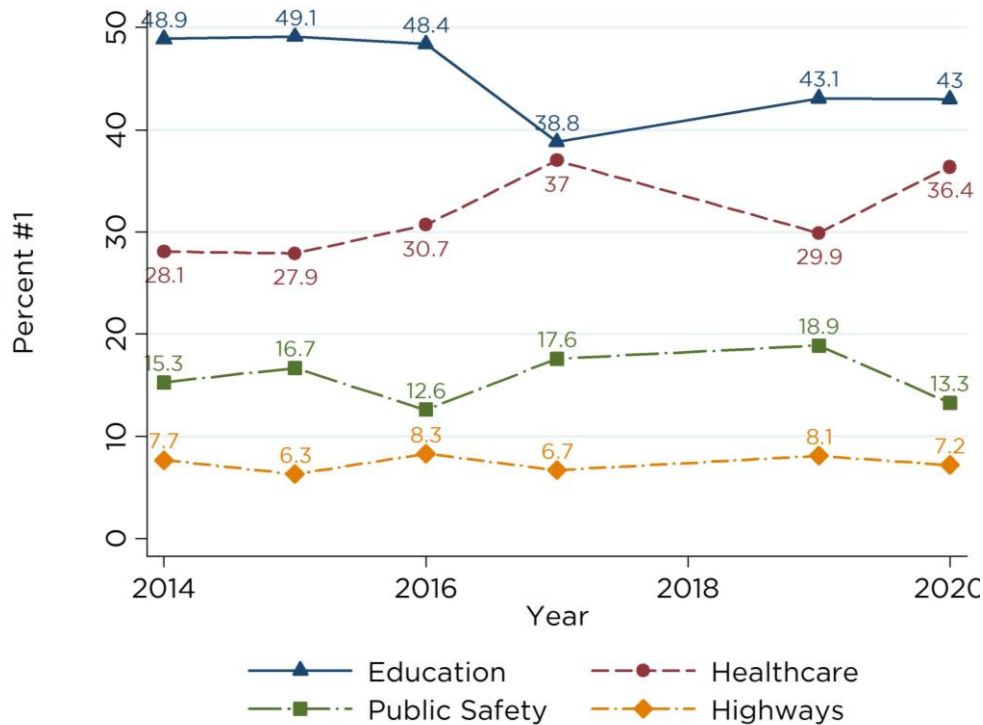
Figure 1. Average rank of major budget areas, 2014–2020



The average ranks are very stable over the years, but there are some fluctuations in the percentage of respondents who rank each area number one. The percentage of respondents ranking each area number one is presented in Figure 2. Every year, large proportions of respondents rank education as the most important service. Healthcare surged in importance in 2017 and 2020, reducing the perceived importance of

education in 2017 and public safety in 2020. Public safety rose to over 15% in 2017 and 2019, but it ebbed slightly in 2020.

Figure 2. Percent prioritizing each budget area #1, 2014–2020

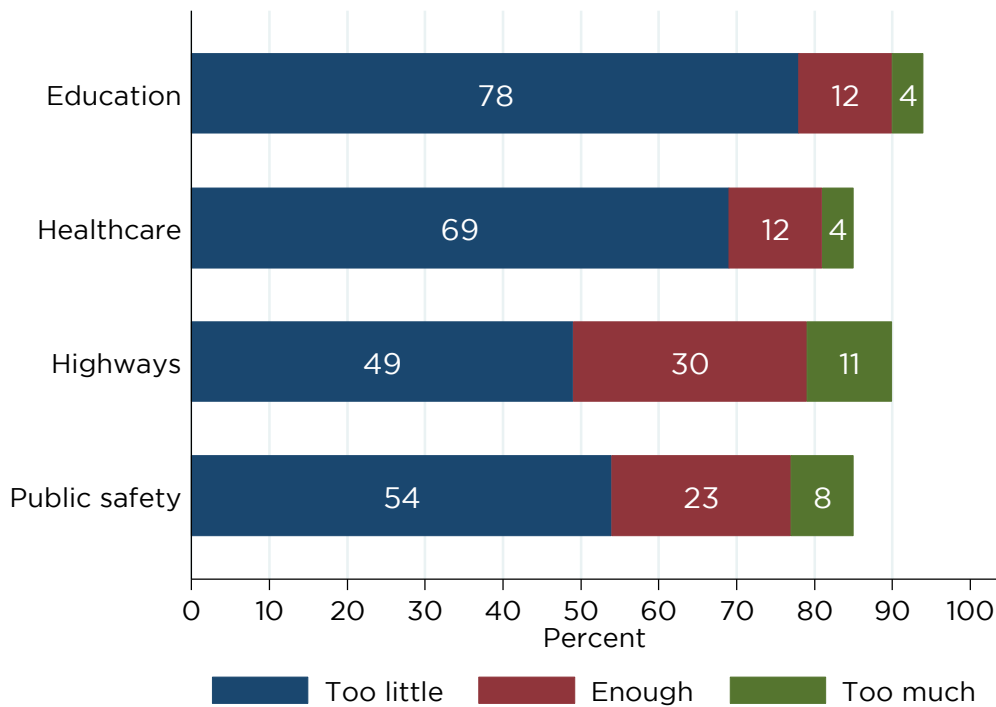


There are some differences in how these services are ranked by different respondents. Pluralities (the most popular response if none garners a majority) of every age group, except those older than 65, rank education as the most important service the state provides. A plurality of the 65 and older group lists healthcare as the most important service. Pluralities of those with at least some college identify education as the most important service, while those with less education (high school diploma or less) are more likely to rank education second. Majorities of those with less education rank healthcare as the most important service. Lower-income groups are more likely to rank healthcare number one than others. Women more likely than men to rank healthcare number one.

We routinely ask respondents if there is too much, too little, or enough money spent on education. This year we also asked this question of the other major areas of state investment. The results are presented in Figure 3.

We routinely ask respondents if there is too much, too little, or enough money spent on education. This year we also asked this question of the other major areas of state investment. The results are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Percent saying too little, enough, or too much spent in major areas



Pluralities or majorities say that too little is spent in each of the major budget areas. Supermajorities of every subpopulation say too little is spent on education.

**Key Finding: Supermajorities of every subpopulation say too little is spent on education.**

Similarly, supermajorities of every subpopulation say too little is spent on healthcare. There are some differences in the level of support. Older residents are more likely to say too little is spent on healthcare than others. More than 90% of those with a high school diploma or less say too little is spent on healthcare compared to 75% of those with some college or more.

Given the prominence of healthcare in national politics in recent decades, differences across partisan identities are expected. Instead, we see general agreement. More than 70% of Republicans say too little is spent on healthcare compared to more than 90% of Democrats.

**Key Finding: Supermajorities of every subpopulation, including 70% of Republicans and 90% of Democrats, say too little is spent on healthcare.**

Barely less than a majority say too little is spent on highways. Pluralities of every subpopulation say too little is spent on highways, except among those over the age of 45. Majorities of older residents say too little is spent on highways. A majority says too little is spent on public safety. Majorities of subpopulations share this view, although the majorities are larger among older residents and Republicans.

**Key Finding: Majorities or pluarities of of every subpopulation say too little is spent on education, healthcare, transportation, and public safety.**

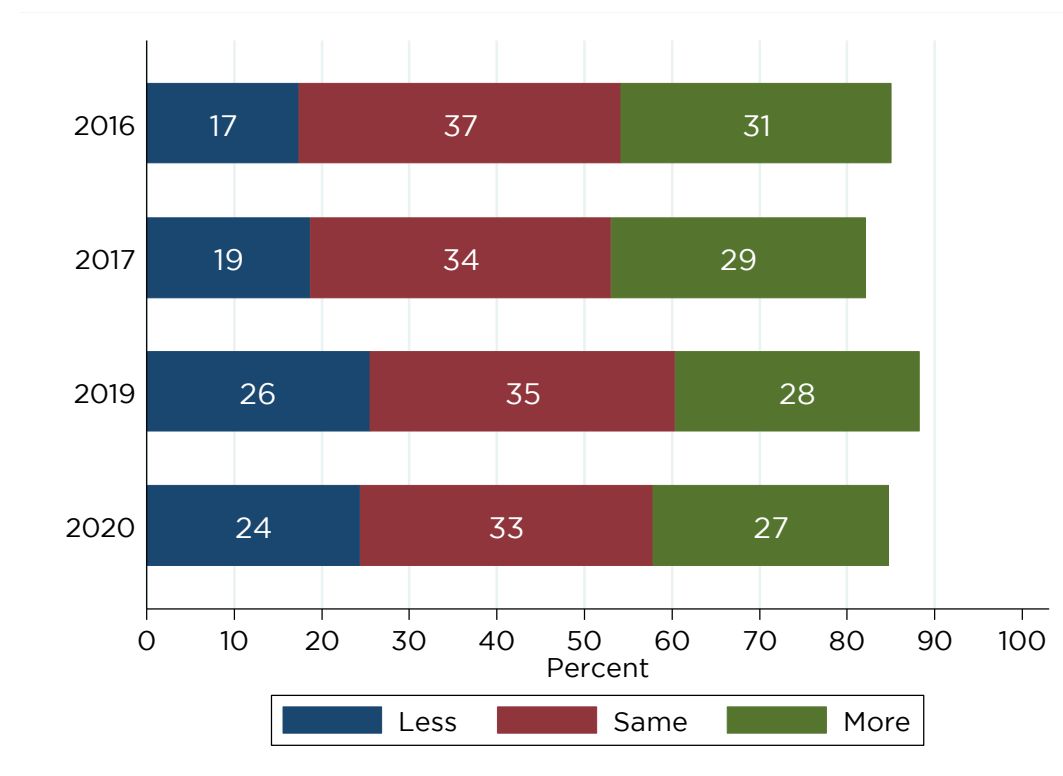
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## State and Local Taxes

For three decades, PARCA has investigated Alabama's tax collection compared to other states. In the 2019 edition of *How Alabama Taxes Compare*<sup>1</sup>, Alabama is again at the bottom of all states in *per capita* tax collections. We asked respondents if they thought people like them in other states paid more, less, or about the same in state and local taxes. While the overall tax burden may be less than other states, many respondents report they believe they pay the same or more than citizens in other states. For each of the last four years, about a third of respondents say people like them in other states pay the same in state and local taxes, and about a quarter say people like them in other states pay more. Republicans and the parents of public school students are more likely to say that they pay the same as those in other states than are other respondents.

