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# Key Findings From New Hampshire Department of Education Study of Non-Public-Schooling Parents

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# Introduction

New Hampshire saw a significant uptick in K-12, non-public schooling in 2020, which was consistent with national trends.<sup>1</sup>

In spring 2023, the New Hampshire Department of Education (NH DOE) partnered with Gallup to conduct a survey about the perspective of non-public-schooling parents — specifically those with children who are homeschooled or enrolled in private schools. NH DOE undertook this research to understand why parents chose private school or homeschooling, their assessment and views of public schools, the educational experiences and needs of their families, their views of education generally, and how they use public school offerings.

## Sample Composition

The population of non-public-schooling families is relatively low in New Hampshire and no comprehensive lists exist to contact these families. A range of recruitment efforts were undertaken to reach as many families as possible, including:

- print mail outreach to 10,000 households
- print invitations sent to New Hampshire public libraries
- social media outreach to groups associated with homeschooling in New Hampshire
- email outreach to groups associated with homeschooling in New Hampshire
- email outreach to all private schools and phone outreach to all schools with enrollment of 300+ students
- email and phone outreach to organizations likely to have frequent engagement with the non-public-schooling population, including children’s museums, summer camps and organizations hosting other extracurricular activities for children
- placement in New Hampshire Friday Forum newsletter
- recruitment from two opt-in sample providers

Gallup performed rigorous data review and cleaning to drive confidence that respondents met the specifications of the study. These recruitment and data cleaning efforts resulted in 334 non-public-schooling parents (including stepparents, foster parents and guardians). The final sample comprises 220 private-school parents and 114 homeschool parents.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://reachinghighernh.org/2023/01/05/where-do-new-hampshire-students-go-to-school-3-key-takeaways-on-k-12-school-enrollment/>; <https://www.education.nh.gov/news/slight-decline-student-enrollment-continues>; [https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/Where%20the%20Kids%20Went-%20Nonpublic%20Schooling%20and%20Demographic%20Change%20during%20the%20Pandemic%20Exodus%20from%20Public%20Schools\\_0.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/Where%20the%20Kids%20Went-%20Nonpublic%20Schooling%20and%20Demographic%20Change%20during%20the%20Pandemic%20Exodus%20from%20Public%20Schools_0.pdf)

# Detailed Findings

## Non-Public-School Parents Are Most Concerned With Academic, Mental Health Factors

The NH DOE-Gallup study gauged the effect that 25 factors had on parents’ decisions to homeschool or enroll their child in private school.<sup>2</sup> The study found the chief factor influencing parents’ decision was concern about the academic quality and schooling environment of the public school system.

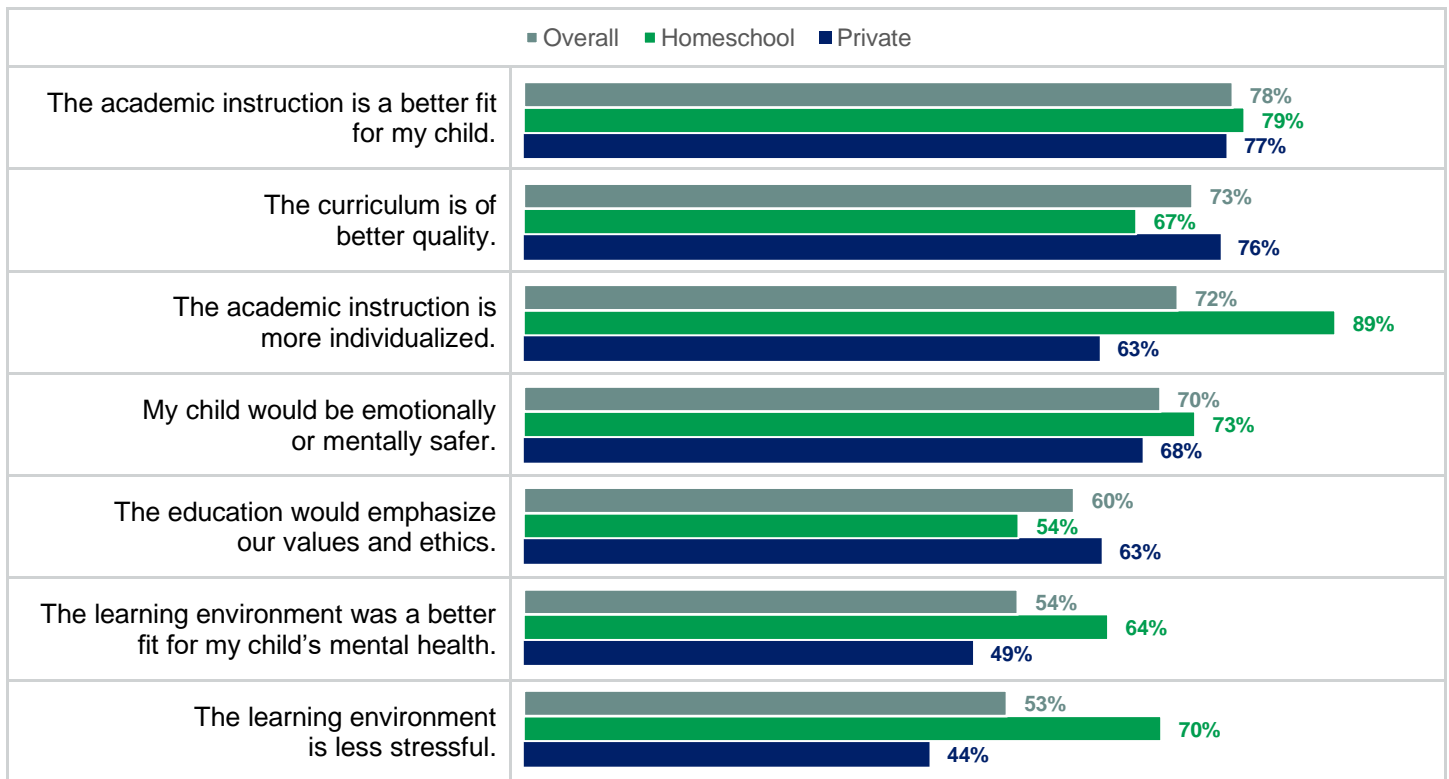
Between 70% and 78% of non-public-school parents overall selected four factors as major reasons why they initially pursued homeschooling or private school. These include a better academic instruction fit, better quality curriculum, more individualized academic instruction, and an emotionally or mentally safe environment. Fewer, but still majorities ranging from 53% to 60%, selected three other factors as major reasons for their decision — the curriculum emphasizes their values and ethics, the learning environment is better for their child’s mental health and it is less stressful.

