



The U.S. Education Climate: Mothers' Views, Experiences, and Insights



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Prepared by

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Mothers**

Count of Mothers:

669



TABLE OF CONTENTS

01.

Study Overview.....3

02.

Methodology.....4

03.

Key Takeaways.....6

04.

Qualitative Data & Insights.....7

05.

Analysis of Survey Results.....8

06.

Summary & Conclusion.....25

07.

Recommendations From Mothers.....27

08.

Demographics.....27



The U.S. Education Climate: Mothers' Views, Experiences, and Insights

Count on Mothers provides legislators, industry leaders, and policymakers with comprehensive first-hand real-time data to help them make more informed decisions. Each issue or policy that we examine is selected based on what surveyed mothers have indicated they want to address, reflecting the priorities of mothers from across the country and political spectrum. We survey mothers because they are the largest group charged with the well-being of children. Every mother is welcomed to contribute to our efforts. We do this work because we believe that mothers' first-hand experiences are a critical source of information, essential to the policymaking process.

This report focuses on information Count on Mothers collected in September 2024 on mothers' views and firsthand experiences in regard to their district public school. We compiled the results to find out the proportion of mothers who send their children to public, private, home, or charter schools, whether they would leave their chosen school if they had the option, and their sentiment around their district public school. In addition, we looked at the potential reasons public school enrollment has dropped over the past five years – specifically, the main problems mothers had who would leave public school if they had the option, and the main problems mothers had with public school who opted for private, charter, or home. **A total of 669 Mothers residing in 46 states and from across the political spectrum provided feedback based on their first-hand knowledge.**

Mothers identified politically within the given choice of very conservative, conservative, moderate, liberal, or very liberal. Count on Mothers tallies political affiliation, states of residence, zip codes, ethnicity, number of children, and level of education in order to ensure a representative sample and to study where Mothers agree regardless of ideology. After analyzing Mothers' opinions from the survey, we take this aggregate data and share it with policymakers and the public so they are educated on Mothers' firsthand experiences and views on pressing issues and on the policies that affect children and families that seek to address those issues.



METHODOLOGY

Design

This process uses a mixed qualitative-quantitative research design. Cross-sectional surveys were distributed in September 2024.

Instrument

A survey was constructed based on the school climate criteria of the **National School Climate Center** to gauge a general understanding of mothers' real-time views on school environments and to find potential reasons for the drop in public school enrollment. The instrument measured the proportion of chosen school-type, whether mothers would change school-type if they had the option, sentiment regarding their school climate, and trust in public school teachers and administrators. An open-ended question was used for more nuanced responses, specifically to find the potential reasons families leave or opt-out of public school. The survey also assessed Mothers' political ideology, state/ zip code of residence, ethnicity, number of children, and level of education to better understand the sample demographics.

Statistical Analysis

Open-ended responses were analyzed for content and grouped thematically. For demographic characteristics, we evaluated differences between groups using chi-square tests. The statistical significance level was set at 0.05. This means that if a particular characteristic has a p-value of 0.05 or less, we can be 95% certain that the difference in the groups is not attributed to chance alone. The lower the p-value, the more confident we can be that there are true differences between the groups. JMP®, Version 17.0.0. SAS Institute Inc., Cary, NC, 1989–2023 was used for data analysis.

Sampling Procedure

Count on Mothers employs both purposive and snowball sampling strategies. Concerted efforts were made to advertise and distribute the survey to and invite participation of as many mothers as possible. For instance, we created Google advertisements, Instagram-based announcements, and posts in mothers' Instagram groups that consist of participants from across the political spectrum. Additionally, mothers who receive the questionnaire are encouraged to distribute the survey to other mothers who they believe would be interested in sharing their perspectives. At the end of the month, we collect additional responses to fulfill the needed distribution.



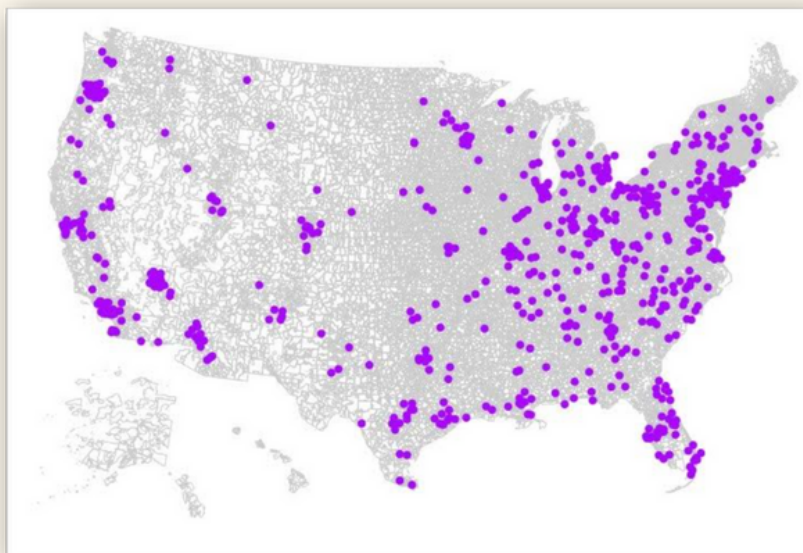
Sample

669 mothers from 46 states completed the survey focused on the U.S. education climate. Efforts were made to ensure that survey respondents reflected a range of political ideologies, from very conservative to very liberal. **Of the 669 Mothers who identified politically, 14.5% identified as very conservative, 17.2% identified as conservative, 34.2% identified as moderate, 19.9% identified as liberal, 12.4% identified as very liberal, and 1.8% identified as other.**

While national data on Mothers' political ideologies has not been identified, studies have examined the political ideologies of women, in general. According to a recent Gallup Poll (2021), 32% of women identified as conservative, 37% of women identified as moderate, and 29% of women identified as liberal. Count on Mothers will continue to invite the participation of Mothers across the political spectrum so that our sample closely mirrors these national trends.