Figure 4. What people like me pay in state and local taxes

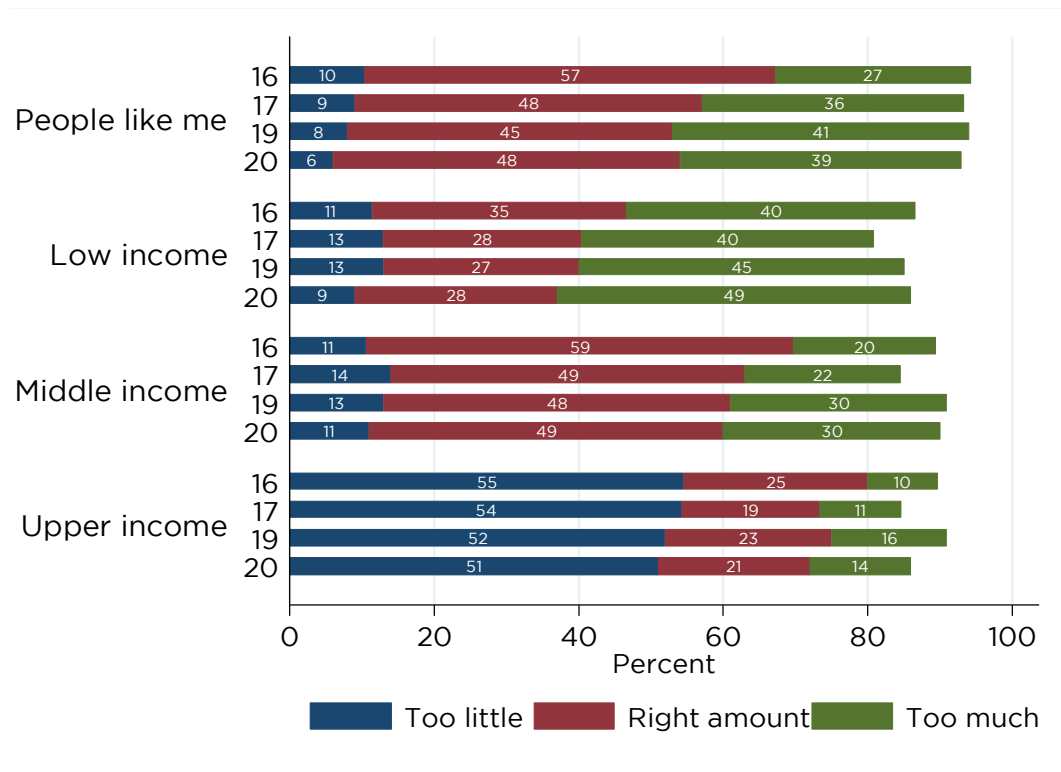


**Key Finding: 60% of Alabamians believe they pay the same or more in state and local taxes compared to people like them in other states.**

<sup>1</sup> <http://parcalabama.org/how-alabama-taxes-compare-2019-edition/>

We asked respondents if they thought they and people in different income groups were paying too much, too little, or about the right amount in state and local taxes. The results are presented in Figure 5 below. As has been the case each time we have asked the question, a majority or plurality say that they and people like them pay about the right amount. In 2020, about 48% say they and people like them pay about the right amount. There are some measurable differences across different groups. Respondents with less than a high school diploma are more likely to say they pay too much compared to those with higher levels of education, who are more likely to say they pay the right amount. White respondents are more likely to say they pay the right amount, while those identifying as African American, multiracial, or other races or ethnicities are more likely to say they pay too much. A plurality (49% in 2020) say that low-income residents are paying too much in state and local taxes. While pluralities or majorities of every income group say low-income people are paying too much, this view is patterned by income: About two-thirds of low-income respondents say low-income residents pay too much, and the proportion declines as income increases to just under half of higher-income respondents. Majorities of those identifying as independents and Democrats say low-income people pay too much with a plurality of Republicans agreeing. Conversely, large majorities of independents and Democrats say upper-income people pay too little, with a plurality of Republicans agreeing. Overall, a bare majority (51%) say upper-income residents pay too little in state and local taxes.

Figure 5. Amount paid in state and local taxes, 2016–2020



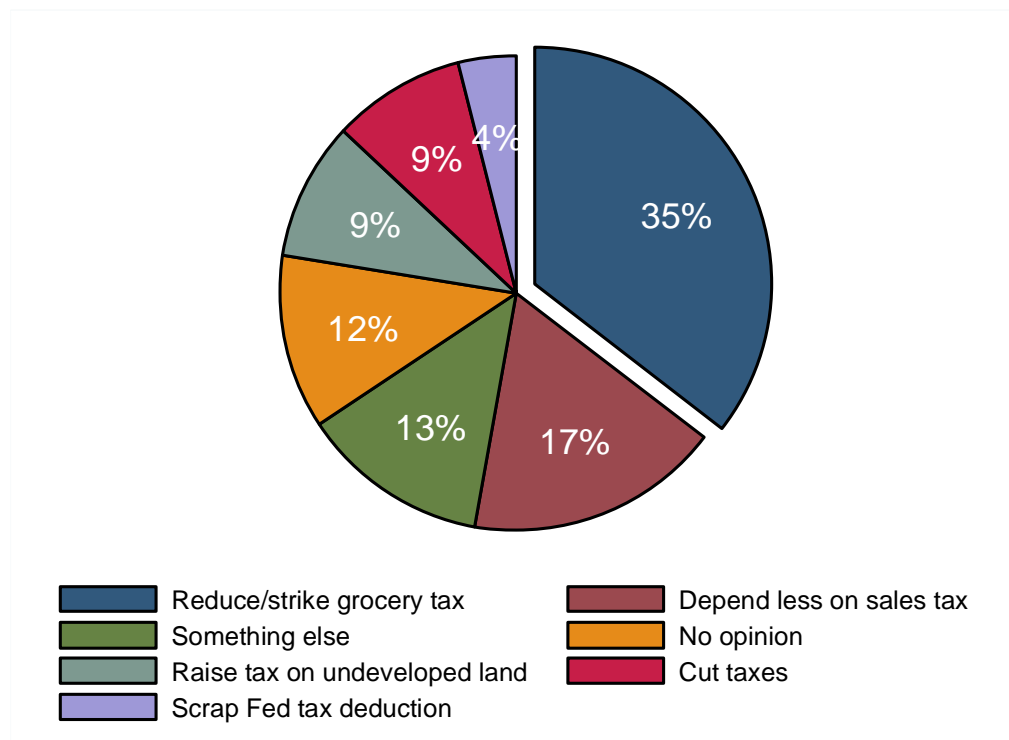
**Key Finding: 48% of people believe they pay the right amount in state and local taxes; 49% believe low-income Alabamians pay too much, and 51% believe upper-income Alabamians pay too little.**

## Policy Priorities

In 2018, we published *Alabama Priorities*,<sup>2</sup> a survey in which we asked respondents how concerned they were about a wide range of issues facing the state. We also asked about their preferred approaches to address some of those issues by presenting a range of policy options and asking which would be their top priority in addressing the issue. We asked a similar set of questions in this year's survey covering taxes, prison overcrowding, jobs and workforce development, homelessness, healthcare, and education. The order of the issues and the policy options were randomized for every respondent. The results are presented in a series of pie charts below with the most popular response on the upper right and the remaining wedges reflecting the other responses in order of popularity.

Note that the percentages shown below do not reflect absolute support for a particular policy proposal, but the relative priority of that proposal among others addressing the same issue. Similarly, one cannot infer that the remaining respondents oppose a proposal. For example, we asked respondents what their top priority would be to address taxes. The results are presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Top priority to address taxes



<sup>2</sup> <http://parcalabama.org/the-priorities-of-alabama-voters/>

Over a third of respondents (35%) say that their top priority is to “reduce or eliminate the sales tax on groceries.” So, this does not mean that only 35% like the idea or that 65% oppose removing the tax; instead, it means that 35% list it as their top priority among the options listed.

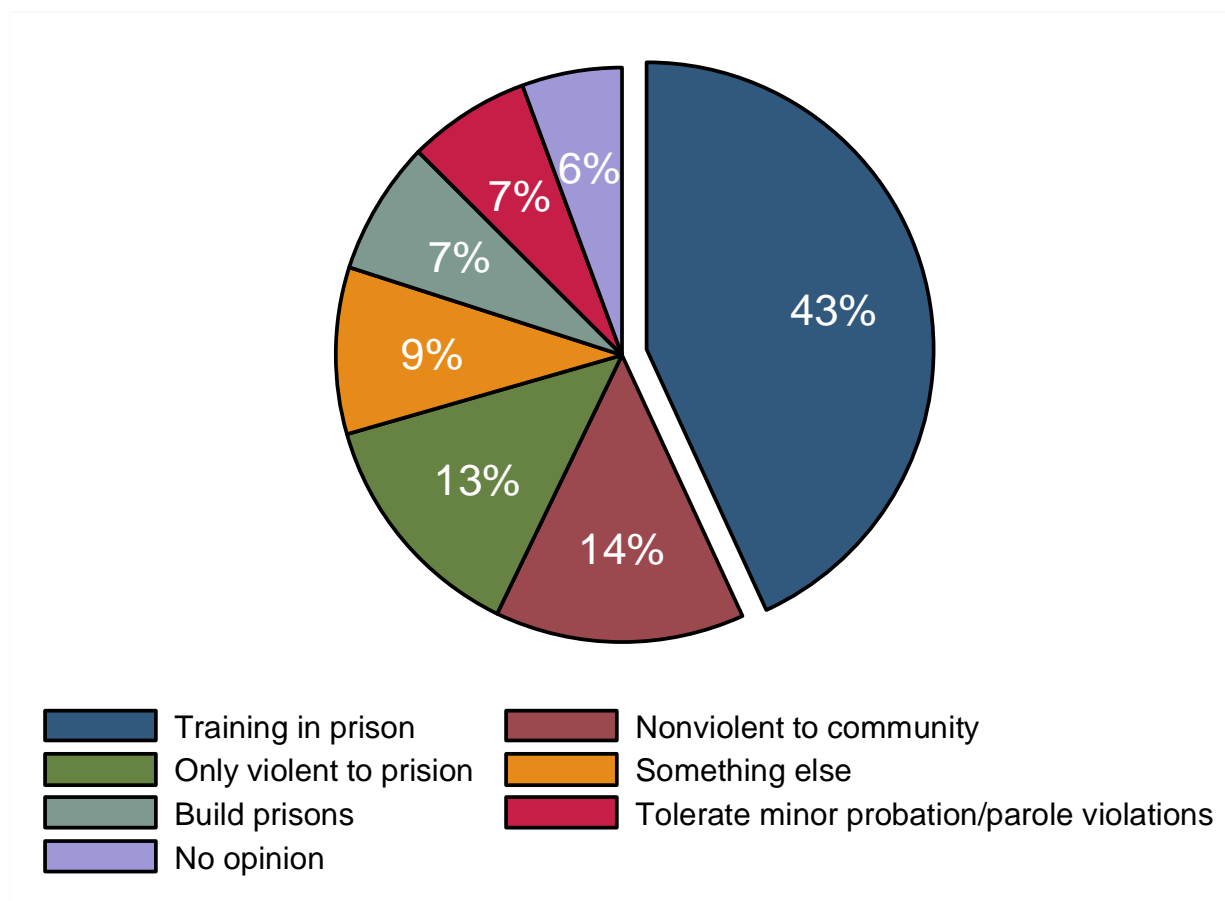
There were no differences in the likelihood of selecting “reduce or eliminate the sales tax on groceries” as the top priority across any social, demographic, regional, or partisan grouping. About 17% list as their top priority “restructure the tax system so that the state is not dependent on sales tax.” Taken together, the top two options suggest that a majority (52%) support reductions or reforms of the tax system related to sales taxes. Support for other options is diffuse.

**Key Finding: 52% support reductions or reforms of the sales tax.**

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Alabama’s troubled prison system continues to challenge policymakers. We asked respondents what their top priority would be to address prison overcrowding. The results are presented in Figure 7. A plurality (43%) of respondents say their top priority is to “invest in education or training programs in prisons to rehabilitate inmates so they don’t return to prison.” Support for this position appears widespread, as there are no significant differences in support across any social, demographic, regional, or political grouping.