Homeschool and private school parents differ most (26 percentage points) on two of the reasons. Homeschool parents are more likely than private school parents to say that individualized instruction and a less stressful learning environment were major reasons for their schooling choice.

**FIGURE 1.**

Thinking back to your initial decision, please indicate if each of the following reasons was a major reason, a minor reason or not a reason in your decision to enroll your child in private school/homeschool.

*% Major reason*



<sup>2</sup> Thirty factors were asked about in total: 25 to both homeschool parents and private school parents and 5 to only private school parents.

## Non-Public-School Parents' Assessment of Public Schools Vary but Tilt Negative

Parents of children who are homeschooled or enrolled in private schools were asked whether they agree or disagree with seven descriptions of public schools in their local area. These include safety of the environment, alignment with their family's values, teachers' care and qualifications, and academic rigor.

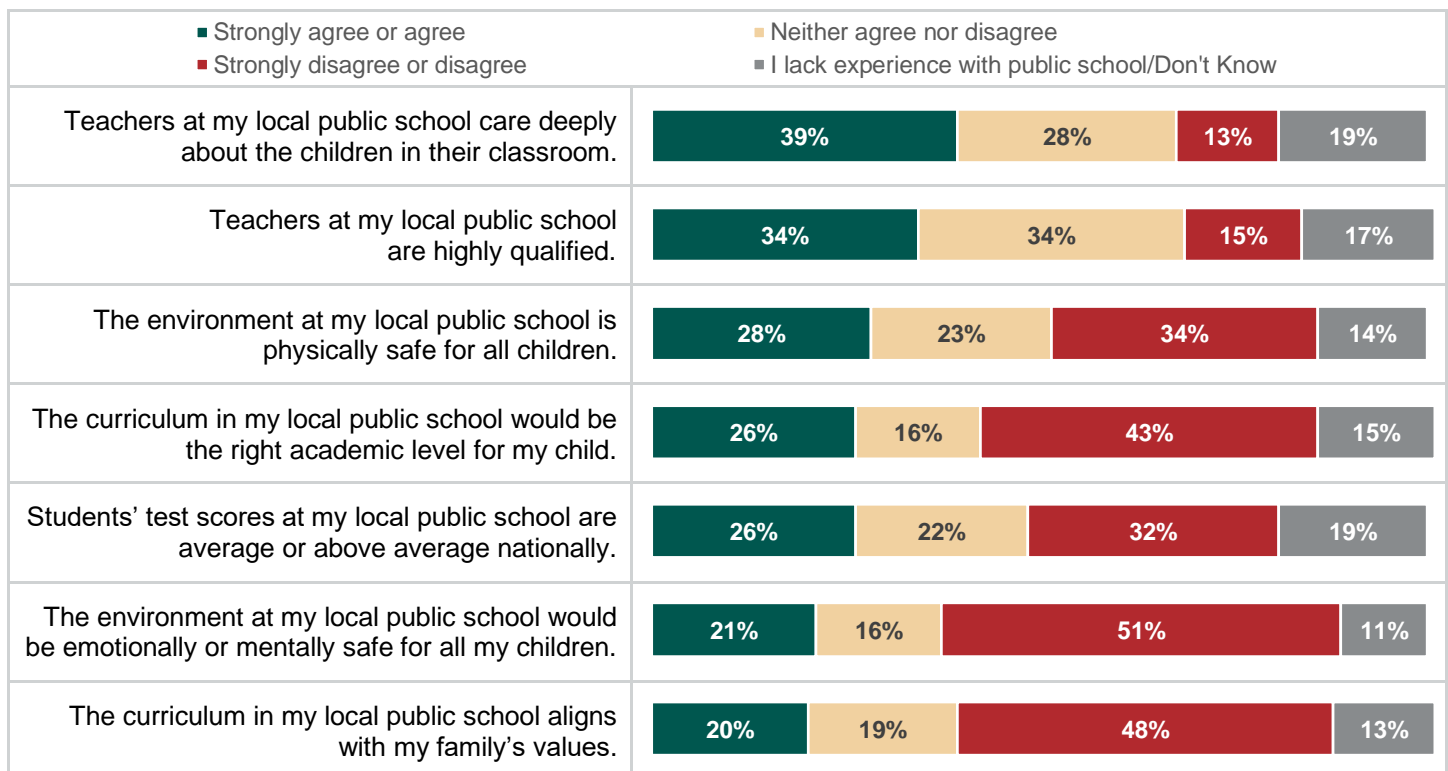
Although significant percentages said they were neutral or lacked experience with public schools on each aspect, views on five of these aspects were more negative than positive, while the two measures about teachers' care and qualifications evoked more positive than negative responses. Specifically, non-public-school parents were most likely to strongly agree or agree that local public-school teachers care deeply about their students (39%) and are highly qualified (34%).

