THE AMERICAN PUBLIC'S VIEWS ON THE FUTURE OF SCHOOLING AND WORK IN A LESS COVIDCONCERNED ERA

April 2021





THE AMERICAN PUBLIC'S VIEWS ON THE FUTURE OF SCHOOLING AND WORK IN A LESS COVID-CONCERNED ERA

This report, based on a new POLITICO-Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health poll, has a special focus on the views of parents and guardians of K-12 public school students about the type of learning they want their children to have next school year, teacher vaccination, and steps that might be taken to address the needs of K-12 students due to the Covid-19 outbreak. The report also looks at the preferences of those who were employed before the Covid-19 outbreak about where they would like to work once the outbreak is over, as well as the public's anticipation of the impact of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) on their own lives.

PART I: VIEWS OF PARENTS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF SCHOOLING

The new POLITICO-Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health poll finds that parents and guardians of K-12 public school students want their children to have in-person learning during the next school year. One in eight (13%) prefer remote learning, while 16% want their children to have hybrid learning (Table 1).

Table 1. The Views Parents/Guardians of K-12 Public School Children on What Type of Learning They Would Want Their Children to Have Next School Year, in percent

In-person learning	71
Remote learning	13
Hybrid learning	16
Don't know/Refused	-

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, The American Public's Views on the Future of Schooling and Work in a Less Covid-Concerned Era. March 16-21, 2021. Base: Parents/guardians of children in grades K-12 who normally attend public school.

About three-fourths of parents/guardians of K-12 public school children (76%) favor requiring all public school teachers to be vaccinated before they can remain at or return to work (Table 2). This view is also held by two-thirds (67%) of the public as a whole.

Table 2. The Views of Parents/Guardians of K-12 Public School Children on Requiring All Public School Teachers to Be Vaccinated Before They Can Remain at or Return to Work, in percent

	Parents/ guardians of K-12 public school children	Total public
Favor	76	67
Oppose	24	32
Don't know/Refused	-	1

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, The American Public's Views on the Future of Schooling and Work in a Less Covid-Concerned Era. March 16-21, 2021. Base: Parents/guardians of children in grades K-12 who normally attend public school and total U.S. adults.

Seven in ten parents (70%) approve of how public schools in their area are handling Covid-19 (Table 3). This view is also held by about two-thirds (65%) of the public as a whole.

Table 3. The Views of Parents/Guardians of K-12 Public School Children on How Public Schools in Their Area Are Handling Covid-19, in percent

	Parents/ guardians of K-12 public school children	Total public
Approve	70	65
Disapprove	30	28
Don't know/Refused	-	7

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, The American Public's Views on the Future of Schooling and Work in a Less Covid-Concerned Era. March 16-21, 2021. Base: Parents/guardians of children in grades K-12 who normally attend public school and total U.S. adults.

The poll also finds that a majority of parents of public school children favor tough standards for K-12 students once classes restart. Nearly two-thirds of these parents/guardians favor resuming standardized testing that has been waived during the Covid-19 pandemic (64%), and a slight majority also favor holding back students who do not meet grade-level benchmarks (54%) (Table 4). Parents are split on the question of extending the current school year through the summer (51% favor, 49% oppose). The views of the public as a whole are similar to those of parents.

About six in ten parents favor keeping schools closed until the Covid-19 outbreak is less severe (62%). But as shown by the finding (above) that a large majority want their children to have inperson learning next school year, there appears to be widespread optimism that the pandemic will be winding down by then and students will be able to attend school in person.

Table 4. The Views of Parents/Guardians of K-12 Public School Children and of the Total Public on Steps That Might Be Taken to Address the Needs K-12 Students May Have as a Result of the Covid-19 Outbreak

% favor

	Parents/ guardians of K-12 public school children	Total public
Resuming standardized testing requirements that have been waived during the pandemic	64	64
Holding back students who do not meet grade-level benchmarks	54	57
Keeping schools closed until the Covid-19 outbreak is less severe and relying on remote education	62	56
Extending the school year through summer	51	47

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, The American Public's Views on the Future of Schooling and Work in a Less Covid-Concerned Era. March 16-21, 2021. Base: Parents/guardians of children in grades K-12 who normally attend public school and total U.S. adults.

PART II: VIEWS OF THOSE WHO WERE EMPLOYED BEFORE THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK ABOUT THEIR FUTURE WORK SITUATION

When those who were employed before the Covid-19 outbreak are asked where they want to work once the outbreak is over, preferences are split. A modest majority say they would want to work fulltime or parttime at a workplace, 16% would like to work fulltime or parttime from home, and 26% would prefer to work sometimes at a workplace and sometimes from home (Table 5).

When those who wanted to work after the end of the outbreak were asked who they thought would make the decision on where they work, 63% said the decision would be made by their employers, while 33% thought they would make the decision themselves.