Figure 7. Top priority to address prison overcrowding

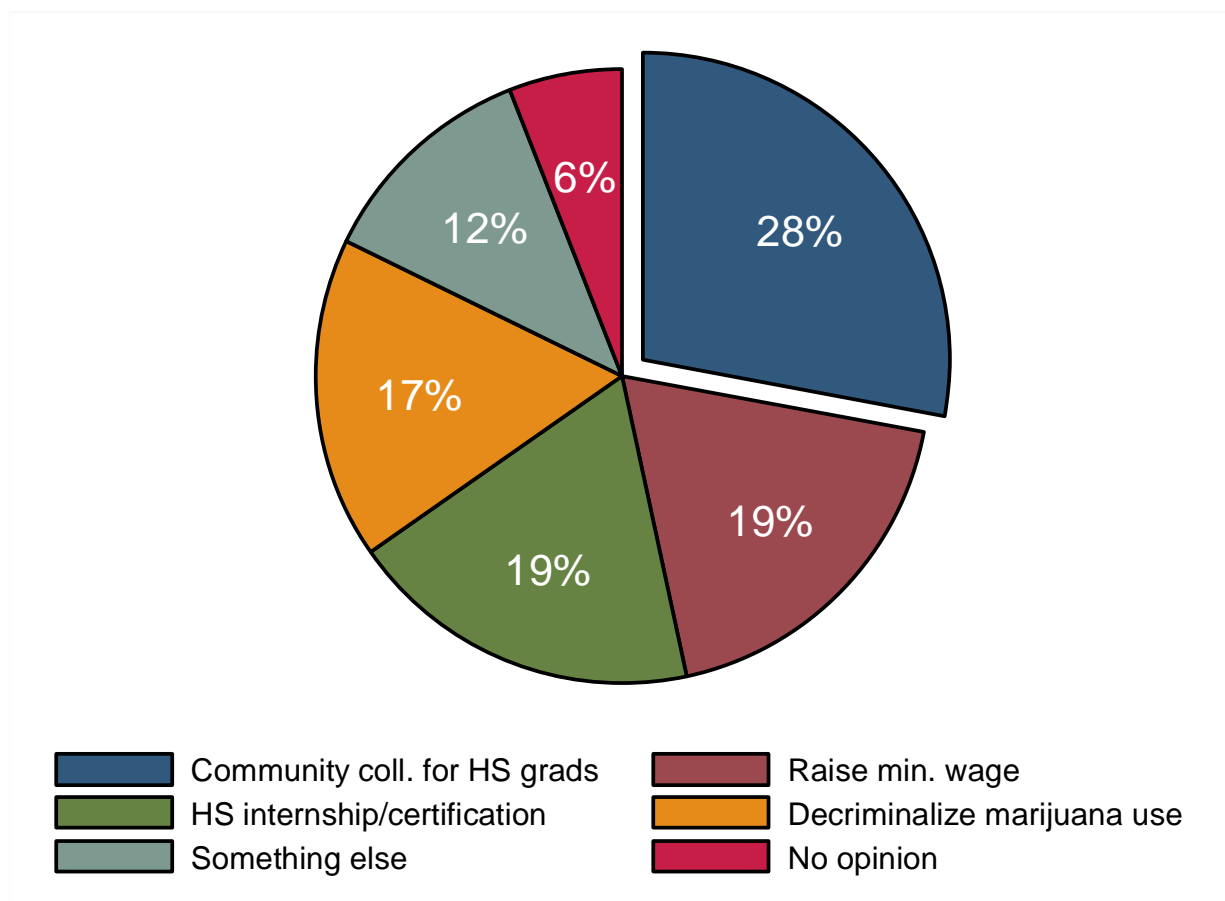


**Key Finding: 9% view building prisons as the most important way to address prison overcrowding.**

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Respondents were asked about their top priority to address jobs and workforce development. The results are presented in Figure 8. Just over a quarter (28%) list their top priority as “provide free community college to high school graduates with a B average.” White respondents were slightly more likely to list this as their top priority than other respondents. About 19% advocate requiring “all high school students to complete an internship or earn a professional credential or certification.” About 19% list raising the minimum wage as their top priority.

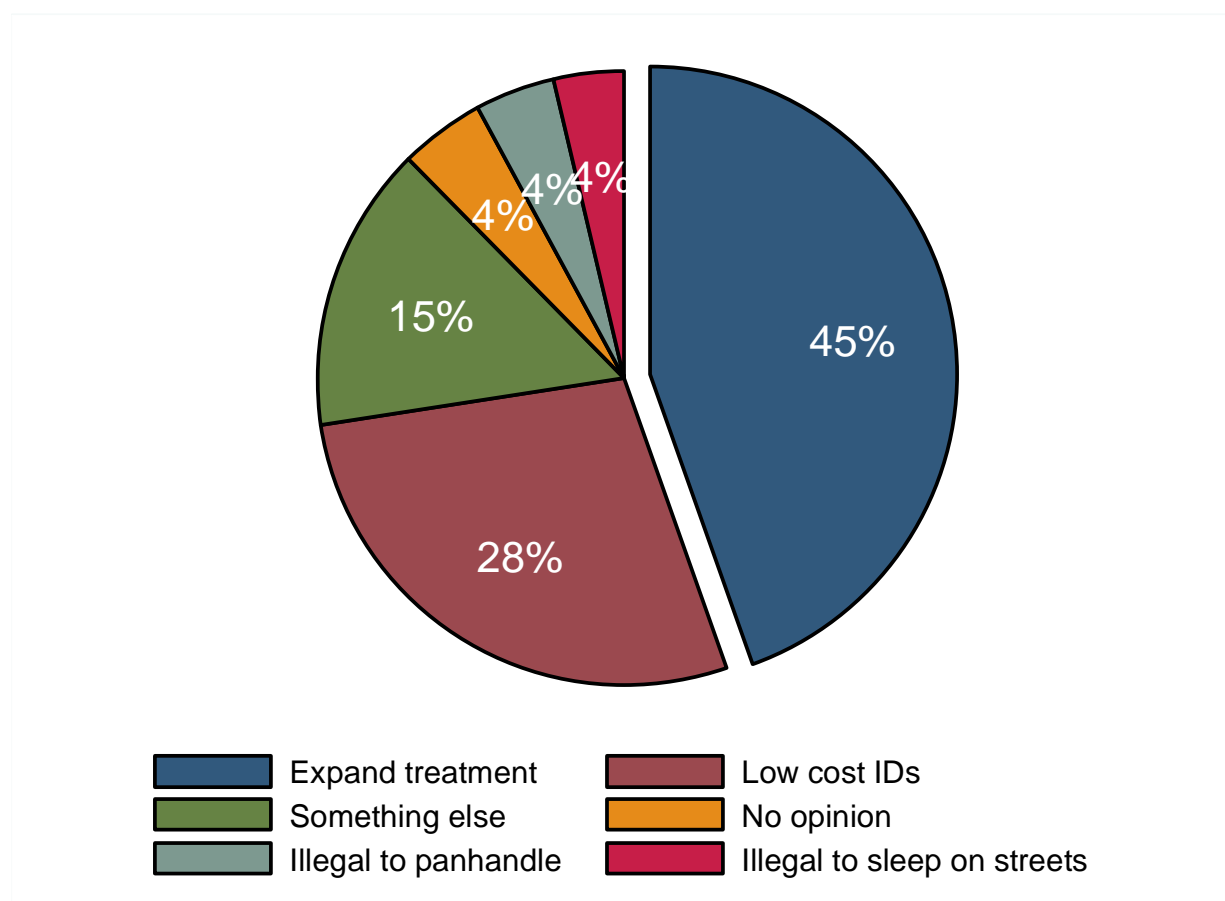
Figure 8. Top priority to address jobs and workforce development



Respondents were asked about their top priority to address homelessness. The results are presented in Figure 9. Here we see the largest plurality for any policy idea in the entire set of priority questions. About 45% say their top priority is to “expand access to mental health and drug treatment for homeless adults.” Respondents with higher education and women were more likely to make treatment their top priority than were other respondents. Just over a quarter (28%) list their top priority as “provide free or very low-cost state IDs to homeless adults to help with their job search.” Even though some municipalities have experimented with making it illegal to panhandle or sleep on the street, few respondents identified these as top priorities, trailing even “something else” and “no opinion.”

**Key Finding: 45% say their priority to address homelessness is to “expand access to mental health and drug treatment for homeless adults,” the largest plurality for any policy idea in the survey.**

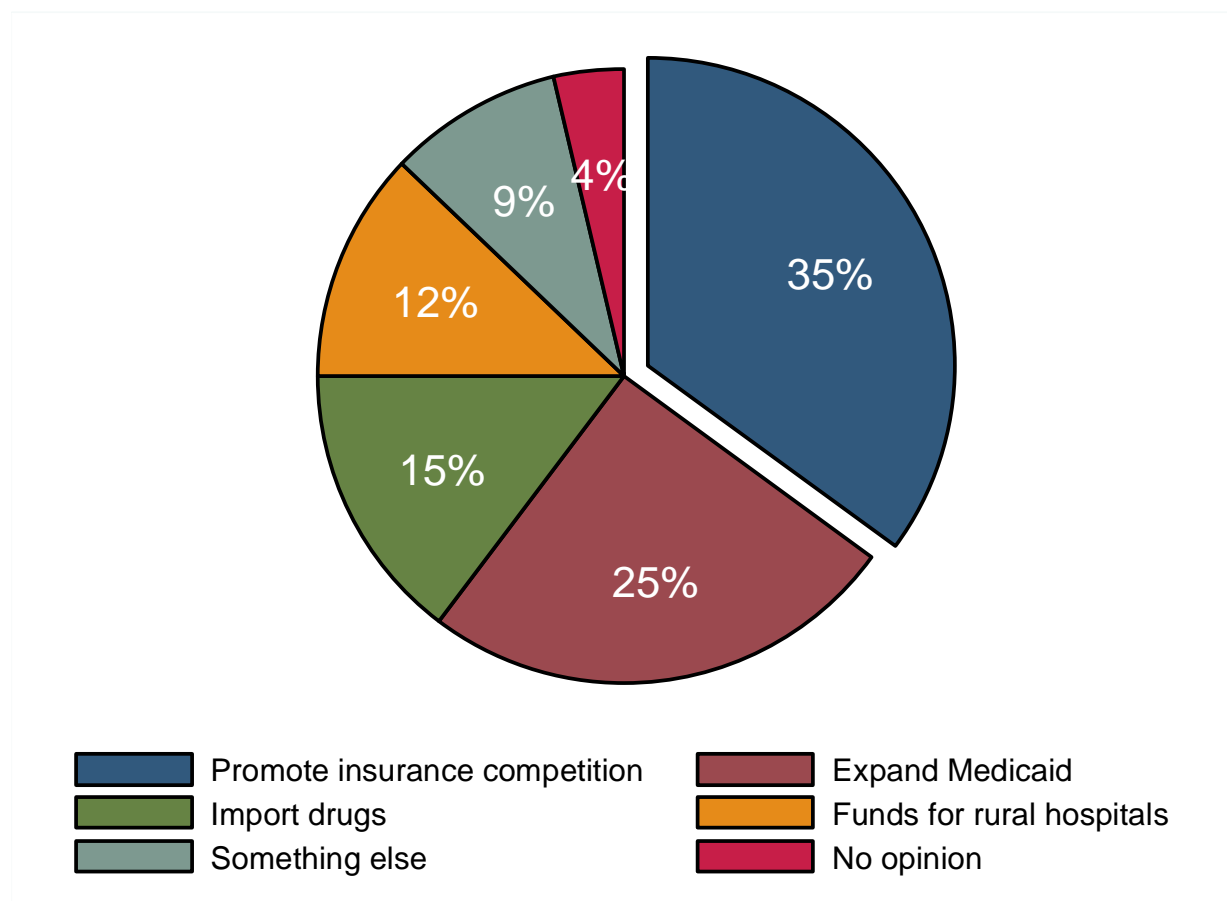
Figure 9. Top priority to address homelessness



Respondents were asked about their top priority to address healthcare. The results are presented in Figure 10. Over a third of respondents (35%) say their top priority is to “promote more competition between health insurance companies to try to lower prices.” Promoting insurance competition was more likely to be supported by Republicans and those with higher incomes than others. About a quarter of respondents identify expanding Medicaid to cover poor adults. Democrats are more likely to support expanding Medicaid than other respondents. Independents fall neatly between Democrats and Republicans on these two priorities.