Meanwhile, fewer agreed with the following about their local public school: it is physically safe (28%), students' test scores are average or above average (26%), and the curriculum would be at the right academic level for their child (26%). On each of these aspects, majorities said they disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Only about one in five parents agreed their local public school would be emotionally or mentally safe (21%) or that the curriculum is in line with their family's values (20%), while more than twice as many disagreed with each.

**FIGURE 2.**

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

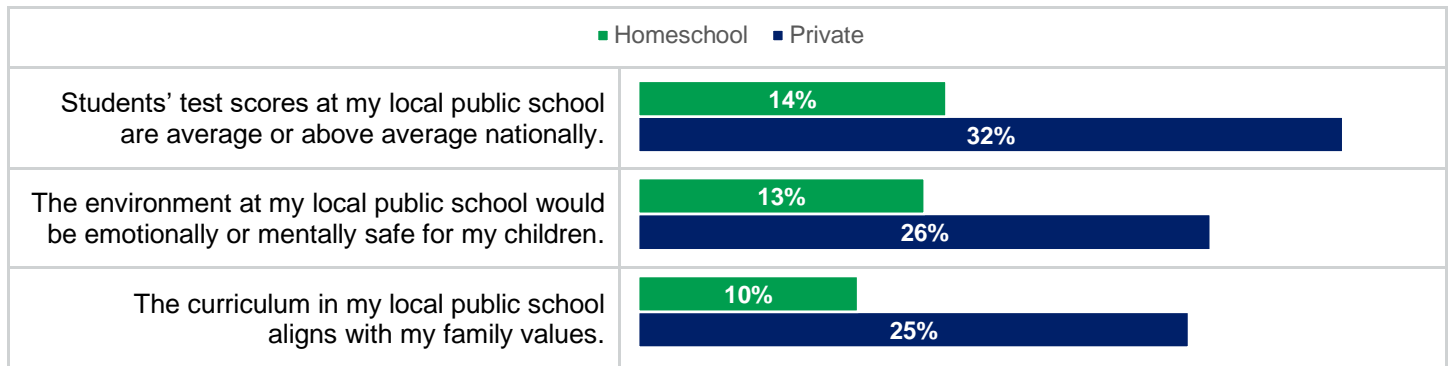


Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, +/-1.

**Responses to three descriptions were considerably different between private school parents and homeschool parents, with homeschool parents showing more distrust in public schools.**

- Thirty-two percent of private-school parents agreed that students’ test scores at the local public school are average or above average, compared with only 14% of homeschool parents.
- Twenty-six percent of private-school parents agreed that the public-school environment was emotionally and mentally safe, compared with 13% of homeschool parents.
- Twenty-five percent of private-school parents *agreed* that the public-school curriculum aligns with the family’s values, compared with 10% of homeschool parents.

**FIGURE 3.**  
Homeschool Parents vs. Private School Parents  
% Strongly agree or Agree

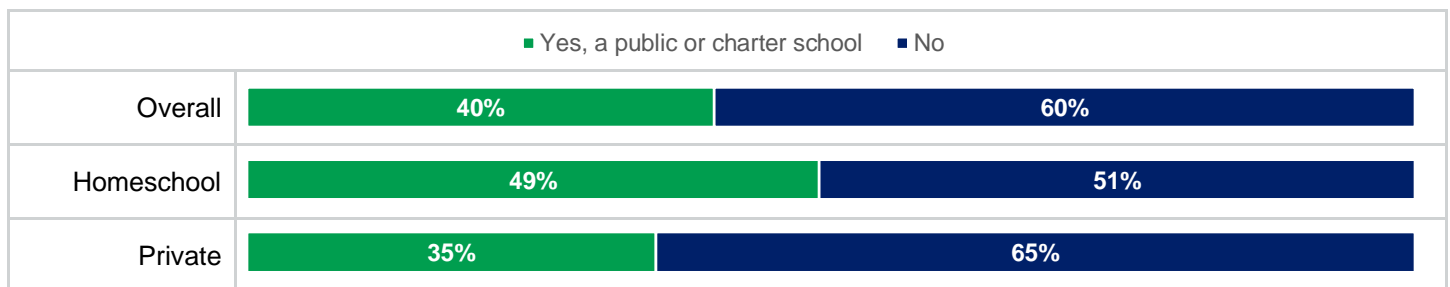


**Some Non-Public-School Parents Had Personal Experience With Public Schools**

Some parents likely based their views of public schools on personal experience since four in 10 said their child attended a public or charter school in New Hampshire before switching to private school or homeschooling. Still, the majority (60%) indicated their children had not previously attended New Hampshire public schools.

Homeschool parents were more likely than private school parents to say their child had been a public-school student at some point, 49% vs. 35%.

**FIGURE 4.**  
Before your child was in homeschooling or private school, did they attend a public or charter school in the state of New Hampshire?



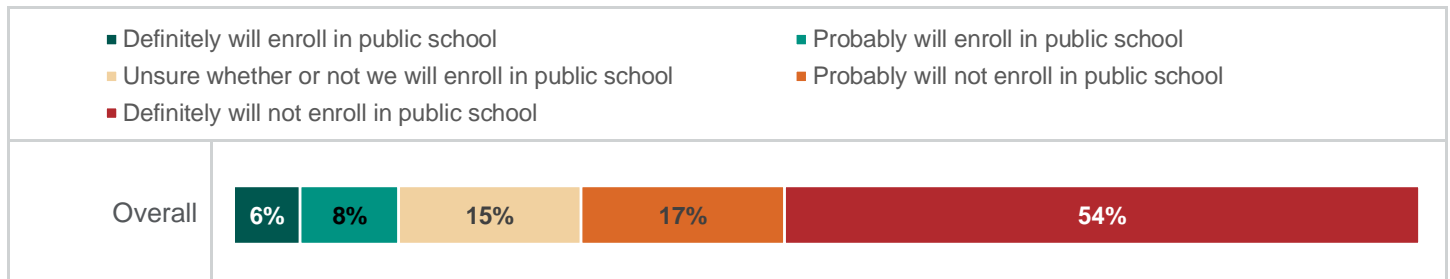
Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, +/-1.