Table 5. Preferences of Those Who Were Employed Before the Covid-19 Outbreak About Where They Would Like to Work Once the Outbreak Is Over and Who Would Decide, in percent

Preferred workplace after Covid-19	
Work fulltime or parttime at a workplace	53
Work sometimes at home, sometimes at a workplace	26
Work fulltime or parttime from home	16
Not have a paying job at all	4
Don't know/Refused	1
Among those who want to work after Covid-19, who they believe would make the decision of where they work	
Decision would be made by employer	63
You would make the decision	33
Don't know/Refused	4

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, The American Public's Views on the Future of Schooling and Work in a Less Covid-Concerned Era. March 16 – 21, 2021. Base: U.S. adults who were employed before the Covid-19 outbreak started.

The poll also finds that a majority of the public favors employers requiring all their employees to be vaccinated before they can remain at or return to work (56%) (Table 6).

While two-thirds of Democrats (69%) favor employers requiring all their employees to be vaccinated, a majority of Republicans are opposed (56%).

Table 6. The Public's Views About Employers Requiring All Their Employees to Be Vaccinated
Before They Can Remain at or Return to Work,
by Party Identification, in percent

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Favor	56	69	43	54
Oppose	43	30	56	45
Don't know/Refused	1	1	1	1

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, The American Public's Views on the Future of Schooling and Work in a Less Covid-Concerned Era. March 16-21, 2021. Base: U.S. adults.

PART III: THE PUBLIC'S ANTICIPATION OF THE IMPACT OF THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ON THEIR OWN LIVES

The new POLITICO and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health poll finds that a majority of U.S. adults do not believe the American Rescue Plan will help them a lot, although most think it will help them at least a little. Overall, about one-third (35%) believe the legislation will help them a lot, 38% that it will help them a little, and 25% that it will not help them at all (Table 7).

Attitudes on the ARP vary by party identification and household income. Democrats (46%) are nearly twice as likely as Republicans (25%) to believe the ARP will help them a lot. While nearly half of adults with household incomes under \$30,000 per year (46%) believe the ARP with help them a lot, this view is shared by 35% of those with household incomes of \$30,000 to under \$100,000 and only 18% of those with household incomes of \$100,000 per year. Among this highest-income group, 43% believe the ARP will not help them at all.

Table 7. The Public Views About Whether and How Much the American Rescue Program Will Help Them, by Party Identification and Household Income, in percent

		Party	y identific	ation	Household income		
		,			42077	\$30K-	440077
	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	<\$30K	<\$100K	\$100K+
Help you a lot	35	46	25	32	46	35	18
Help you a little	38	39	36	40	32	45	32
Not help you at all	25	14	36	26	21	20	43
Don't know/Refused	2	1	3	2	1	*	7

POLITICO/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, The American Public's Views on the Future of Schooling and Work in a Less Covid-Concerned Era. March 16 – 21, 2021. Base: U.S. adults.

METHODOLOGY

The results are based on polling conducted by *Politico* and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Representatives of the two organizations worked closely to develop the survey questionnaires and analyze the results of the polls. *Politico* and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health paid for the surveys and related expenses.

The project team was led by Robert J. Blendon, Sc.D., Professor of Public Health and Professor of Health Policy and Political Analysis Emeritus, at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and Joanne Kenen, Executive Editor, Health Care at *Politico/Politico Pro*. Harvard research team also included John M. Benson and Chelsea Whitton Pearsall.

Interviews were conducted with a nationally representative sample of 1,008 randomly selected U.S. adults via telephone (including cell phones and landlines) by SSRS of Glen Mills, Pennsylvania. The interviewing period was March 16-21, 2021. The interviews were conducted in English and Spanish.

When interpreting these findings, one should recognize that all surveys are subject to sampling error. The margin of error for the full sample is ± 3.6 percentage points. For questions asked of parents or guardians of children in grades K-12 living with them who would normally be attending a public school in person this year, the margin of error is ± 9.4 percentage points.

Possible sources of non-sampling error include non-response bias, as well as question wording and ordering effects. Non-response in telephone surveys produces some known biases in survey-derived estimates because participation tends to vary for different subgroups of the population. To compensate for these known biases and for variations in probability of selection within and across households, sample data are weighted by household size, cell phone/landline use and demographics (sex, age, race/ethnicity, education, and region) to reflect the true population. Other techniques, including random-digit dialing, replicate subsamples, and systematic respondent selection within households, are used to ensure that the sample is representative.





Politico/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health Poll

The American Public's Views on the Future of Schooling and Work in a Less Covid-Concerned Era

This survey was conducted for *Politico* and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health via telephone by SSRS, an independent research company. Interviews were conducted via telephone (cell phone and landline) March 16-21, 2020, among a nationally representative sample of 1,008 U.S. adults. The margin of error for total respondents is ±3.6 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. More information about SSRS can be obtained by visiting www.ssrs.com.