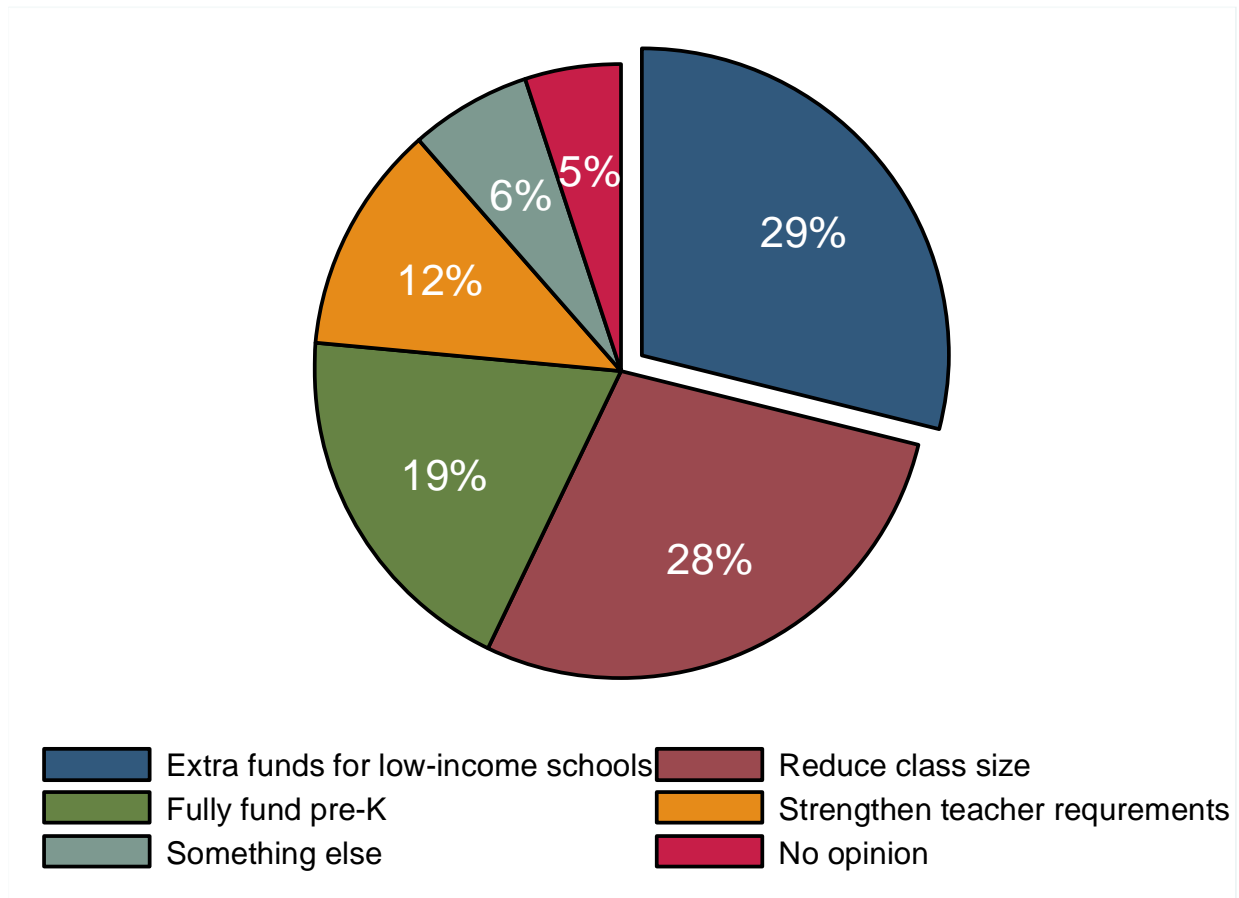


Figure 10. Top priority to address healthcare



Respondents were asked about their top priority for kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade education. The results are presented in Figure 11. Over a quarter (29%) of respondents list their top priority as reducing class size. Republicans and parents of public school students were slightly more likely to list reducing class size as their top priority. Nearly as many respondents (28%) list their top priority for education as providing “extra funding for schools with large numbers of low-income students.” Younger respondents were more likely to list this as their top propriety than were older respondents. Nearly a fifth (19%) of respondents list fully funding pre-K programs as their top priority. Republicans were less likely to identify this as a top priority compared to independents or Democrats. Fully funding pre-K programs also garnered more support in North Alabama than in the rest of the state.

Figure 11. Top priority to address education

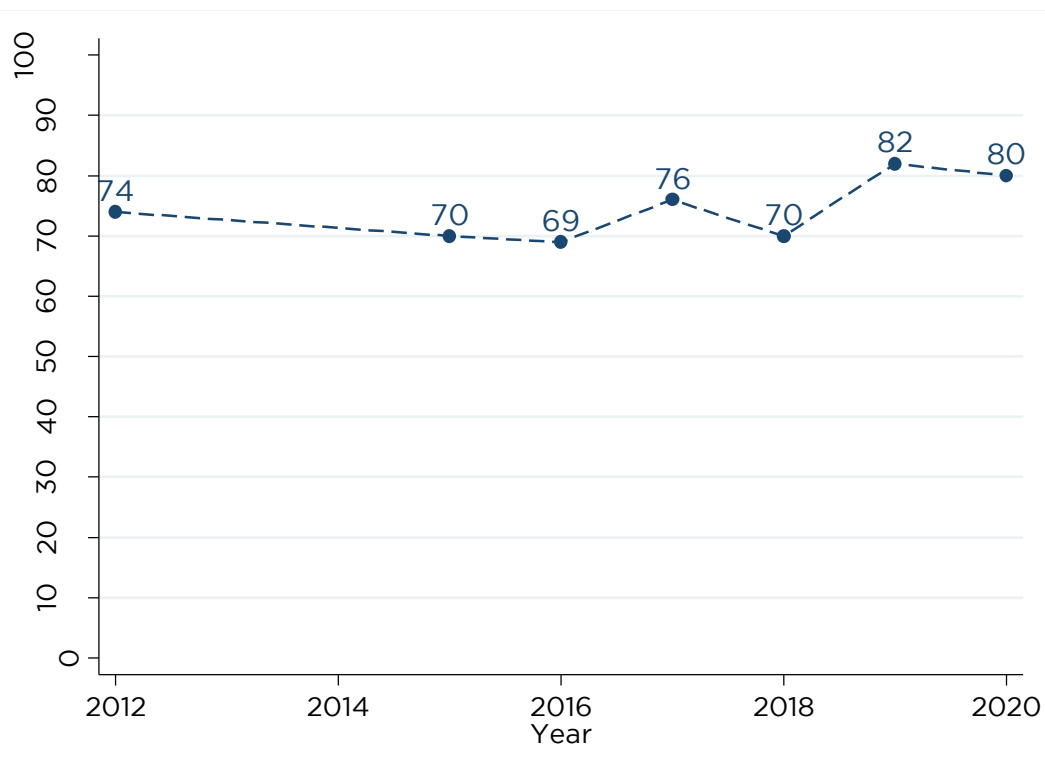


## Public Education

As part of PARCA's commitment to understand public education and in partnership with the Alabama Association of School Boards, we ask several questions about public education in Alabama.

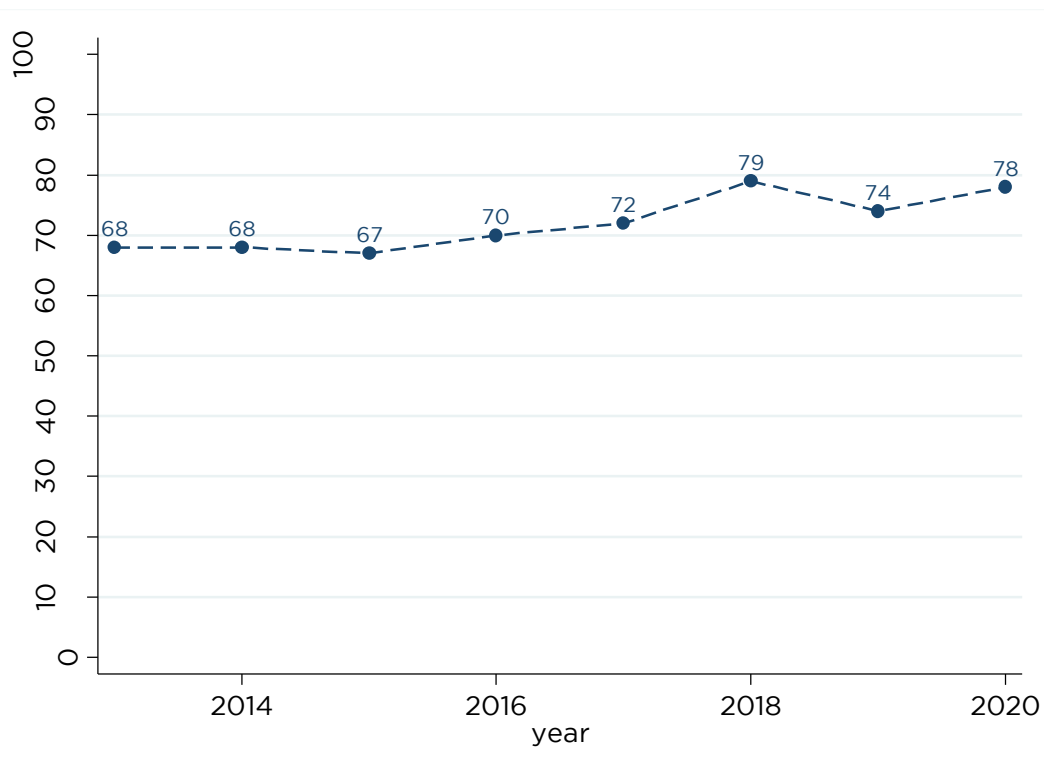
Alabama finances public education through a budget known as the Education Trust Fund and other programs through a budget called the General Fund. There are occasional calls to restructure the budget process. Since 2012, we have asked respondents if they think the budgets should be combined or if education should be kept separate. Substantial majorities say that education should be kept in a separate budget. The percentage saying education should be kept in a separate budget is presented in Figure 12. The question was not asked in 2013 or 2014, but in each of the other years, 69% to 82% held this view. In 2020, about four-fifths (80%) say the education budget should be kept separate from the General Fund. Supermajorities of every subpopulation hold this view.

Figure 12. Percent saying keep education separate



We discussed attitudes about the amount of state spending in the first section of the report. In Figure 13, the education response is put in the context of the last eight times the question has been asked. In the years 2013 through 2016, about two-thirds of respondents said too little is spent on education. In the four most recent years, from 2017 through 2020, about three-quarters have said too little is spent on education. In the 2020 survey, just over three quarters (78%) say too little is spent on education. While there are some minor differences by age, gender, and race, supermajorities of every subpopulation, region, and political identity say too little is spent on education.

Figure 13. Too little spent on education in Alabama

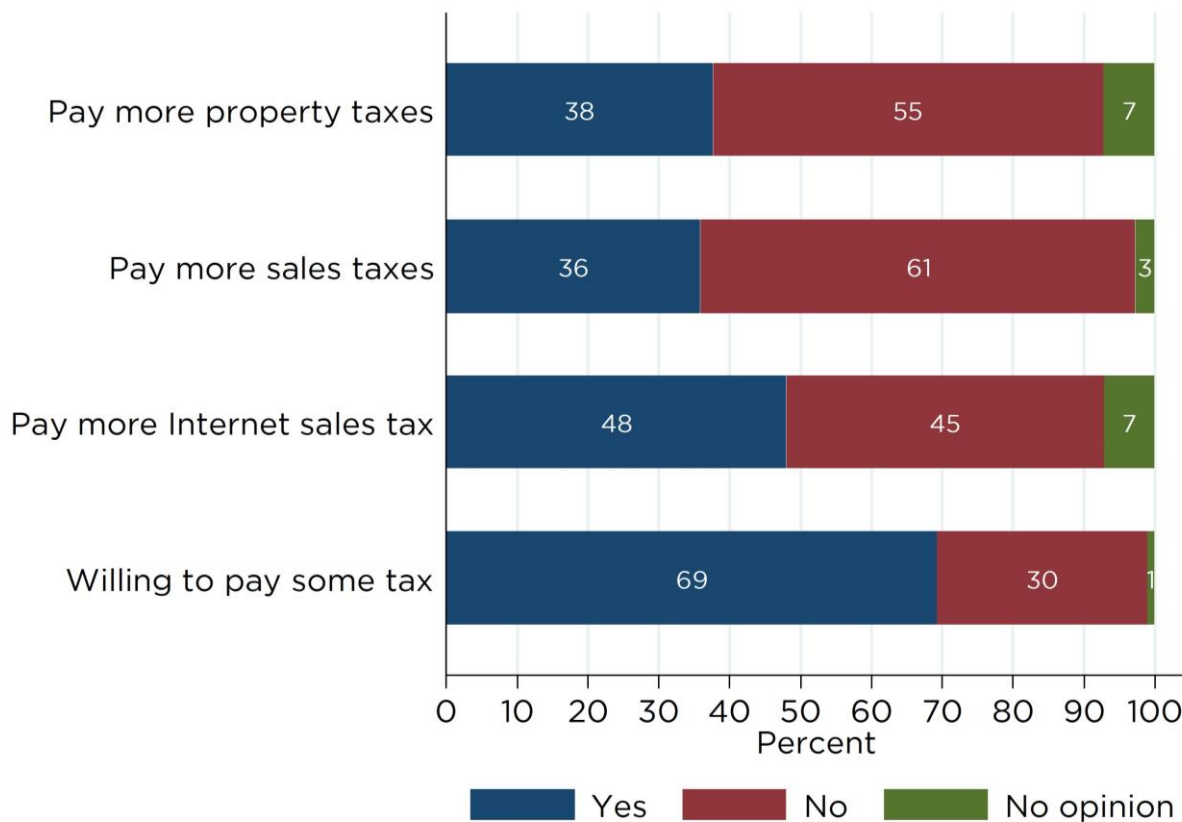


We consistently find that Alabamians see education as a top priority for state investment. They want to protect the Education Trust Fund, and large majorities say too little is spent on education.