66.5% of respondents reported having 1 or 2 children, which is slightly higher than the National average reported in 2014 ([Pew Research Center](#)). The race and ethnicity of mothers surveyed were similarly distributed to the U.S. National distributions ([2020 US Census](#)). Among mothers surveyed, 36.3% have a college degree or higher, while 63.7% of mothers reported having some college (but no degree) or less.

Thank you to all of the moms who joined the count!





KEY TAKEAWAYS

STRONG PARTICIPATION AND TRUST IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

At least 7 in 10 American families send their kids to public school.

Mothers overwhelmingly hold positive views of their district public schools. Seventy-four percent of mothers send their children to public schools, and of those, 74% believe their school fosters a physically safe and emotionally supportive environment. Additionally, 75% of all mothers trust the teachers in public schools and 65% of all mothers trust public school administrators to deliver positive academic outcomes, indicating a strong baseline of confidence.

CONCERNS ABOUT BULLYING, SAFETY, AND ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOUNTABILITY

Nearly 1 in 2 mothers whose kids attend public school cite bullying and safety as their number one issue.

While most mothers trust their district public schools, 36% report that bullying or safety is a key concern, and of those whose kids currently attend public school 46% cite bullying or safety. Many view school leadership as central to improving safety and support. Mothers' concerns reflect a desire for greater accountability and responsiveness from administrators.

INTEREST IN SWITCHING ACROSS ALL SCHOOL TYPES

The desire to switch school type is not a public school phenomenon.

40% of mothers who send their children to public schools would leave if they could; but interestingly, about 20% of private school mothers would switch schools if given the opportunity, along with 27% of those who currently attend charter or homeschool. This suggests that school satisfaction is not solely a public school issue.

IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

A significant number of American mothers believe improved school climate is critical.

Mothers highlight safety, mental health support, and academic resources as their top priorities for schools. These concerns point to specific areas where targeted support and resources could improve educational experiences and outcomes for American families.



QUALITATIVE DATA & INSIGHTS

When asked, “What’s the most important problem to solve in your district’s public school (whether your kids attend or not)?” mothers consistently pointed to four key concerns:

- **Bullying**
- **Safety**
- **Inadequate funding**
- **Academics/curriculum quality**

Among these, bullying and safety were by far the most frequently cited issues. Nearly four in ten mothers who responded to this open-ended question identified concerns about bullying and overall school safety, with many feeling that teachers and administrators are failing to adequately address these problems.

Patterns in School Dissatisfaction

Cross-tabulation of responses reveals notable trends:

- Among public school mothers who would switch schools if given the opportunity, nearly half (46%) cited bullying and safety as their top concerns (see Table 6c).
- Mothers who do not send their children to public schools were more likely to cite academics and funding as the biggest challenges, rather than bullying or safety.

Key Takeaways

- While 76% of mothers agree that their child’s school fosters an emotionally supportive and physically safe environment, qualitative responses reveal the areas where mothers are concerned and may suggest a deeper layer of dissatisfaction in those who believe the school fosters a safe and supportive environment. Overall, the two main categories of concern were either bullying and safety or funding and academic outcomes. These insights highlight the need for stronger anti-bullying initiatives, improved communication between schools and parents, increased funding, and greater accountability in academic standards.
- Cross-tabulating responses about the “most important problems to solve” with those from mothers who would switch out of public school if they could reveals a striking pattern: **nearly half of those seeking to leave public schools cite safety and bullying as primary concerns, while mothers outside of the public school system are more likely to point to academics and funding.**
- This finding suggests that parents who actively choose private or alternative schooling may do so due to concerns about academics or funding, while those currently in public schools and also discontent are more focused on safety and bullying-related challenges.



ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESULTS

1. What type of school does your school age child(ren) attend?

The question of school type is central to understanding mothers' views on the public school climate—whether they choose public schools, what drives that decision, and how they assess the most pressing issues in U.S. education. According to our survey data, the majority of American mothers (74%) currently send their children to public schools, followed by 8% who homeschool and 6% who choose private schools (Table 1a). A deeper examination reveals that education level and family size are key factors influencing school choice. Among mothers who send their children to private schools, 68% have a college degree, compared to only 33% of those without a degree (Table 1b). Notably, all mothers who send their children to parochial (religious-based) schools have a college degree. While the parochial school sample size is small, this trend suggests that higher education levels may correlate with a preference for private or religious-based schooling, potentially due to perceived quality, values-based education, and access to resources.

The number of children a mother has is also a statistically significant predictor of school choice, with larger families more likely to choose public schools, likely due to financial and logistical considerations. Political affiliation showed only a marginal influence on school choice, suggesting that while political ideology may shape broader attitudes toward education, it is not a decisive factor in school selection (Table 1c). Race and ethnicity also did not show a statistically significant impact, though differences in access to school options could be explored further in a larger, more diverse sample. These findings highlight that school choice is shaped primarily by practical and socioeconomic factors—education level and family size—rather than ideological or racial influences. The next phase of this study will explore the reasons behind these decisions, whether mothers would switch schools if they could, and what conditions might drive such a shift.

Table 1a.