## Few Non-Public-School Parents Leave the Door Open to Enrolling in Public School in the Future

Looking ahead, seven in 10 non-public-school parents said they will definitely not (54%) or probably not (17%) enroll their child in public school at some point in the future. Far fewer indicated their child would probably (8%) or definitely (6%) attend public school, while 15% were unsure. There were no significant differences in the intentions of homeschool and private school parents.

**FIGURE 5.**

Please indicate how likely, if at all, you are to enroll this child in public school at some point in the future.

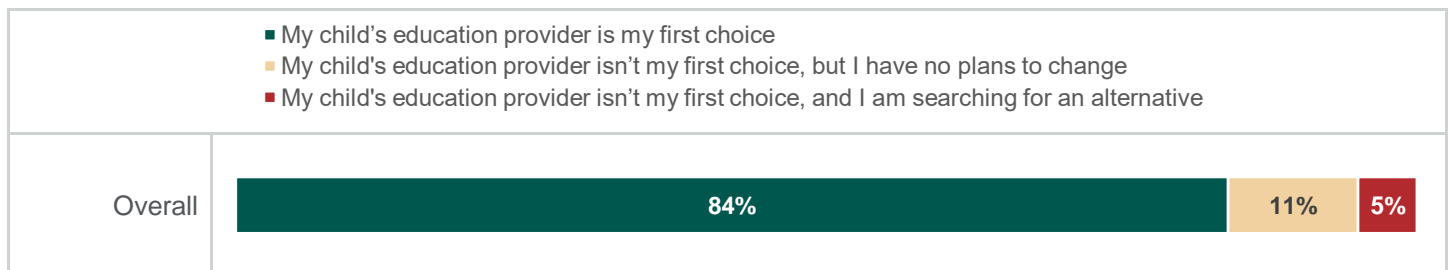


Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, +/-1.

Additionally, a large majority of parents (84%) said their current educational provider was their first choice for their child's education, while 11% said it isn't their first choice, but they have no plans to change, and 5% indicated their current provider is not their first choice and they are currently seeking alternatives. There was not a statistically significant difference in these feelings between homeschooling and private school parents.

**FIGURE 6.**

Please indicate which of the following best describes how you feel about your child's education provider during this school year.



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, +/-1.



## Little Would Precipitate a Switch to Public School for Non-Public-School Parents

Ultimately, regardless of the motivation behind their decision to homeschool or enroll their child in private school, when offered nine hypothetical situations, no more than one in five non-public-school parents said they would be compelled to send their child to public school. Between 17% and 21% of parents said they would be much more likely to enroll their child in public school if the academic reputation was stronger, if the school could help their child get ahead academically, if the teachers were trained differently, or if the school offered the right kind of curriculum.

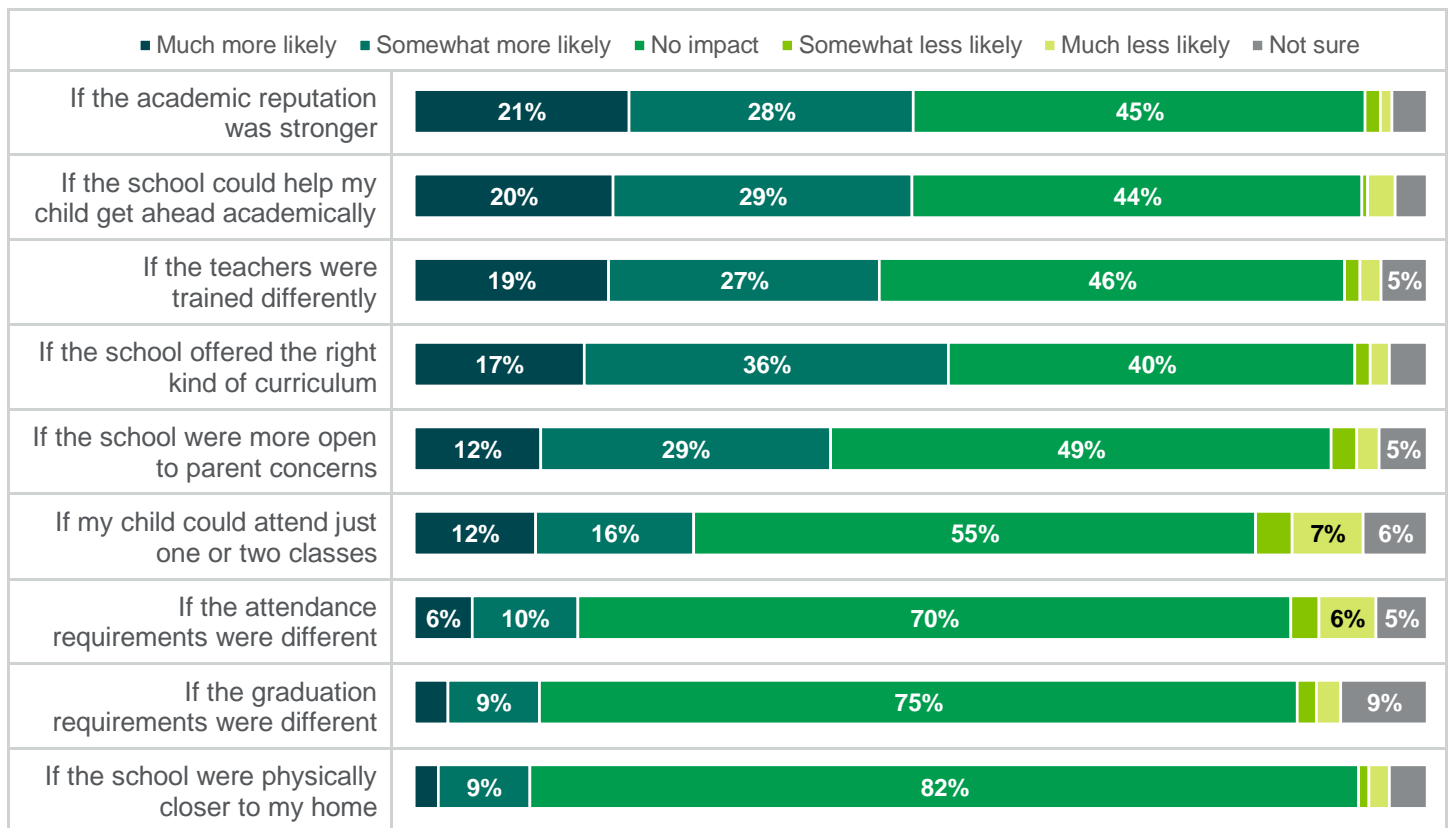
Taken together with the percentages who said each situation would make them *somewhat* more likely to switch to public school, only one of these hypothetical situations was considered as a possible tipping point by the majority of the parents. Fifty-three percent said they would be much or somewhat more likely to change to public school if they thought the curriculum was right.