In previous surveys, we have found majorities saying they would be willing to pay more in taxes to support education. When we ask about specific revenue measures, we see less enthusiasm. This year we asked if respondents would be willing to pay more in three specific taxes to increase funding for education. The results are presented in Figure 14. Just over two-thirds (69%) of respondents are willing to pay one or more of the taxes to increase education, but none of the specific tax proposals garners majority support. While over a third of respondents say they are willing to pay more property taxes or more sales taxes, majorities say they are not willing to pay more of those tax types. A plurality (48%) say they are willing to pay more tax on Internet purchases. The fact that a majority of Alabamians are willing to pay more taxes to increase funding for education but are not supportive of the same revenue mechanisms represents a challenge for policymakers.

**Key Finding: A majority of Alabamians are willing to pay more taxes for education but do not agree on which taxes should be raised.**

Figure 14. Willing to increase education funding by paying more



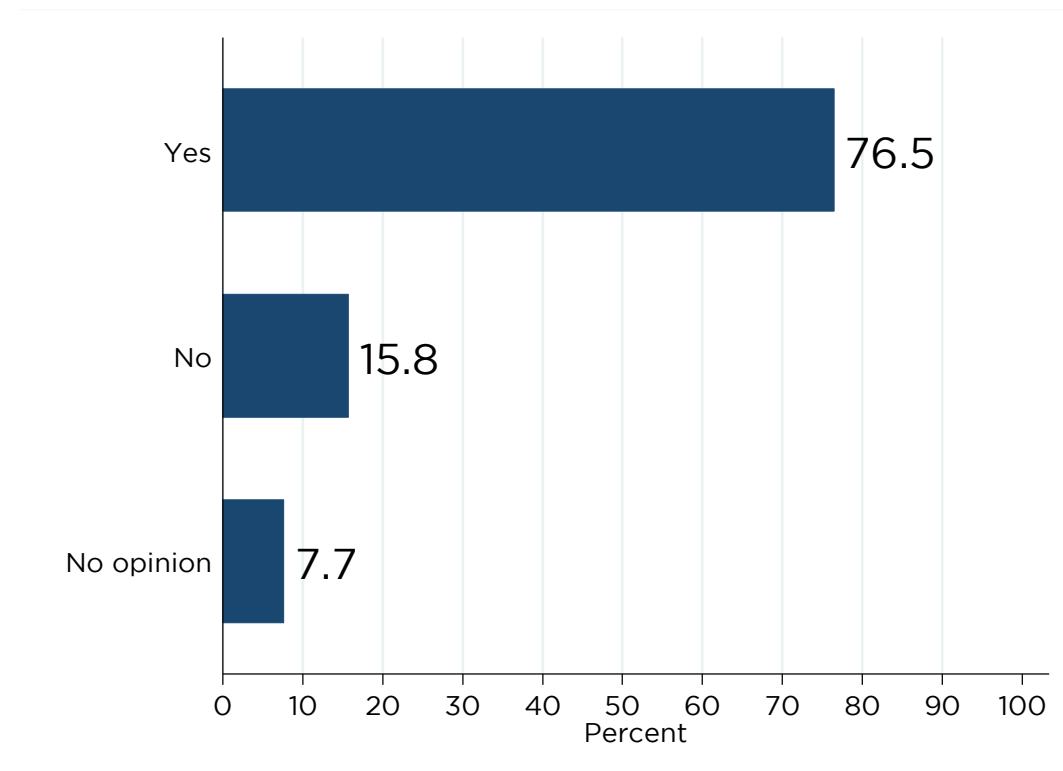
Increasingly, Internet purchases include sales taxes. Large online retailers collect the taxes and pay them to the state. We described the situation to respondents:

Alabamians pay sales taxes on almost all purchases, whether in stores or online. Sales taxes collected in stores stay in the local community. Taxes on Internet sales are collected by the state and distributed to local communities through a population-based formula. Some counties and cities pledge a portion of their sales tax revenue to support the local schools.

We then asked, “Should Internet sales tax revenues be included in this pledge?” The results are presented in Figure 15. About three-quarters of respondents say that a portion of Internet sales tax revenue should go to public schools. There were no significant differences across any subpopulation.

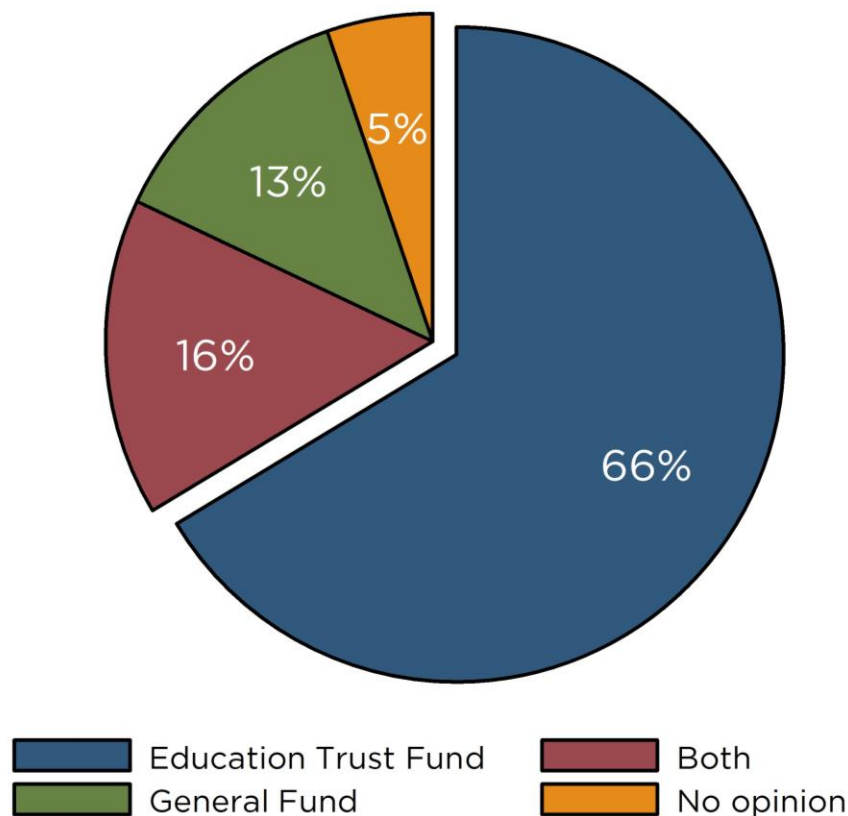
**Key Finding: Alabamians want online sales tax revenue distributed in the same way that traditional sales tax revenue is distributed.**

Figure 15. Should online sales taxes go to local schools



Lottery proposals are introduced in almost every legislative session. We asked respondents, “If the state legislature approves a state lottery, should the proceeds go to fund public education in the Education Trust Fund or general government services in the General Fund?” The results are presented in Figure 16. About two-thirds of respondents say lottery proceeds should go into the Education Trust Fund. Supermajorities of every subpopulation agreed that lottery proceeds should go into the Education Trust Fund, although the majorities were slightly lower for older respondents.

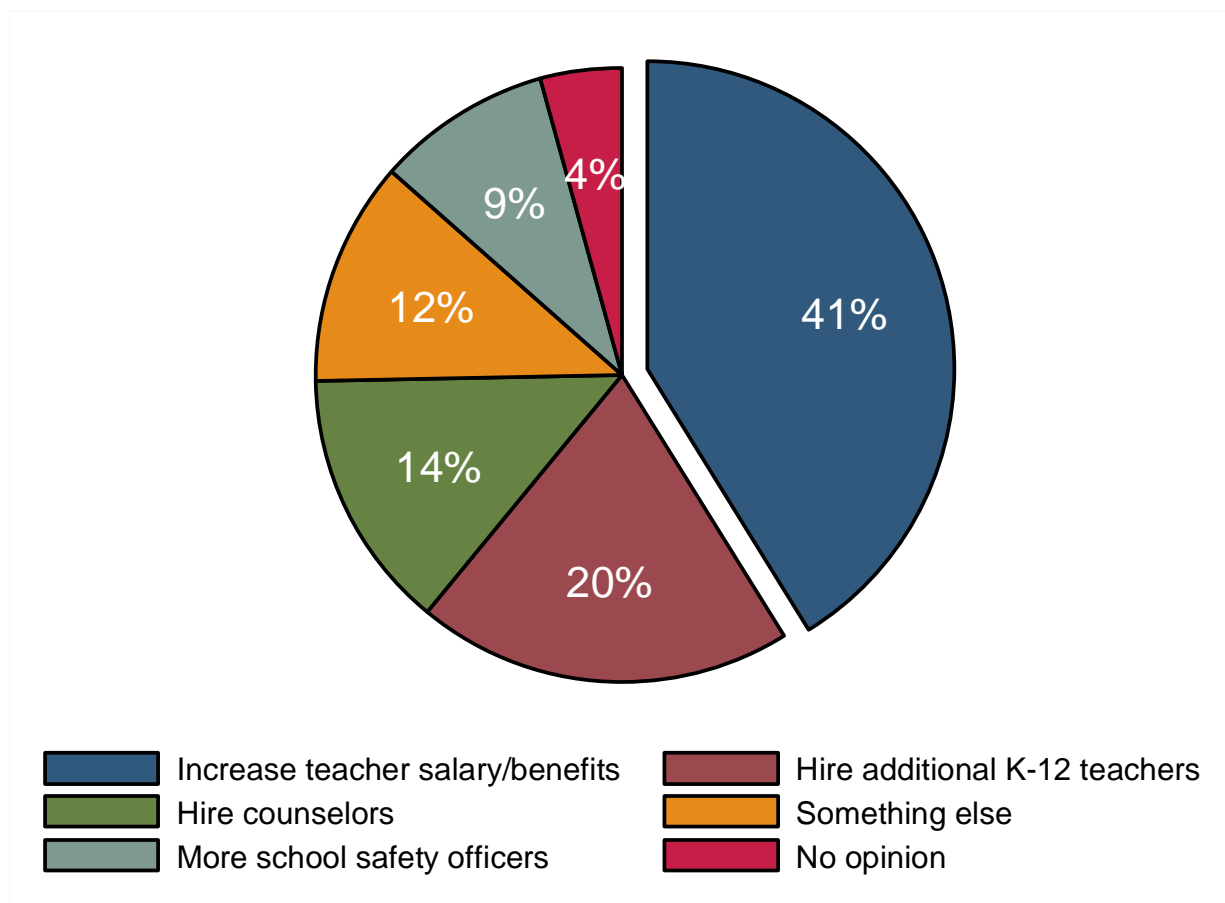
Figure 16. Lottery proceeds should go to



In addition to asking about possible sources of new revenue for education, we asked what the top priority for spending new education dollars should be. The results are presented in Figure 17. About two-fifths of respondents (41%) say new revenue should be used to increase teacher salaries and benefits. Respondents with higher levels of education were more likely to list increasing teacher salaries as their top

priority than others. About a fifth indicate that hiring additional teachers would be their top priority, with older residents more likely to choose this than younger respondents. Both priorities are directly related to classroom instruction.