	# of Respondents	% of Sample
Public	493	73.7%
Home-school	53	7.9%
Private	40	6.0%
Charter	38	5.7%
Parochial (religious)	8	1.2%
Other	37	5.5%
Grand Total	669	100.0%



**What type of school does your school age child(ren) attend?
by No College Degree vs. College Degree**

Table 1b.

School Type		Public	Home-school	Private	Charter	Parochial (religious)	Other	TOTAL
No college degree	# of respondents	259	26	13	17	0	20	335
	Row %	52.5%	49.1%	32.5%	44.7%	0.0%	54.1%	
	Total %	38.7%	3.9%	1.9%	2.5%	0.0%	3.0%	50.1%
College degree	# of respondents	234	27	27	21	8	17	334
	Row %	47.5%	50.9%	67.5%	55.3%	100.0%	45.9%	
	Total %	35.0%	4.0%	4.0%	3.1%	1.2%	2.5%	49.9%
Total		493	53	40	38	8	37	669



What type of school does your school age child(ren) attend? by Political Affiliation

Table 1c.

Very Liberal	# of Respondents	% of Sample	Liberal	# of Respondents	% of Sample
Public	68	81.9%	Public	106	79.7%
Home-school	4	4.8%	Home-school	5	3.8%
Private	4	4.8%	Private	8	6.0%
Charter	3	3.6%	Charter	6	4.5%
Parochial (religious)	0	0.0%	Parochial (religious)	2	1.5%
Other	4	4.8%	Other	6	4.5%
Grand Total	83	100.0%	Grand Total	133	100.0%

Moderate	# of Respondents	% of Sample	Conservative	# of Respondents	% of Sample
Public	167	72.9%	Public	79	68.7%
Home-school	17	7.4%	Home-school	9	7.8%
Private	8	3.5%	Private	11	9.6%
Charter	19	8.3%	Charter	7	6.1%
Parochial (religious)	1	0.4%	Parochial (religious)	3	2.6%
Other	17	7.4%	Other	6	5.2%
Grand Total	229	100.0%	Grand Total	115	100.0%

Very Conservative	# of Respondents	% of Sample
Public	66	68.0%
Home-school	15	15.5%
Private	8	8.2%
Charter	2	2.1%
Parochial (religious)	2	2.1%
Other)	4	4.1%
Grand Total	97	100.0%



2. Agree or Disagree: I would change the type of school my kid(s) attend(s), if I had the option.

A significant portion of mothers would change their child's school type if given the option, highlighting underlying dissatisfaction or unmet needs within the current education system. **About 37% of mothers stated they would change their child's school, while 40% would not, and 23% were unsure** (Table 2a, Chart 2a). Notably, 41% of mothers who send their children to public schools agreed or strongly agreed that they would change schools if possible—a higher rate than among mothers using other types of schools.

Interestingly, dissatisfaction is not confined to public school parents. Among those sending children to parochial (13%), private (18%), charter (26%), and homeschooling (27%), a notable portion also expressed a willingness to change school types. This suggests that even among those with more selective school options, unmet expectations or logistical challenges may be driving dissatisfaction. However, it's important to consider that mothers who have already opted for alternative school types likely made that choice based on specific dissatisfaction with public schools or alignment with personal values. This may naturally reduce their likelihood of wanting to switch schools again, making direct comparisons between public and non-public school parents more complex.

Education level, race/ethnicity, political affiliation, and current school type all emerged as statistically significant predictors of whether a mother would prefer to change her child's school. **Mothers without a college degree were more likely to express a desire to switch schools (56%) than those with a degree (44%),** suggesting that factors like affordability, access, or perceived quality could be influencing this preference. Political affiliation also played a role: liberal mothers were less likely to want to change schools (29%) compared to moderates (39%), conservatives (41%), and very conservatives (40%) (Table 2b). Race/ethnicity was also significant, suggesting that different racial or ethnic groups may face distinct challenges or limitations in the school options available to them. Interestingly, the number of children in a family did not significantly influence whether a mother would prefer to change schools, underscoring that school satisfaction is more closely tied to educational, political, and demographic factors than to family size. These findings point to complex motivations behind school choice and suggest that addressing quality, access, and alignment with personal values may be key to improving school satisfaction for mothers across different backgrounds.



Distribution of moms who would change their kids school type by School Type

Table 2a.

School Type		Agree/ Strongly Disagree	Unsure	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Total
Public	# of respondents	202	109	182	493
	Row %	41.0%	22.1%	36.9%	
	Total %	30.2%	16.3%	27.2%	73.7%
Home-school	# of respondents	14	10	29	53
	Row %	26.4%	18.9%	54.7%	
	Total %	2.1%	1.5%	4.3%	7.9%
Private	# of respondents	7	9	24	40
	Row %	17.5%	22.5%	60.0%	
	Total %	1.0%	1.3%	3.6%	6.0%
Charter	# of respondents	10	8	20	38
	Row %	26.3%	21.1%	52.6%	
	Total %	1.5%	1.2%	3.0%	5.7%
Parochial (religious)	# of respondents	1	3	4	8
	Row %	12.5%	37.5%	50.0%	
	Total %	0.1%	0.4%	0.6%	1.2%
Other	# of respondents	15	12	10	37
	Row %	40.5%	32.4%	27.0%	
	Total %	2.2%	1.8%	1.5%	5.5%
Total		249	151	269	669



Distribution of moms who would change their child's school type by Self-reported Political Affiliation

Table 2b.