Far more non-public-school parents said each of the other five hypothetical scenarios would have no impact or make them less likely to enroll their child in public school. Among these measures were their proximity to the school, a change in graduation requirements, a more flexible attendance policy, and the opportunity for their child to attend just one or two classes.

In addition, 41% of parents said they would be more likely to switch if the school was more open to parental concerns, 49% said this would have no impact and 5% said it would make them less likely to change.

**FIGURE 7.**

If each of the following were true, to what extent would it make you more or less likely to enroll your child in public school?



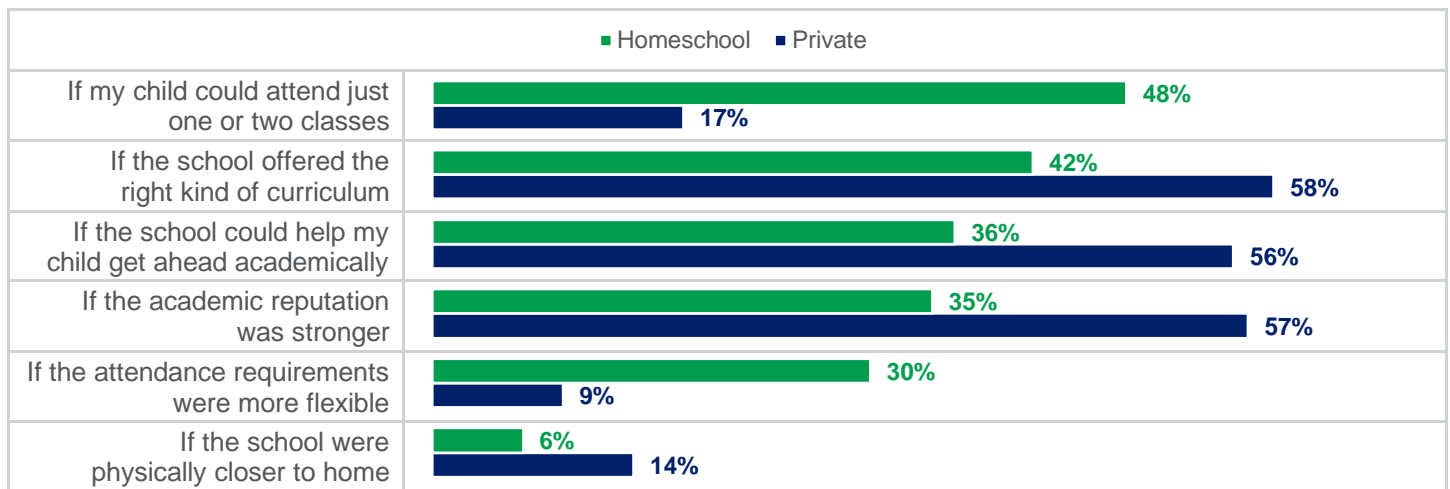
Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, +/-1; percentages shown when >4%.



Several of the scenarios showed statistically significant differences between homeschool and private school parents. Homeschool parents were more likely than private school parents to say they would be at least somewhat open to switching if public schools allowed their child to take one or two classes (48% vs. 17%) or had a more flexible attendance policy (30% vs. 9%).

Conversely, private school parents were significantly more likely than homeschool parents to say they would be at least somewhat more likely to enroll in public school for academic reasons. Majorities of 56% to 58% of private school parents said they would be much or somewhat more likely to make the switch to public school if one of three scenarios existed: the right curriculum, stronger academic reputation or help for their child to get ahead academically. Meanwhile, 35% to 42% of homeschool parents said the same.