Figure 17. Top priority for new education revenue

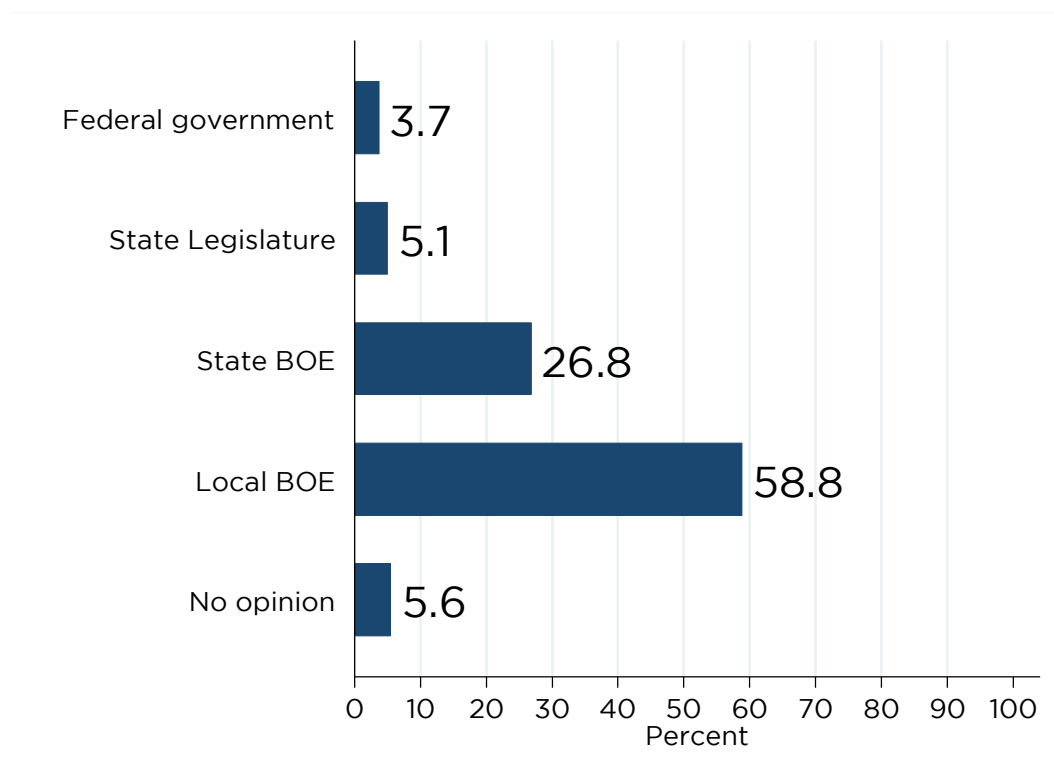


We asked, “Which level of government is best equipped to make decisions about spending for public schools in your area?” Possible responses range from the federal government to the local board of education. The results are presented in Figure 18. A majority (58.8%) say the local board of education is best equipped to make spending decisions with just over a quarter (26.8%) saying the state board is best equipped. While majorities of every subpopulation support having local boards making spending decisions, those with higher levels of education are slightly more supportive than those with lower levels of education.

**Key Finding: 41% of respondents believe new education dollars should go to increase teacher salaries and benefits.**



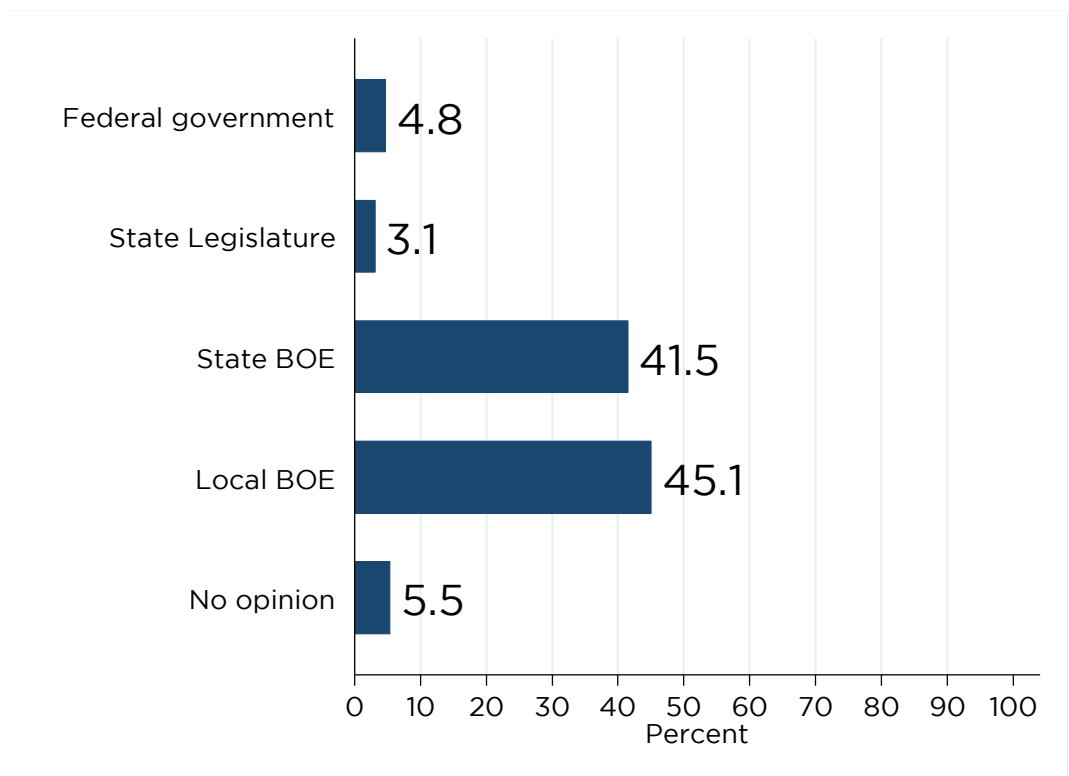
Figure 18. Best level of government to decide school spending



Control of school calendars has changed substantially in recent decades. Bills addressing calendars are introduced in almost every legislative session. We asked respondents which level of government is best equipped to set the school year calendar and gave them the same range of responses as the previous question. The results are presented in Figure 19. A plurality (45.1%) say the local board of education should set the calendar, although nearly as many (41.5%) say the state board of education should control the calendar. Those with higher incomes were slightly more likely to say that local boards of education should set the school year calendar.

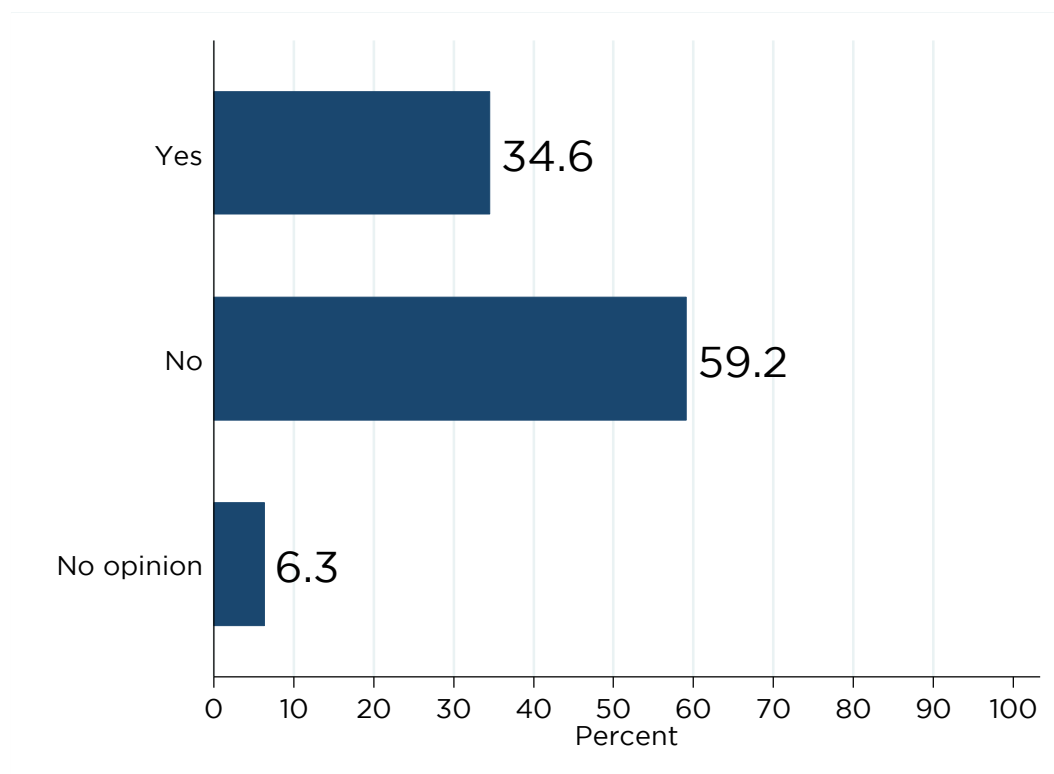
**Key Finding: 87% believe that the state board of education or local boards of education should decide school calendars, compared to 3% who believe the legislature should decide.**

Figure 19. Which level of government should set the school year calendar?



We asked respondents if state tax credits should be used to fund scholarships to private schools. The results are presented in Figure 20. Nearly three-fifths (59.2%) of respondents answered in the negative. Majorities of every subpopulation opposed using state tax credits to fund private school scholarships. Older residents were more likely to say no than younger residents. Women respondents were more opposed than males.

Figure 20. State tax credits to fund scholarships to private schools



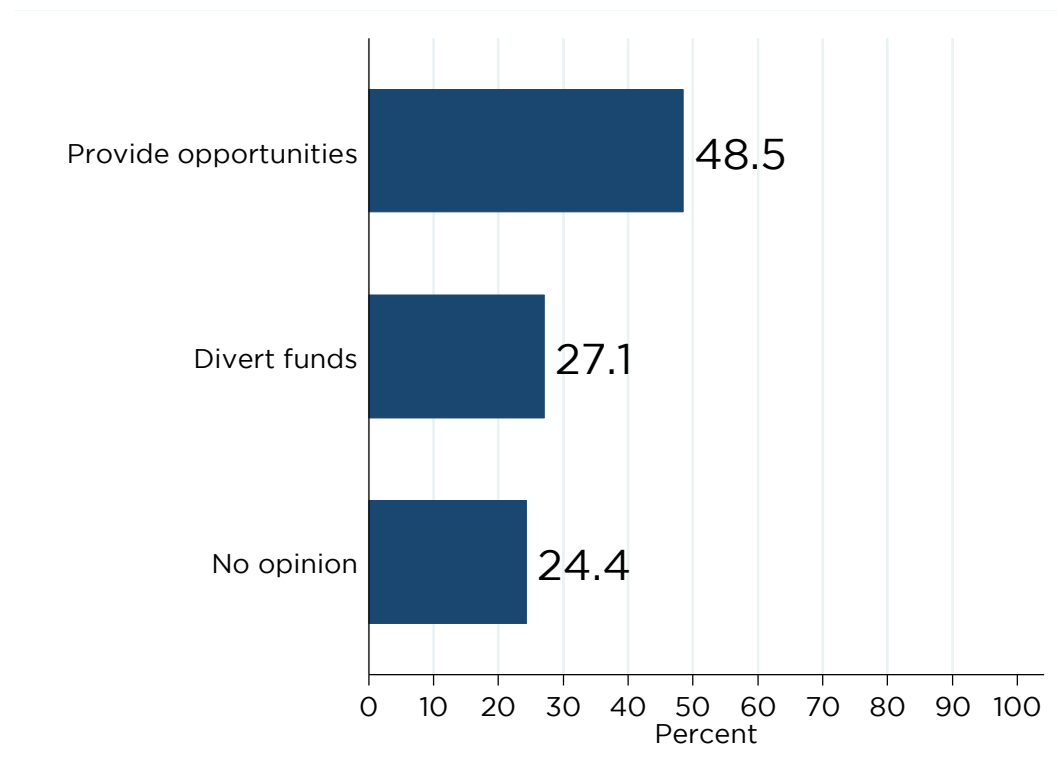
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We asked respondents about charter schools. Because charter schools are relatively new to the state, we read respondents a definition and described a range of opinions that people might hold:

Charter schools are public schools that receive tax dollars but operate outside the direct control of local school boards. Some people believe that charter schools divert funding from public schools. Other people believe charter schools provide opportunities for students who are not well served by traditional public schools.