Very Liberal	# of Respondents	% of Sample	Liberal	# of Respondents	% of Sample
Strongly agree	18	21.7%	Strongly agree	20	15.0%
Agree	12	14.5%	Agree	18	13.5%
Unsure	17	20.5%	Unsure	24	18.0%
Disagree	13	15.7%	Disagree	39	29.3%
Strongly disagree	23	27.7%	Strongly disagree	32	24.1%
Grand Total	83	100.0%	Grand Total	133	100.0%

Moderate	# of Respondents	% of Sample	Conservative	# of Respondents	% of Sample
Strongly agree	44	19.2%	Strongly agree	19	16.5%
Agree	46	20.1%	Agree	28	24.3%
Unsure	60	26.2%	Unsure	33	28.7%
Disagree	49	21.4%	Disagree	18	15.7%
Strongly disagree	30	13.1%	Strongly disagree	17	14.8%
Grand Total	229	100.0%	Grand Total	115	100.0%

Very Conservative	# of Respondents	% of Sample
Strongly agree	23	23.7%
Agree	16	16.5%
Unsure	14	14.4%
Disagree	22	22.7%
Strongly disagree	22	22.7%
Grand Total	97	100.0%



3. My school fosters an emotionally supportive, physically safe environment.

A majority of mothers—approximately **76%**—**agree or strongly agree that their child’s school fosters an emotionally supportive and physically safe environment** (Table 3a). This overall sense of security and support reflects a positive perception of school climate among most mothers, but there are notable differences by school type. Mothers whose children attend parochial (100%), charter (95%), and private schools (90%) report higher levels of agreement compared to those whose children attend public schools (74%) (Table 3c). These differences suggest that the controlled environments, smaller class sizes, or value alignment often associated with non-public schools may contribute to greater feelings of emotional and physical security. However, the fact that **nearly three-quarters of public school mothers still perceive a positive climate** points to a broad baseline of satisfaction across different educational settings.

Political affiliation also plays a role in shaping mothers’ perceptions of school climate, though the differences are less pronounced than those based on school type. Across most political groups—very liberal, liberal, moderate, and conservative—agreement rates cluster between 71% and 77%, indicating general consistency in how mothers evaluate school safety and support. Interestingly, very conservative mothers report significantly higher levels of agreement (91%), suggesting that this group may have a stronger alignment with the values or policies reflected in their school environment, or perhaps a greater tendency to view schools through a more trusting lens (Table 3b).

Statistical analysis confirms that political affiliation and school type are significant predictors of whether a mother believes her child’s school fosters a safe and supportive environment. However, other demographic factors—such as education level, race/ethnicity, and number of children—do not show a statistically significant relationship with perceptions of school climate. This suggests that a mother’s political outlook and the type of school her child attends are more influential in shaping her perception of school safety and support than her background or household structure.

The data points to a complex but largely positive outlook on school climate among mothers. While non-public school mothers report higher levels of satisfaction, the relatively strong agreement among public school mothers underscores that, for many families, public schools are perceived as providing a secure and supportive environment. The relatively minor variation across political groups suggests that school climate is a broadly shared concern that transcends ideological divides, reinforcing the importance of fostering emotionally and physically secure learning environments across all school types.



Distribution of moms in agreement that their school fosters an emotionally supportive, physically safe environment.

Table 3a.

	# of Respondents	% of Sample
Strongly agree	237	35.4%
Agree	271	40.5%
Unsure	110	16.4%
Disagree	37	5.5%
Strongly disagree	14	2.1%
Grand Total	669	100.0%

--- by Self-reported Political Affiliation

Table 3b.

Very Liberal	# of Respondents	% of Sample
Strongly agree	41	49.4%
Agree	23	27.7%
Unsure	15	18.1%
Disagree	2	2.4%
Strongly disagree	2	2.4%
Grand Total	83	100.0%

Liberal	# of Respondents	% of Sample
Strongly agree	42	31.6%
Agree	61	45.9%
Unsure	17	12.8%
Disagree	13	9.8%
Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
Grand Total	133	100.0%

Moderate	# of Respondents	% of Sample
Strongly agree	66	28.8%
Agree	96	41.9%
Unsure	50	21.8%
Disagree	10	4.4%
Strongly disagree	7	3.1%
Grand Total	229	100.0%

Conservative	# of Respondents	% of Sample
Strongly agree	36	31.3%
Agree	48	41.7%
Unsure	19	16.5%
Disagree	10	8.7%
Strongly disagree	2	1.7%
Grand Total	115	100.0%

Very Conservative	# of Respondents	% of Sample
Strongly agree	48	49.5%
Agree	40	41.2%
Unsure	5	5.2%
Disagree	1	1.0%
Strongly disagree	3	3.1%
Grand Total	97	100.0%



Distribution of moms in agreement that their school fosters a safe environment by School Type

Table 3c.

School Type		Agree/ Strongly Disagree	Unsure	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Total
Public	# of respondents	364	86	43	493
	Row %	73.8%	17.4%	8.7%	
	Total %	54.4%	12.9%	6.4%	73.7%
Home-school	# of respondents	41	6	6	53
	Row %	77.4%	11.3%	11.3%	
	Total %	6.1%	0.9%	0.9%	7.9%
Private	# of respondents	36	4	0	40
	Row %	90.0%	10.0%	0.0%	
	Total %	5.4%	0.6%	0.0%	6.0%
Charter	# of respondents	36	2	0	38
	Row %	94.7%	5.3%	0.0%	
	Total %	5.4%	0.3%	0.0%	5.7%
Parochial (religious)	# of respondents	8	0	0	8
	Row %	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
	Total %	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%
Other	# of respondents	23	12	2	37
	Row %	62.2%	32.4%	5.4%	
	Total %	3.4%	1.8%	0.3%	5.5%
Total		508	110	51	669



4. Overall, I trust the teachers in my public school to help my child(ren) reach successful academic goals.

Approximately 75% of mothers trust the teachers in their public schools to help their children reach successful academic outcomes (Table 4a). This reflects a broad level of confidence in public school teachers, with over 70% agreement across most political groups. However, mothers who self-identify as very liberal reported the highest levels of trust, with 84% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they trust their child's teachers—somewhat higher than the 72%–76% agreement among other political groups (Table 4b).