**FIGURE 8.**  
**Homeschool Parents vs. Private School Parents**  
*% Much or Somewhat more likely to enroll in public school*

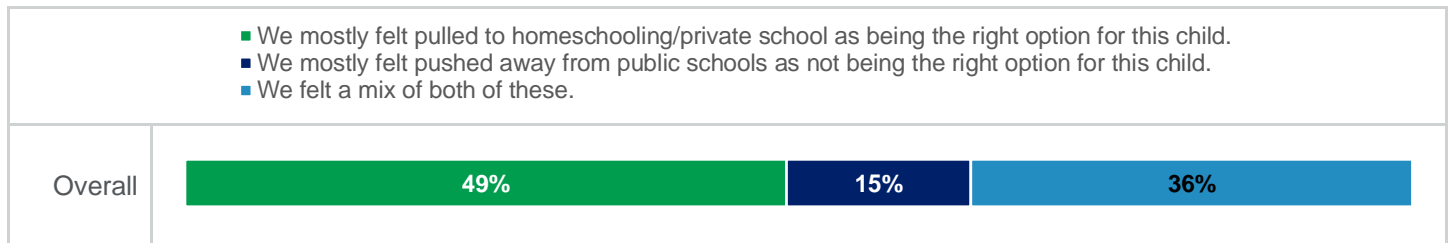


## Non-Public-School Parents Are Driven Most by Appeal of Homeschool or Private School, Not Feeling Pushed from Public School

When asked about their decision to not enroll their child in public school, nearly half (49%) of parents said they felt pulled toward homeschooling or private schooling, as opposed to a small minority (15%) who felt pushed away from public schooling. Another 36% said it was a combination of being pushed away from public school and pulled by the appeal of private school or homeschool. There was not a statistically significant difference in these feelings across homeschooling versus private schooling parents.

**FIGURE 9.**

Which of the following best describes why your family chose your current educational approach?

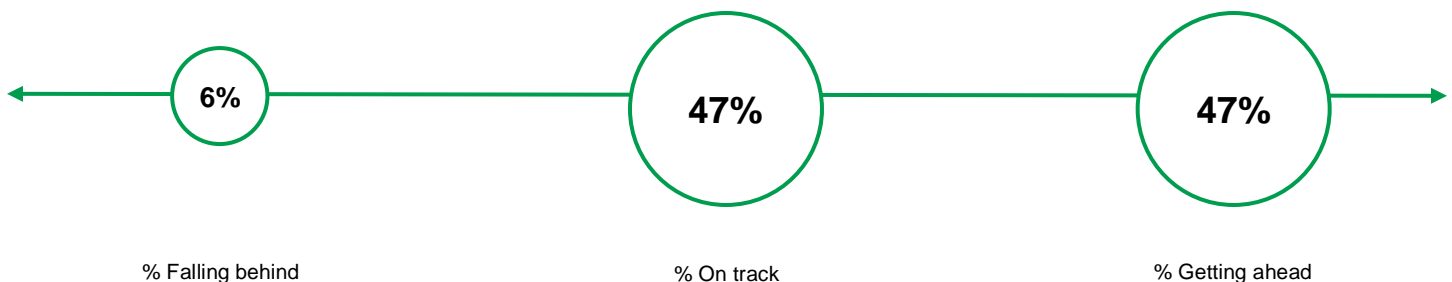


## Nearly All Non-Public-School Parents Believe Their Child Is on Track or Getting Ahead

Non-public school parents were evenly split on assessing their child's learning as getting ahead (47%) and staying on track (47%). Only 6% of non-public-schooling parents believed that their children were falling behind. There was not a statistically significant difference in these assessments across homeschooling versus private-schooling parents.

**FIGURE 10:**

Thinking about your child's learning this past year, do you feel like they are getting ahead, falling behind or are staying on track?



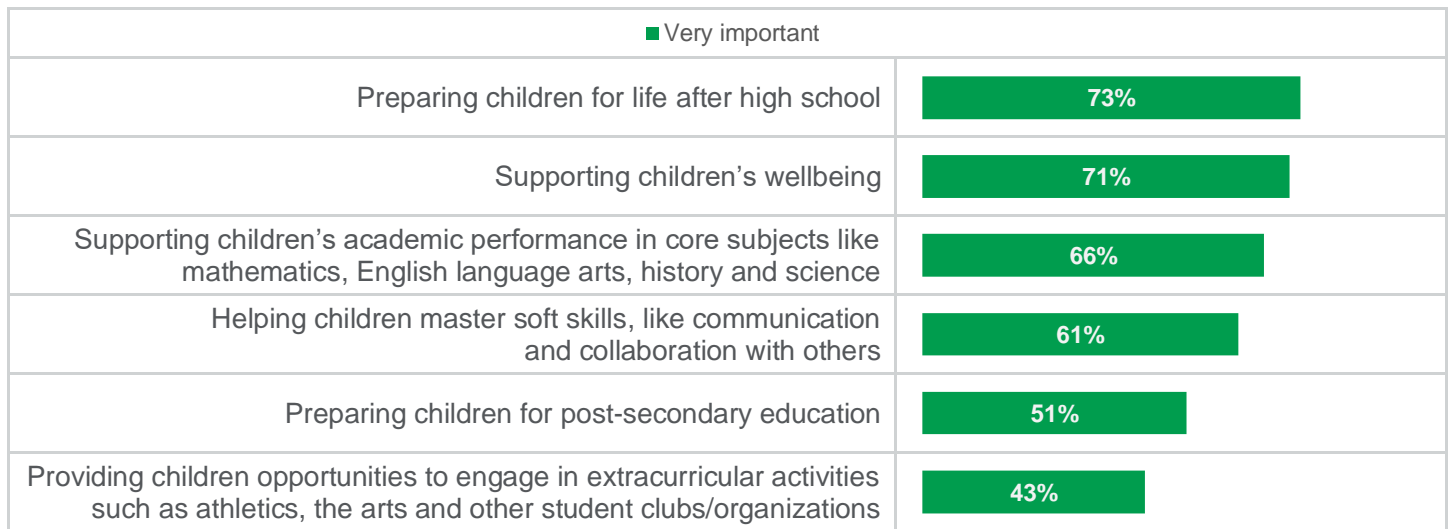
## Preparation for Life After High School and Child’s Wellbeing Are Most Important in K-12 Education.