We then asked if respondents thought charter schools diverted funds or provided opportunities for students. The results are presented in Figure 21. A plurality (48.5%) say that charter schools provide opportunities for students who are not well served by public schools. Nearly a quarter have no opinion, indicating that respondents are less familiar with charter schools than other topics addressed in the survey.

Figure 21. Charter school provide opportunity/divert funds

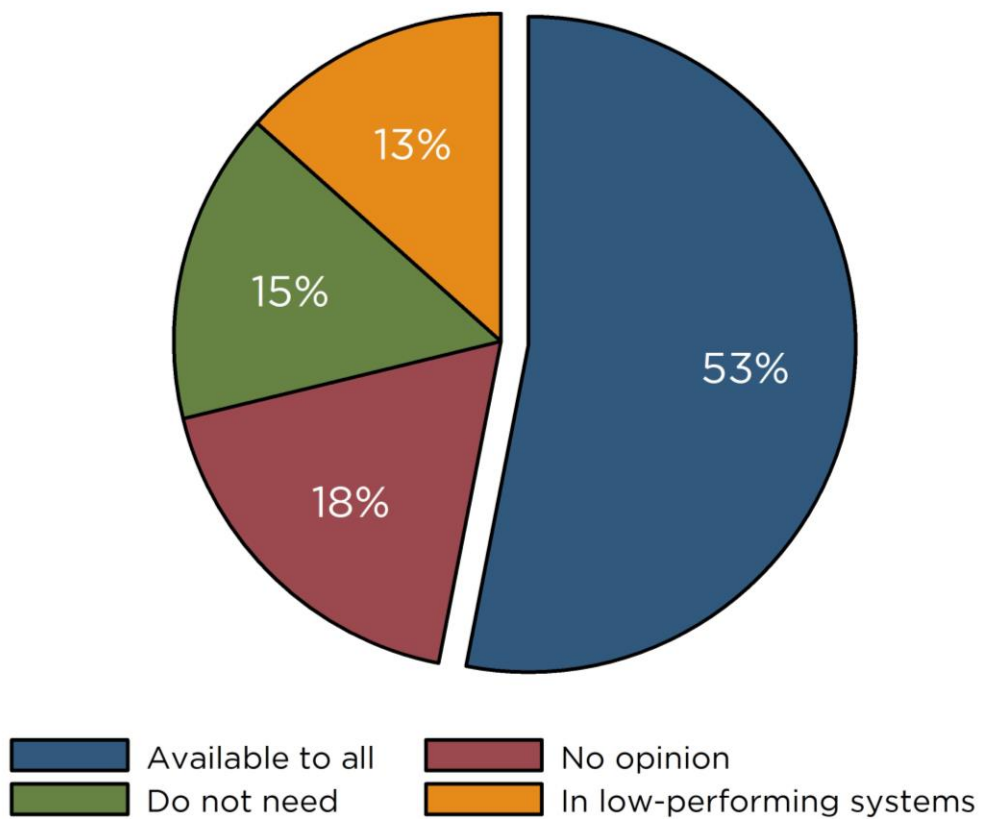


As a follow-up, we read respondents three statements about charter schools that covered a range of possible opinions and asked them which statement best described their opinion of charter schools. These statements were presented in random order:

- Charter schools should be available to every student statewide.
- Charter schools in Alabama should only be made available in low-performing school systems.
- Alabama does not need to increase access to charter schools.

The results are presented in Figure 22. A majority (53.1%) say charter schools should be available statewide. There were no significant differences across subpopulations. As with the previous charter school question, the large percentage of respondents with no opinion is indicative of a lack of familiarity with charter schools in the state.

Figure 22. Opinion of charter schools

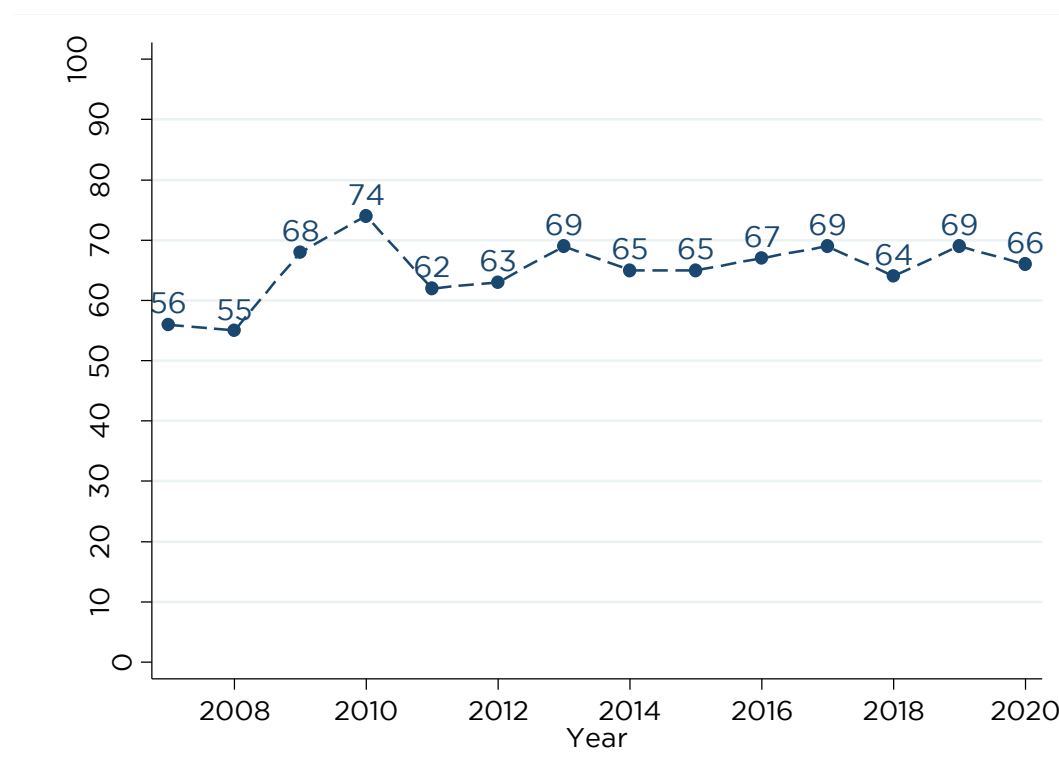


The responses should be read with caution. The data indicate that the public has less familiarity and understanding of charter schools than with other issues explored in the survey. Likewise, current state law allows charter schools statewide in any system where local leadership can generate interest, support, and secure approval of the local system or the State Charter School Commission.

## Relationship with State Government

For 14 years, we have included two items in the survey to assess Alabamians' relationships with state government. We ask respondents to agree or disagree with two statements. The first statement is "Government officials in Montgomery do not especially care what people like me think." The percentage agreeing or strongly agreeing is presented in Figure 23. There has been some movement in the series, but for the last several years, the percentage agreeing with the statement has been in the mid- to upper sixties. About two-thirds (66%) of respondents in 2020 agree or strongly agree that officials in Montgomery do not care what people like them think. Substantial majorities of every subpopulation agree with the statement. Among those with college or graduate degrees, the majorities are a little smaller. Similarly, independents and Democrats are more likely to agree with the statement.

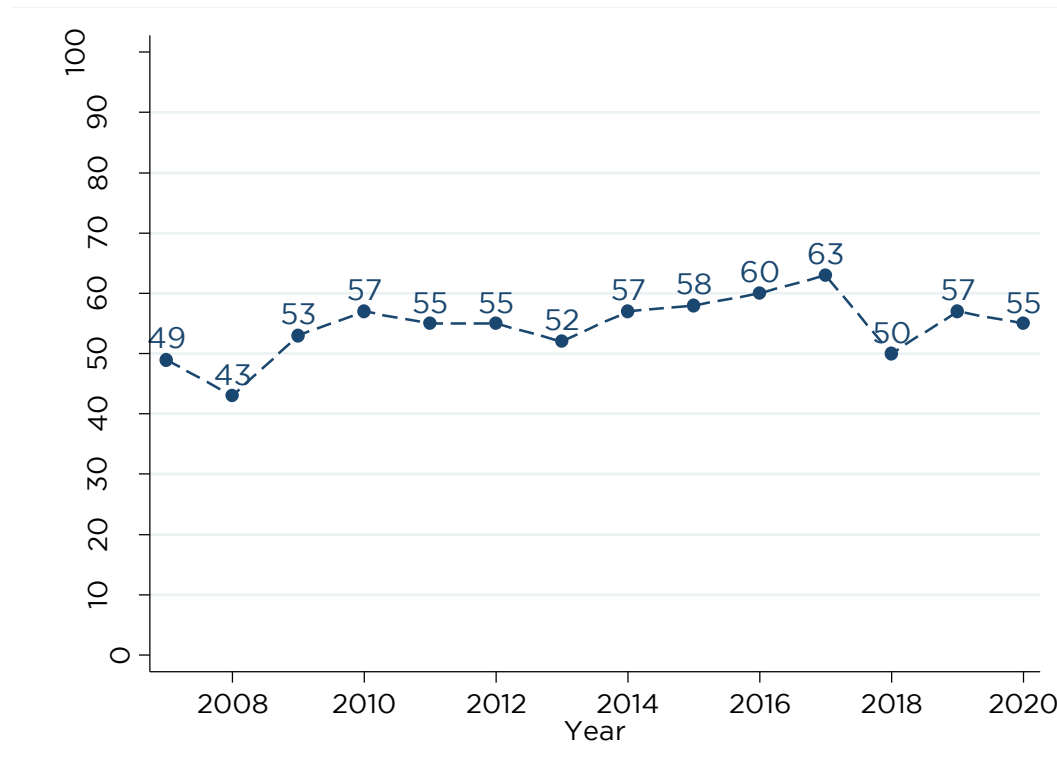
Figure 23. Officials in Montgomery do not care what people like me think



The second statement used to gauge respondents' relationships with state government is "people like me have no say in what the government in Montgomery does." The percentage agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement is presented in Figure 24. In most recent years, we see majorities in the mid-fifties agreeing with

the statement. In the 2020 survey, about 55% agreed that they have no say in what state government does. The view is broadly held. Only among those with graduate degrees or Republicans does the percentage agreeing dip below 50%.

Figure 24. People like me have no say in the government in Montgomery



## Conclusion

As has been the case in previous surveys, education remains a top priority for state residents. We also have learned that majorities or pluralities of Alabamians think all the major areas of state services are underfunded. A majority of respondents seem supportive of reforms in sales tax collection, either wanting the tax removed from grocery purchases or reforms to reduce dependence on sales tax generally. Further, a majority want local schools to get their share of sales taxes collected on online purchases. A plurality supports expansions of rehabilitative programs in prisons, particularly education and training, to prevent recidivism. Preferred responses to homelessness emphasize helping the homeless with treatment or taking steps to facilitate employment.