1. The American Rescue Plan

POLQ1. The U.S. Congress just passed a \$1.9 trillion Covid-19 relief bill. Do you think this legislation will help you a lot, a little, or not at all?

		Party identification			Household income		
	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	<\$30K	\$30K- <\$100K	\$100K+
Help you a lot	35	46	25	32	46	35	18
Help you a little	38	39	36	40	32	45	32
Not help you at all	25	14	36	26	21	20	43
Don't know/Refused	2	1	3	2	1	*	7

2. The Future of Schooling

POLQ2c. Do you approve or disapprove of the way public schools in your area are handling Covid-19?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	Parents/ guardians of K- 12 public school children
Approve	65	71	60	65	70
Disapprove	28	23	36	29	30
Don't know/Refused	7	6	4	6	-

POLQ3. A number of people have made suggestions to address the needs K-12 students may have as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak. Do you favor or oppose each of the following?

a. Extending the school year through summer

	Total adults	Dem	Rep	Ind	Parents/ guardians of K-12 public school children
Favor	47	51	47	44	51
Oppose	50	47	51	53	49
Don't know/Refused	3	2	2	3	-

c. Holding back students who do not meet grade-level benchmarks

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	Parents/ guardians of K-12 public school children
Favor	57	53	60	59	54
Oppose	40	44	37	40	45
Don't know/Refused	3	3	3	1	1

d. Resuming standardized testing requirements that have been waived during the pandemic

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	Parents/ guardians of K-12 public school children
Favor	64	66	66	62	64
Oppose	32	32	30	35	34
Don't know/Refused	4	2	4	3	2

e. Keeping schools closed until the Covid-19 outbreak is less severe and relying on remote education ${\sf Covid-19}$

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	Parents/ guardians of K-12 public school children
Favor	56	69	49	48	62
Oppose	42	29	49	50	38
Don't know/Refused	2	2	2	2	-

POLQ3 Favor Summary Table Based on total respondents

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	Parents/ guardians of K-12 public school children
Resuming standardized testing requirements that have been waived during the pandemic	64	66	66	62	64
Holding back students who do not meet grade-level benchmarks	57	53	60	59	54
Keeping schools closed until the Covid-19 outbreak is less severe and relying on remote education	56	69	49	48	62
Extending the school year through summer	47	51	47	44	51

(Asked of parents or guardians of children in grades K-12 living with them who would normally be attending a public school in person this year; n=151)

POLQ5. Are your children currently learning in-person, remotely, or in a hybrid learning environment?

	Parents/guardians of K-12 public school children				
	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	
In person	19				
Remotely	62	Not assess to a section of			
Hybrid learning environment	18	Not enough cases for analysis (n<50			
Don't know/Refused	1				

(Asked of parents or guardians of children in grades K-12 living with them who would normally be attending a public school in person this year; n=151)

POLQ6. What would you want your children to do in terms of their education in the next school year? In-person learning, remote learning, or hybrid learning?

	Parents/guardians of K-12 public school children				
	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	
In person learning	71				
Remote learning	13	Not enough cases for analysis			
Hybrid learning	16	(n<50)			
Don't know/Refused	-				

POLQ7. When the Covid-19 vaccinations are widely available, do you favor or oppose requiring all public school teachers to be vaccinated before they can remain at or return to work?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind	Parents/ guardians of K-12 public school children
Favor	67	80	55	63	76
Oppose	32	19	43	36	24
Don't know/Refused	1	1	2	1	-

3. Future Work Situation

POLQ8. When the Covid-19 vaccinations are widely available, do you favor or oppose employers requiring all their employees to be vaccinated before they can remain at or return to work?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Favor	56	69	43	54
Oppose	43	30	56	45
Don't know/Refused	1	1	1	1

POLQ9. Before the Covid-19 outbreak began, were you employed fulltime, employed parttime, or not employed?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Employed full time	58	60	58	56
Employed part time	13	13	9	18
Not employed	29	27	33	26
Don't know/Refused	*	*	*	*

(Asked of respondents who were employed before the Covid-19 outbreak began; n=701) POLQ10. When the Covid-19 outbreak is over, which of the following would you like to do?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
Work fulltime or parttime at a workplace	53	51	53	55
Work sometimes at home, sometimes at a workplace	26	22	27	29
Work fulltime or parttime from home	16	23	14	11
Not have a paying job at all	4	3	5	4
Don't know/Refused	1	1	1	1

(Asked of respondents who were employed before the Covid-19 outbreak began and want to work after the COVID-19 outbreak is over; n=666)

POLQ11. Do you think you would be able to make this decision about where you would work, or would that decision be made by the employer regardless of what you would prefer?

	Total	Dem	Rep	Ind
You would make this decision	33	27	40	35
Decision would be made by the employer	63	69	59	61
Don't know/Refused	4	4	1	4