Asked to weigh in on the importance of six experiences for their child’s K-12 education, over seven in 10 non-public-school parents rated two as *very important*: preparation for life after high school and support for their child’s wellbeing.

Smaller majorities said three other aspects were very important: supporting children’s academic performance in core subjects (66%), helping them master soft skills like communication and collaboration with others (61%) and preparing them for post-secondary education (51%). Only one consideration — providing opportunities to engage in extracurricular activities — was viewed by less than half as very important.

**FIGURE 11.**

How important, if at all, is it to you that a child’s K-12 education experience focuses on the following?

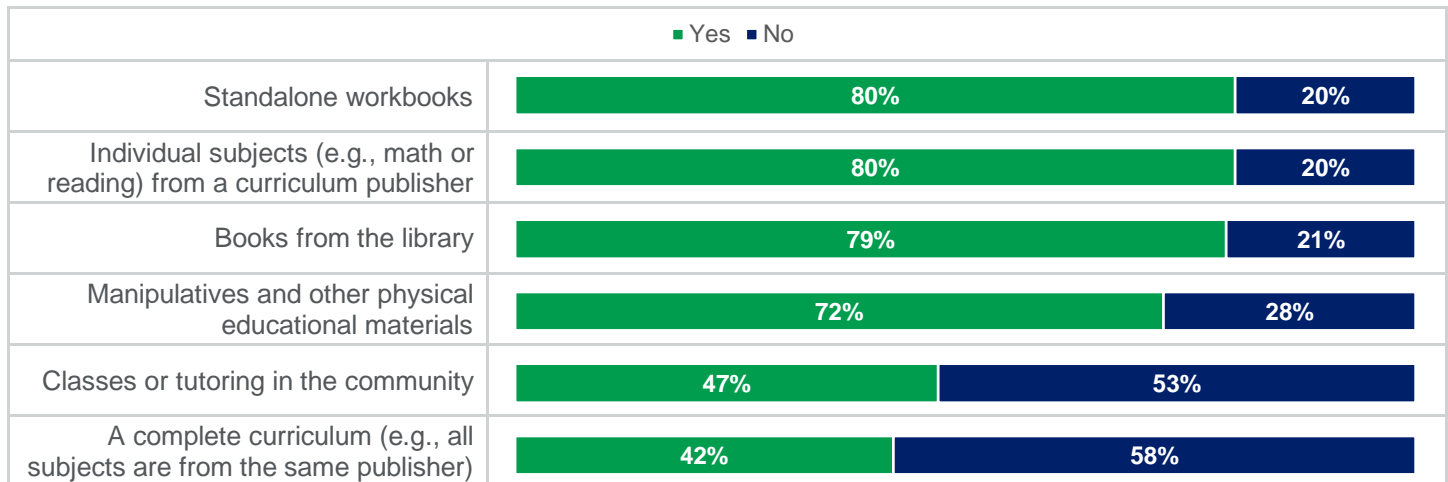


Parents with a child in private school differ significantly from those who homeschool their children only on the importance of one experience: 58% of parents with a child in private school say preparing their child for post-secondary education is very important, compared with only 36% of homeschooling parents.

## Homeschool Parents Use Various Teaching Aids, Including Homeschool-Specific Resources

About four in five homeschool parents reported using three types of educational materials — standalone workbooks, individual subjects from a curriculum publisher and library books. Slightly fewer (72%) said they use manipulatives and other physical education materials.<sup>3</sup> Less than half of homeschoolers said they make use of classes or tutoring in their community (47%) or a complete course curriculum from a publisher (42%).

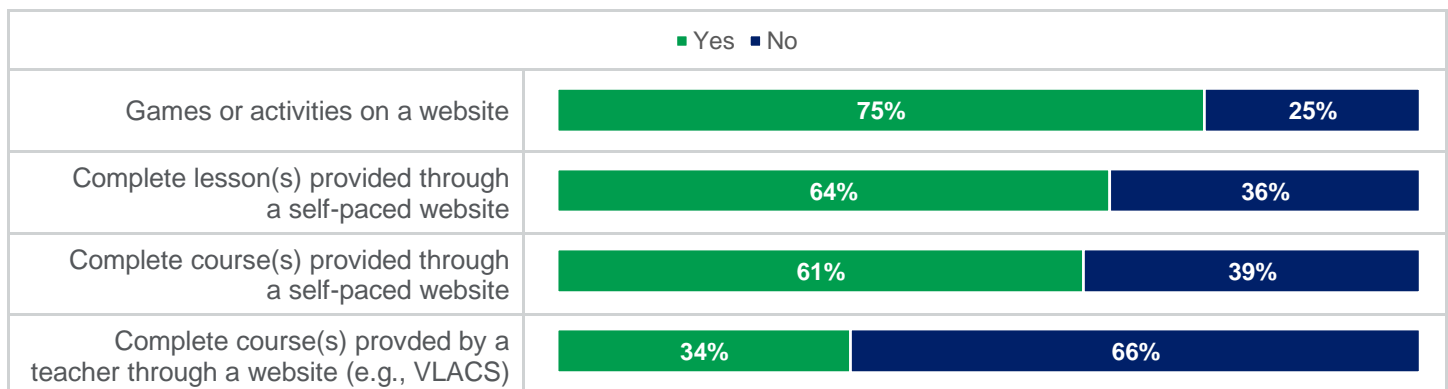
**FIGURE 12.**  
Do you use any of the following educational materials?



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, +/-1.

Majorities of homeschool parents reported using several different online educational materials — games or online activities (75%), as well as complete, self-paced lessons (64%) and courses (61%). Fewer (34%) of homeschool parents said they use complete online courses provided by a teacher.