Chi-square tests revealed that political affiliation is the only statistically significant factor influencing mothers' trust in public school teachers. This suggests that political outlook may shape how mothers evaluate teacher effectiveness, even when other demographic factors remain constant. Notably, the number of children, education level, and race/ethnicity were not statistically significant predictors of teacher trust.

These findings align with broader patterns in the study, where political views appear to influence mothers' perspectives on schooling and education quality more than other personal characteristics. The high overall trust in teachers contrasts somewhat with the previously reported desire to switch school types (37%), suggesting that while many mothers respect and trust their children's teachers, systemic issues like safety, curriculum alignment, or school culture may still be driving dissatisfaction. This underscores the complexity of school satisfaction—confidence in teachers does not necessarily translate to contentment with the broader educational environment.

Distribution of moms in agreement in trusting the teachers in their public school to help their child(ren) reach successful academic outcomes

Table 4a.

	# of Respondents	% of Sample
Strongly agree	211	31.7%
Agree	285	42.8%
Unsure	106	15.9%
Disagree	40	6.0%
Strongly disagree	24	3.6%
Grand Total	666	100.0%



Distribution of moms in agreement that their school fosters a safe environment by Self-reported Political Affiliation

Table 4b.

Very Liberal	# of Respondents	% of Sample	Liberal	# of Respondents	% of Sample
Strongly agree	38	45.8%	Strongly agree	46	35.1%
Agree	32	38.6%	Agree	54	41.2%
Unsure	9	10.8%	Unsure	22	16.8%
Disagree	2	2.4%	Disagree	8	6.1%
Strongly disagree	2	2.5%	Strongly disagree	1	0.8%
Grand Total	83	100.0%	Grand Total	131	100.0%

Moderate	# of Respondents	% of Sample	Conservative	# of Respondents	% of Sample
Strongly agree	56	24.6%	Strongly agree	36	31.3%
Agree	109	47.8%	Agree	48	41.7%
Unsure	48	21.1%	Unsure	18	15.7%
Disagree	10	4.4%	Disagree	8	7.0%
Strongly disagree	5	2.2%	Strongly disagree	5	4.3%
Grand Total	228	100.0%	Grand Total	115	100.0%

Very Conservative	# of Respondents	% of Sample
Strongly agree	34	35.1%
Agree	38	39.2%
Unsure	7	7.2%
Disagree	9	9.3%
Strongly disagree	9	9.3%
Grand Total	97	100.0%



5. Overall, I trust the public school administrators (principal, assistant principal, superintendent) in my district to ensure successful educational outcomes.

Over 65% of mothers surveyed trust their public school administrators—including principals, assistant principals, and superintendents—to ensure successful educational outcomes for their children (Table 5a). While this is a lower level of trust than mothers reported for teachers (75%), it still represents a solid majority expressing confidence in school leadership. The proportion of mothers who agree or strongly agree is fairly consistent across political affiliations, ranging from 61% to 67%, with the exception of very liberal mothers, who show the highest level of trust at 78% (Table 5b).

Political affiliation and race/ethnicity are statistically significant predictors of trust in public school administrators.

This suggests that both ideological outlook and demographic factors shape how mothers evaluate school leadership. Meanwhile, the number of children a mother has and education level do not significantly influence trust in administrators.

These findings align with broader trends observed in this study. While trust in teachers is relatively high across the board, confidence in school leadership is more nuanced, particularly across political and racial/ethnic lines. **The gap between trust in teachers (75%) and trust in administrators (65%) suggests that while many mothers have confidence in the educators working directly with their children, they may be more skeptical about decision-making at the administrative level.** This could be influenced by concerns about district policies, school governance, or responsiveness to parental input.

Furthermore, this data connects with previous findings on school climate and satisfaction. While a majority of mothers (77%) agree that their schools foster an emotionally supportive and physically safe environment, over a third (37%) would switch school types if given the chance, and 46% of public school mothers seeking a switch cite bullying and safety as key concerns. This suggests that while many mothers trust teachers and administrators, a meaningful segment still perceives systemic challenges that leadership may not be adequately addressing.

Distribution of moms that trust the public school administration in their district to ensure successful education outcomes

Table 5a.

	# of Respondents	% of Sample
Strongly agree	172	25.7%
Agree	264	39.5%
Unsure	131	19.6%
Disagree	58	8.7%
Strongly disagree	44	6.6%
Grand Total	669	100.0%



**Distribution of moms in agreement that they trust their public school administrators in their district to ensure successful educational outcomes
By Political Affiliation**

Table 5b.

Very Liberal	# of Respondents	% of Sample	Liberal	# of Respondents	% of Sample
Strongly agree	30	36.1%	Strongly agree	33	24.8%
Agree	35	42.2%	Agree	53	39.8%
Unsure	9	10.8%	Unsure	26	19.5%
Disagree	5	6.0%	Disagree	15	11.3%
Strongly disagree	4	4.8%	Strongly disagree	6	4.5%
Grand Total	83	100.0%	Grand Total	133	100.0%

Moderate	# of Respondents	% of Sample	Conservative	# of Respondents	% of Sample
Strongly agree	49	21.4%	Strongly agree	30	26.1%
Agree	91	39.7%	Agree	49	42.6%
Unsure	66	28.8%	Unsure	16	13.9%
Disagree	13	5.7%	Disagree	12	10.4%
Strongly disagree	10	4.4%	Strongly disagree	8	7.0%
Grand Total	229	100.0%	Grand Total	115	100.0%

Very Conservative	# of Respondents	% of Sample
Strongly agree	30	30.9%
Agree	30	30.9%
Unsure	12	12.4%
Disagree	12	12.4%
Strongly disagree	13	13.4%
Grand Total	97	100.0%



Qualitative Section

“What’s the most important problem to solve in your district’s public school (whether your kids attend or not)?”