Education is a top priority for residents. A large majority think too little is spent on education and that the Education Trust Fund needs to be kept separate from the General Fund. A majority express a willingness to pay more in some tax to increase funding for education, although no specific revenue instrument is supported by a majority of respondents. Majorities think future lottery proceeds should go to education. If new revenue is available for education, Alabamians say it should be used to either increase teacher pay or to hire more teachers. Residents seem resistant to transferring public funds out of the public school system, as a majority oppose using state tax credits to fund scholarships to private schools. Majorities say school spending decisions should be made by local boards of education rather than state or federal institutions, and a plurality support having local boards make decisions about school calendars.

Taken as a whole, the survey indicates some dissatisfaction in Alabamians' relationships with state government and concerns with state government performance. For many years, majorities of residents have thought that government officials do not care what people like them think or that they have a say in what the state government does. Perhaps dissatisfaction with the level of funding for public education is a manifestation of this frustration. To be sure, Alabamians' diffuse support for the various tax mechanisms does not give policymakers an easy solution to funding education. The belief that other major areas of government are underfunded as well may signal concerns about performance as much as budget policy. Improving residents' relationships with state government may require acting on popular policy preferences or persuading Alabamians of the value of legislative and administrative actions.



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PARCA engaged Samford University students to conduct telephone surveys, providing valuable work experience and an opportunity to contribute to public policy in Alabama.

Natalie Armstrong	Thomas Gray
Shauntai Battle	Ta'Naisha Hill
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Jori Childs	Sarah Myers
Andrew Clark	Raven Omar
Kaitlyn Cole	Nia Ratliffe
Olivia Crozier	Sydney Sigler
Lauren Ducote	Katie Stanley
Emily Egan	Emmanuel Tait
Samantha Fitzgerald	Makaila Woolard

## Survey Toplines

2020 PARCA Survey Toplines  
 Conducted January 3-February 6, 2020  
 Statewide RDD sample, n=422  
 Margin of error +/- 4.77%

Weighted by race, gender, and age to match state demographics

I'm going to name four big investments the state makes with your tax dollars. If you had to choose just one of them as the most important service the state provides, which one of these would it be? [Randomized] which one of these services would you rank as the next most important?

Response categories: Education; Healthcare for the poor and the elderly; Highways; Public Safety, including prisons and law enforcement.

	Mean	Std. Err.
Education	1.862874	.0477818
Healthcare	2.125022	.0561599
Highways	3.251687	.0493924
Public Safety	2.760416	.0508205

Four big investments-Education   percentages	
1	43.01
2	35.6
3	13.47
4	7.914
Total	100

Key: percentages = cell percentages

Four big investments-Healthcare   percentages	
1	36.42
2	27.91
3	22.42
4	13.25
Total	100

Four big investments-Highways   percentages	
1	7.249
2	13.84
3	25.4
4	53.51
Total	100

Four investments-Public Safety   percentages	
1	13.32
2	22.65
3	38.71
4	25.33
Total	100

Do you think there is too little, too much, or enough money now being spent on [ITEM] in Alabama? *Note: Same categories as previous question.*

Too little, too much, or enough money spent on Education	percentages
Too much	4.116
Enough	12.4
Too little	78.44
No opinion	5.041
Total	100

Too little, too much, or enough money spent on Healthcare	percentages
Too much	4.143
Enough	12.18
Too little	69.13
No opinion	14.55
Total	100

Too little, too much, or enough money spent on Highways	percentages
Too much	11.17
Enough	29.61
Too little	49.28
No opinion	9.948
Total	100

Too little, too much, or enough money spent on Public Safety	percentages
Too much	7.93
Enough	22.74
Too little	53.91
No opinion	15.42
Total	100

Thinking about how much you pay in state and local taxes here in Alabama, do you think people like you in neighboring states pay more, less, or about the same in state and local taxes?

Amt. people like you in other states pay in S&L taxes	percentages
More	27.02
Same	33.4
Less	24.36
No opinion	15.22
Total	100

Next, I want to ask you about how much different people in Alabama are paying in state and local taxes. For each group I name, let me know if you think they are paying too much, too little, or about the right amount in state and local taxes. First, would you say that you and people like you in Alabama are paying too much, too little, or about the right amount in state and local taxes? [AFTER ANSWER: How about [NEXT ITEM]?

How much tax--You and people like you	percentages
Too much	39.26
Right amount	48.04
Too little	5.671
No opinion	7.033
Total	100

How much tax--People w/lower income	percentages
Too much	49.36
Right amount	27.64
Too little	9.34
No opinion	13.66
Total	100

How much tax--People w/middle income	percentages
Too much	30.16
Right amount	48.97
Too little	10.76
No opinion	10.11
Total	100

How much tax--People w/upper income	percentages
Too much	13.67
Right amount	21.32
Too little	51.47
No opinion	13.54
Total	100

The State of Alabama has two separate budgets. The biggest budget is for education and is funded mostly by state income and sales tax dollars. Other state programs are funded from a smaller general fund budget. Some policymakers want to combine the two budgets, to give the legislature more control over state spending. [ROTATE] Do you favor combining the two state budgets into one, or keeping education dollars in a separate budget? [ALTERNATE WITH THIS TEXT] Do you favor keeping education dollars in a separate budget, or combining the two state budgets into one?

Keep education dollars separate or combine budgets	percentages
Combine budgets	14.47
Keep education separate	79.82
No opinion	5.711
Total	100

I'm going to list some ways to increase funding for education. would you be willing to increase funding for education by paying higher [Items randomized]? How about [next item]? How about [next item]?

Pay more sales tax for education | percentages

Yes	35.88
No	61.44
No opinion	2.676
Total	100

Pay more Internet tax for education | percentages

Yes	48
No	44.9
No opinion	7.099
Total	100

Pay more property tax for education | percentages

Yes	37.62
No	55.22
No opinion	7.166
Total	100

willing to pay one of these taxes | percentages

Yes	69.18
No	29.79
No opinion	1.035
Total	100

If the state legislature approves a state lottery, should the proceeds go to fund public education in the Education Trust Fund or general government services in the General Fund?

Lottery proceeds should go to | percentages

Education Trust Fund	66.38
Both	15.64
General Fund	12.73
No opinion	5.245
Total	100

What would be your top priority for spending NEW education dollars?  
[Randomized]Response categories: Hiring additional K-12 teachers; increasing teacher salary and benefits; hiring school counselors and providing mental health support; hiring additional school safety officers; or something else.

| percentages

Hiring additional K-12 teachers	19.87
Increasing teacher salary and be	41.14
Hiring counselors/providing ment	13.69
Hiring additional school safety	9.19
Something else	11.82
No opinion	4.296
Total	100

which level of government is best equipped to make decisions about spending for public schools in your area? would you say it is the federal government, the state legislature, the state board of education, or the local board of education?

	percentages
Federal government	3.657
State Legislature	5.131
State BOE	26.83
Local BOE	58.78
No opinion	5.609
Total	100

which level of government should set the school year calendar? would you say it is the federal government, the state legislature, the state board of education, or the local board of education?

	percentages
Federal government	4.879
State Legislature	3.101
State BOE	41.46
Local BOE	45.08
No opinion	5.481
Total	100

should state tax credits be used to fund scholarships to private schools?

	percentages
Yes	34.58
No	59.16
No opinion	6.253
Total	100

Charter schools are public schools that receive tax dollars but operate outside the direct control of local school boards. Some people believe that charter schools divert funding from public schools. Other people believe charter schools provide opportunities for students who are not well served by traditional public schools. what do you think? Do charter school divert funds from traditional public schools, or do they provide opportunities that traditional public schools do not?

Charter schools divert/provide opportunities	percentages
Provide opportunities	48.45
Divert funds	27.11
No opinion	24.44
Total	100

I'm going to read three statements. Tell me which statement best describes your opinion of charter schools.

Randomized

1. Charter schools should be available to every student statewide.
2. Charter schools in Alabama should only be made available in low-performing school systems.
3. Alabama does not need to increase access to charter schools.

Charter school statements	percentages
Available to all	53.07
Only low-performing schools	13.39
Do not need	15.4
No opinion	18.14
Total	100

Alabamians pay sales taxes on almost all purchases, whether in stores or online. Sales taxes collected in stores stay in the local community. Taxes on Internet sales are collected by the state and distributed to local communities through a population-based formula. Some counties and cities pledge a portion of their sales tax revenue to support the local schools. Should Internet sales tax revenues be included in this pledge?

	percentages
Yes	76.49
No	15.78
No opinion	7.73
Total	100

We want to ask you about your thoughts about ways to improve things in Alabama. For each of the next few items, please tell me which of the proposals would be your top priority for addressing the issue, if something else should be done, or if you have no opinion.

When thinking about kindergarten through 12th grade education, what is your top priority? Randomized response categories: Fully fund pre-K for all students; strengthen the requirements for becoming a teacher; reduce class sizes; provide extra funding for schools with large numbers of low-income students; or something else.

Top priority for K-12 education	percentages
Fully fund pre-K	19.31
Strengthen teacher requirements	12.07
Reduce class size	28.29
Extra funds low-income schools	28.87
Something else	6.411
No opinion	5.051
Total	100

**When thinking about Healthcare, what is your top priority?** Randomized response categories: Expand Medicaid to cover poor adults; promote more competition between health insurance companies to try to lower prices; allow cheaper prescription drugs to be imported from Canada; increase state funding for rural hospitals; or something else.

Top priority for healthcare	percentages
Expand Medicaid	25.34
Promote insurance competition	35
Import drugs	14.66
Extra funds for rural hospitals	12.12
Something else	9.19
No opinion	3.683
Total	100

**When thinking about Homelessness, what is your top priority?** Randomized response categories: Expand access to mental health and drug treatment for homeless adults; make it illegal to sleep on the streets; make it illegal to panhandle; provide free or very low-cost state IDs to homeless adults to help with their job search; or something else.

Top priority for homelessness	percentages
Expand treatment	44.59
Illegal to sleep on streets	3.725
Illegal to panhandle	4.19
Low cost IDs	28
Something else	15.01
No opinion	4.478
Total	100

**When thinking about Prison overcrowding, what is your top priority?**

Randomized response categories: Find safe ways to move nonviolent inmates back to the community; invest in education or training programs in prison to rehabilitate inmates so they don't return to prison; end the practice of returning people to prison for minor probation or parole violations; sentence only violent offenders to prison; supervise others in the community; or something else.

Top priority for prison overcrowding	percentages
Build prisons	7.495
Nonviolent to community	14.05
Training in prison	43.13
Tolerate minor probation/parole	6.906
Only violent to prison	13.34
Something else	9.416
No opinion	5.673
Total	100

**When thinking about Taxes, what is your top priority?** Randomized response categories: Eliminate the state income tax deduction for federal income taxes paid; restructure the tax system so that the state is not dependent on sales tax; increase property taxes on timber and other undeveloped land; reduce or eliminate the sales tax on groceries; cut taxes; or something else.

Top priority for taxes	percentages
Scrap Fed tax deduction	3.968
Reduce dependence on sales tax	17.39
Raise tax on undeveloped land	9.445
Reduce/strike grocery tax	35.41
Cut taxes	9.074
Something else	12.87
No opinion	11.84
Total	100

**When thinking about Jobs and the workforce, what is your top priority?**

Randomized response categories: Loosen restrictions on low-level marijuana use so it is not a barrier to employment; require all high school students to complete an internship or earn a professional credential or certification; increase the minimum wage; provide free community college to high school graduates with a B average; or something else.



Top priority for jobs and the workforce	percentages
Decriminalize pot use	16.91
Require HS internship/certificat	18.7
Raise min wage	18.74
Free community coll for HS grads	27.89
Something else	11.79
No opinion	5.972
Total	100

Now I'm going to read some statements. Please indicate whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each statement.

Government officials in Montgomery do not especially care what people like me think.

	percentages
Strongly Disagree	1.229
Disagree	19.23
Neither Agree nor Disagree	12.91
Agree	31.78
Strongly Agree	33.67
No opinion	1.187
Total	100

People like me have no say in what the government in Montgomery does.

	percentages
Strongly Disagree	3.08
Disagree	31.28
Neither Agree nor Disagree	9.292
Agree	29.16
Strongly Agree	25.9
No opinion	1.281
Total	100





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