**FIGURE 13.**  
Do you use any of the following online educational materials?

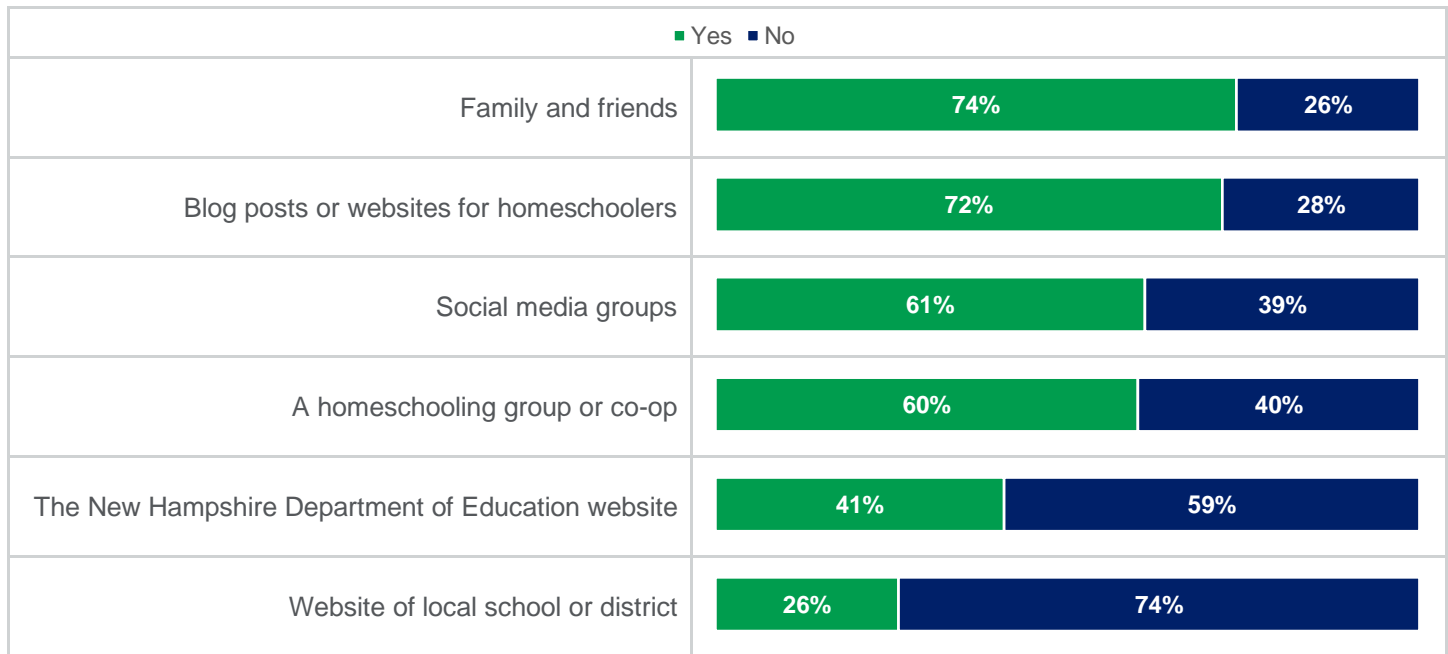


<sup>3</sup> Manipulatives are physical objects that educators use to give students a hands-on experience with academic concepts. For example, colored blocks are commonly used in math to help children learn counting and grouping by 10.

Nearly three-quarters of homeschool parents reported using their own personal networks and homeschool-specific websites. Six in 10 non-public-school parents said they use a social media group, a homeschooling group or co-op — more than local school, district or the NH DOE websites. Less than half of homeschool parents said they use the NH DOE website (41%) or their local school or district website (26%).

**FIGURE 14.**

Do you use any of the following to obtain homeschooling information or resources?



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100%, +/-1.

## Non-Public-School Parents' Use of Public-School Services

Just over half of non-public-school parents, 52%, said their child does not take advantage of any public-school services or offerings, while 48% of parents indicated their child uses at least one public school service or offering. Less than 20% of non-public-school parents reported using each of the individual offerings. The most used service was school-based sports with 19% of non-public-school students participating.

Non-public-school parents whose children do not currently use public-school offerings reported an overall low level of interest in using them. For each of the services, less than one-quarter of non-public-school parents said they were very interested or interested in using the service in the future. The areas receiving the highest level of interest were social events, career counseling, and computing and technology.

# Methodology

Gallup used various opt-in methods, as well as limited address-based sampling (ABS) to invite New Hampshire parents of a child enrolled in a K-12, non-public school to participate in the survey. Opt-in invitation methods included social media outreach, printed flyers at local libraries, email outreach to private schools and homeschooling organizations, and placement in New Hampshire Friday Forum newsletter. Samples from two third-party, opt-in sample providers were also used. Overall, 82 individuals were recruited via the ABS mail invitation, 116 were recruited via the third-party samples, and 136 were recruited through other outreach methods.

The total sample is weighted based on age, gender and education characteristics to match the demographic characteristics of New Hampshire parents with a child, aged 5-17, in a non-public school.

The total sample of 334 parents has a design effect of 1.3 and an adjusted margin of effort (MOE) of  $\pm 6.0\%$  at the 95% confidence level. The adjusted MOE indicates that for a given probability, there is a 95% chance that the true number is within 6.0 percentage points above or below the reported estimate. For the sample of 220 private school parents, the design effect is 1.3 and the adjusted MOE is  $\pm 7.4\%$ . For the sample of 114 homeschool parents, the design effect is 1.3 and the adjusted MOE is  $\pm 10.3\%$ .<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> While design effect and the adjusted MOE were calculated using unrounded numbers, both appear rounded for reporting purposes.

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