When asked, “What’s the most important problem to solve in your district’s public school (whether your kids attend or not)?” mothers consistently pointed to four key concerns:

1. **Bullying**
2. **Safety**
3. **Inadequate funding**
4. **Academics/curriculum quality**

Among these, bullying and safety were by far the most frequently cited issues. **Nearly four in ten mothers who responded to this open-ended question identified concerns about bullying and overall school safety, with many feeling that teachers and administrators are failing to adequately address these problems.**

- A mom from Florida said that children are being bullied by “both students and teachers.”
- A mom from South Carolina said, “the school is doing nothing about it.”
- Some of the moms who feel safety is the most important problem to solve specifically mention gun violence and school shootings.

Additionally, moms are concerned about inadequate funding for schools as well as the quality of academics/curriculum.

- An Illinois mom said the most important problem that needs to be solved in her school district is “actually having the funding needed to provide students and staff with what they need to learn and teach.”
- Other moms said that lack of funding has led to their schools having an aging infrastructure, outdated learning materials, and even lack of air conditioning or heating.
- Some moms who are concerned about the quality of academics and the curriculum are also concerned that students are being promoted to the next grade without adequate knowledge or academic foundation.

Concerns about safety often went beyond bullying to include broader issues such as gun violence and school shootings. Beyond safety, mothers also expressed strong concerns about inadequate school funding and the quality of academics.

Others described how aging infrastructure, outdated learning materials, and insufficient climate control (air conditioning/heating) are directly impacting student learning experiences. Additionally, some mothers worried that students are being promoted to the next grade without mastering necessary academic skills, weakening their long-term educational foundation.



Mixed Methods

Patterns in School Dissatisfaction

Cross-tabulation of responses reveals notable trends:

- Among public school mothers who would switch schools if given the opportunity, nearly half (46%) cited bullying and safety as their top concerns (see Table 6c).
- Mothers who do not send their children to public schools were more likely to cite academics and funding as the biggest challenges, rather than bullying or safety.

This suggests a distinct divide in parental concerns:

- Public school mothers who want to leave are primarily focused on safety and bullying.
- Mothers who have already left public schools or chosen alternative options (private, charter, or homeschool) tend to be more concerned with academics and funding.

Key Takeaways

While 76% of mothers agree that their child's school fosters an emotionally supportive and physically safe environment, qualitative responses reveal the areas where mothers are concerned and may suggest a deeper layer of dissatisfaction in those who believe the school fosters a safe and supportive environment. Overall, the two main categories of concern were either bullying and safety or funding and academic outcomes. These insights highlight the need for stronger anti-bullying initiatives, improved communication between schools and parents, increased funding, and greater accountability in academic standards.

Cross-tabulating responses about the “most important problems to solve” with those from mothers who would switch out of public school if they could reveals a striking pattern: **nearly half of those seeking to leave public schools cite safety and bullying as primary concerns, while mothers outside of the public school system are more likely to point to academics and funding.**

This finding suggests that parents who actively choose private or alternative schooling may do so due to concerns about academics or funding, while those currently in public schools and discontent are more focused on safety and bullying-related challenges.



What's the most important problem to solve in your district's public school (*whether your kids attend or not*)?

Table 6a.

	# of Respondents	% of Sample
Bullying	109	18.2%
Safety	109	18.2%
Inadequate funding	57	9.5%
Academics/Curriculum	55	9.2%
Other	51	8.5%
Large class size/Inadequate number of teachers	39	6.5%
Teacher retention/Teacher pay	29	4.8%
Behavior and mental health	23	3.8%
Political agendas (both ends of the spectrum)	19	3.2%
Inadequate resources for students with special needs	18	3.0%
Facilities/Infrastructure/Maintenance	16	2.7%
Food/Nutrition issues	10	1.7%
Equity/Equality issues	9	1.5%
Lack of inclusion	9	1.5%
Transportation/Bus issues	8	1.3%
Standardizing testing	8	1.3%
Drugs/Smoking	6	1.0%
Attendance	6	1.0%
Teacher qualifications	6	1.0%
Inadequate school administration	5	0.8%
Lack of communication with parents	4	0.7%
School rezoning	3	0.5%
Total	599	100.0%



Reasons moms who send their children to public school WOULD change school type given the opportunity

Table 6b.

	# of Respondents	% of Sample
Bullying	51	27.9%
Safety	33	18.0%
Other	16	8.7%
Academics/Curriculum	15	8.2%
Inadequate funding	10	5.5%
Large class size/Inadequate number of teachers	10	5.5%
Behavior and mental health	9	4.9%
Inadequate resources for students with special needs	7	3.8%
Teacher retention/Teacher pay	6	3.3%
Attendance	4	2.2%
Political agendas (both ends of the spectrum)	4	2.2%
Standardizing testing	4	2.2%
Lack of communication with parents	3	1.6%
Transportation/Bus issues	2	1.1%
Facilities/Infrastructure/Maintenance	2	1.1%
Inadequate school administration	2	1.1%
Drugs/Smoking	2	1.1%
Equity/Equality issues	1	0.5%
Teacher qualifications	1	0.5%
Lack of inclusion	1	0.5%
Total	183	30.6%



CONCLUSION

Mothers overwhelmingly hold positive views of their district public schools. **Seventy-four (74%) percent of mothers send their children to public schools**, and of those, 74% believe their school fosters a physically safe and emotionally supportive environment. Additionally, 75% of all mothers trust public school teachers, and 65% trust public school administrators to deliver strong academic outcomes—indicating a solid baseline of confidence in the public education system.

Fairly consistent with those favorability numbers, about **37% of mothers stated they would change their child's school**, however only 40% would not and 23% were unsure (Table 2a, Chart 2a). Of the mothers who send their kids to public school, 41% agreed or strongly agreed that they would change schools if possible—a higher rate than among mothers using other types of schools. However, among those sending children to parochial (13%), private (18%), charter (26%), and homeschooling (27%), a notable portion of each expressed a desire to change school types. This suggests that school dissatisfaction is not limited to public school and exists across all school types.

In assessing issues in public school, the qualitative data reveals a more complex and nuanced story. Among mothers who responded to the open-ended question about the most important issue to solve in their district public schools, **36% named bullying or safety as their top concern**, the highest rate above all other answers. Among mothers who currently send their kids to public school and would switch schools if the could, nearly half (46%) cited bullying or safety as the most pressing issue. Many mothers emphasized the critical role of school leadership in addressing these challenges, pointing to a need for greater accountability and responsiveness from administrators.

Across all respondents, the most commonly cited concerns about district public schools were **bullying, safety, inadequate funding**, and **academics**, and within those answers a clear pattern emerges:

- Mothers currently in public schools and dissatisfied are more likely to point to safety and bullying.
- Mothers outside the public school system—who have in theory already made a school choice—are more likely to cite academic quality and funding as the biggest problems in public education.

This contrast suggests that **safety concerns may weigh more heavily on day-to-day experience, while academic rigor and resource issues may be more likely to influence long-term school decisions**.

It also raises key questions for future study.



Conclusion

(continued)

Future study questions include:

1. Do **concerns about funding or academics** drive mothers to opt out of public schools altogether?
2. Are **safety and bullying challenges viewed as problems to be addressed, but not necessarily dealbreakers** for staying in public schools?
3. Do mothers experience similar levels of stress across school types?
4. Are cost, convenience, or philosophy the reasons some non-public school mothers would still choose to switch?

Recommendations from Mothers

Mothers are clear, regardless of where they send their child to school, about what they want their district public school to improve.

Their top priorities include:

- Greater accountability and responsiveness from administrators
- Increased investment in academic resources
- Stronger anti-bullying initiatives and safety measures
- Improved communication between schools and families
- Expanded access to mental health support

These recommendations reflect mothers' desire for schools that are not only safe and emotionally supportive, but also academically strong and resourced. Addressing these priorities offers a clear path forward for strengthening trust and satisfaction with public education—and ensuring better outcomes for American families.



DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic questions were asked to **ensure the sample population was representative of the US population.**

The survey data measured education level, ethnicity, political ideology, state of residence, region by zip code, and number/ages of children.

Political Ideology

Count on Mothers is committed to representing Mothers of all political ideologies so that policymakers can be best informed of mothers' experiences and views regardless of ideology or politics.

A total of 669 Mothers residing in 46 states and from across the political spectrum provided feedback based on their first-hand knowledge.

Mothers identified politically within the given choice of very conservative, conservative, moderate, liberal, or very liberal. Count on Mothers tallies political affiliation, states of residence, zip codes, ethnicity, number of children, and level of education in order to ensure a representative sample and to study where Mothers agree regardless of ideology. Regarding the political background of the survey respondents, the sample closely reflects the U.S. breakdown of political ideology among women according to Gallup. **14.5% identified as very conservative, 17.2% identified as conservative, 34.2% identified as moderate, 19.9% identified as liberal, 12.4% identified as very liberal, and 1.8% identified as other.**

While national data on Mothers' political ideologies has not been identified, studies have examined the political ideologies of women, in general. According to a recent Gallup Poll (2021), 32% of women identified as conservative, 37% of women identified as moderate, and 29% of women identified as liberal. Count on Mothers will continue to invite the participation of Mothers across the political spectrum so that our sample closely mirrors these national trends.

Table 7a.

	# of Respondents	% of Sample
Very liberal	83	12.4%
Liberal	133	19.9%
Moderate	229	34.2%
Conservative	115	17.2%
Very Conservative	97	14.5%
Other	12	1.8%
Total	669	100.0%



DEMOGRAPHICS

State of Residence Question

Mothers who responded to the survey and answered the state of residence question resided in 46 states. The states with the most representation included: California (7.5%), New York (6.9%), Florida (6.7%), Pennsylvania (6.4%), Texas (6.3%), Ohio (4.2%), Illinois (4.2%), Oregon (4.2%), North Carolina (3.9%), Michigan (3.7%), Nevada (3.6%), and Georgia (3.1%).

Location of Respondents

Table 7b.

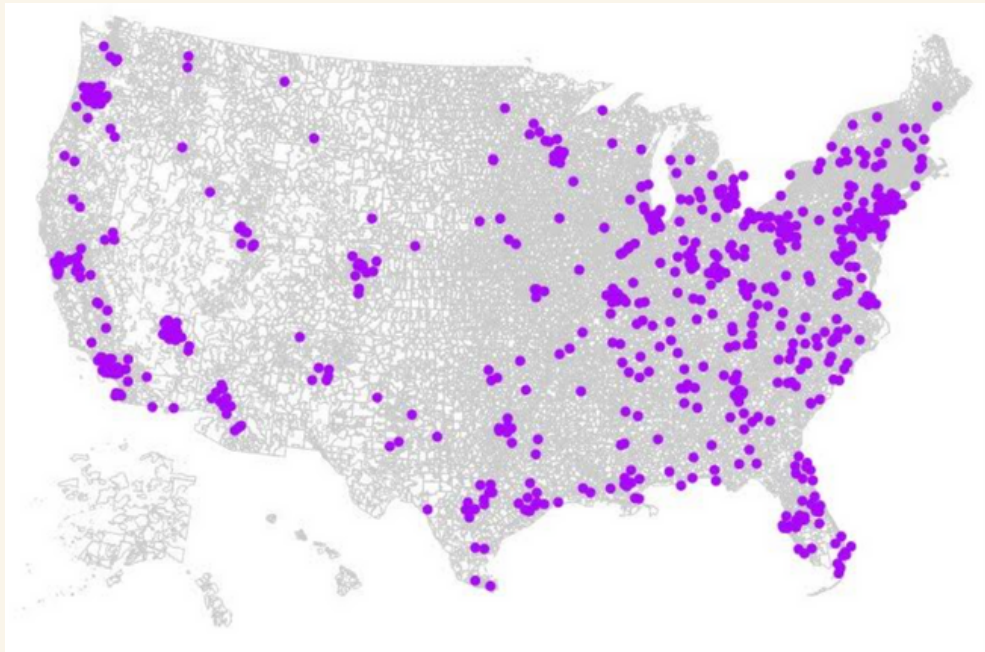
	# of Respondents	% of Sample		# of Respondents	% of Sample
Alabama	8	1.2%	Nebraska	5	0.7%
Arizona	17	2.5%	Nevada	24	3.6%
Arkansas	5	0.7%	New Hampshire	4	0.6%
California	50	7.5%	New Jersey	18	2.7%
Colorado	12	1.8%	New Mexico	7	1.0%
Connecticut	2	0.3%	New York	46	6.9%
Delaware	1	0.1%	North Carolina	26	3.9%
Florida	45	6.7%	North Dakota	1	0.1%
Georgia	21	3.1%	Ohio	28	4.2%
Idaho	1	0.1%	Oklahoma	5	0.7%
Illinois	28	4.2%	Oregon	28	4.2%
Indiana	16	2.4%	Pennsylvania	43	6.4%
Iowa	2	0.3%	South Carolina	10	1.5%
Kansas	1	0.1%	South Dakota	2	0.3%
Kentucky	12	1.8%	Tennessee	14	2.1%
Louisiana	10	1.5%	Texas	42	6.3%
Maine	1	0.1%	Utah	7	1.0%
Maryland	11	1.6%	Virginia	20	3.0%
Massachusetts	5	0.7%	Washington	7	1.0%
Michigan	25	3.7%	Washington DC	1	0.1%
Minnesota	17	2.5%	West Virginia	8	1.2%
Mississippi	7	1.0%	Wisconsin	7	1.0%
Missouri	16	2.4%	Wyoming	1	0.1%
Montana	2	0.3%	Grand Total	669	100.0%



DEMOGRAPHICS

Zip Code

We asked mothers to provide their zip code to give legislators an idea of districts where mothers who participate in Count on Mothers surveys live. We are actively involved in expanding these districts and reaching out to more mothers in each district.



- Most mothers surveyed report having 1 or 2 children (67%), which is aligned with national averages (Pew Research Center: <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/05/07/family-size-among-mothers/>).
- The race and ethnicity of mothers surveyed are also similarly distributed to the US national distributions (2020 US Census: <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/improved-race-ethnicity-measures-reveal-united-states-population-much-more-multiracial.html>).
- There is an even split between mothers surveyed who have a college degree (n = 335, 49.9%) and mothers who do not have a college degree (n = 334, 50.1%).



DEMOGRAPHICS

Ethnicity, Number of Children, and Education level

- Most mothers surveyed report having 1 or 2 children (67%), which is aligned with national averages (Pew Research Center: <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/05/07/family-size-among-mothers/>).
- The race and ethnicity of mothers surveyed are also similarly distributed to the US national distributions (2020 US Census: <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/improved-race-ethnicity-measures-reveal-united-states-population-much-more-multiracial.html>).
- There is an even split between mothers surveyed who have a college degree (n = 335, 49.9%) and mothers who do not have a college degree (n = 334, 50.1%).

Table 7c.

	# of Respondents	% of Sample
American Indian or Alaska Native	7	1.0%
Asian or Asian American	17	2.5%
Black or African American	106	15.8%
Hispanic or Latino/a	49	7.3%
Middle Eastern or North African	1	0.1%
Multiracial	30	4.5%
Native Hawai'ian or Pacific Islander	2	0.3%
White or Caucasian	457	68.3%
Total	669	100.0%



DEMOGRAPHICS

Number of Children

Table 7d.

	# of Respondents	% of Sample
1	202	30.2%
2	243	36.3%
3	132	19.7%
4	49	7.3%
5+	43	6.4%
Total	669	100.0%

Highest level of education completed

Table 7e.

	# of Respondents	% of Sample
12th grade or less	33	4.93%
Graduated from high school or equivalent (e.g. GED)	162	24.22%
Some college, but no degree	140	20.93%
Associate degree	91	13.60%
Bachelor's degree	146	21.82%
Master's degree	78	11.66%%
Doctoral degree	19	2.84%
Total	669	100.0%