

AMERICANS' VIEWS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS AND PERSONNEL IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19



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INTRODUCTION

The past two years have seen devastating health, economic, workforce and education challenges attributable to the arrival of COVID-19 in the U.S. The global pandemic resulted in a large-scale economic shutdown to help prevent the spread of coronavirus in 2020, as well as an unprecedented shutdown of in-person learning at schools across the nation. While the economy and schools largely had re-opened with the availability of vaccines in 2021, the fast-spreading omicron variant created new challenges in 2022. Many employers have delayed their plans to move back to the workplace, and schools have been grappling with keeping schools open in a safe manner. At the same time, the duration of the pandemic has resulted in high levels of employee burnout across the U.S. workforce, and employers are facing an acute shortage of workers.¹

Throughout the pandemic, the role of state and local public employees has become increasingly important. From first responders to public health professionals to school personnel, more than 18 million individuals who are employed by state and local governments continue to deliver essential services to their communities. Not surprisingly, recent research finds the pandemic and economic crisis are taking a heavy toll on state and local employees. Since the early days of the pandemic, negative job sentiment among state and local workers is on the rise, feelings that the risks they are taking during the pandemic are not on par with their compensation, and many have been negatively impacted financially by the pandemic.²

With respect to the public sector education workforce, the pandemic has been extremely challenging. Almost overnight, K-12 teachers and personnel were confronted with the complex challenge of pivoting to virtual education in 2020. It was grueling and frustrating for the K-12 workforce, for families and for children. While schools largely opened for the 2021-22 school year for in-person learning, the omicron variant has presented new challenges. Also, many school districts have had to contend with being caught in the political crossfire in jurisdictions opposed to vaccine and mask mandates, along with other high-profile disagreements related to school curriculum. Some public school personnel report feeling scapegoated and attacked on a number of fronts.³

Not surprisingly, recent research indicates that as the pandemic lingers, K-12 public school employees have been struggling with a multitude of issues. A 2021 national poll found 52 percent of the K-12 workforce is stressed and burnt out, while more than one-third (37 percent) of these workers say the pandemic has them considering a job change. Moreover, 90 percent of K-12 employees reported concerns about students falling behind as a result of the pandemic, with 34 percent extremely concerned.⁴

In recent days, the K-12 public workforce shortage has reached crisis levels across the nation thanks, in part, to the omicron variant. High infection rates across the workforce have resulted in a shortage of teachers, bus drivers, custodians and cafeteria workers, forcing some school districts to close temporarily or pivot back to virtual instruction. In Boston, a superintendent stepped back in the classroom to teach fourth-grade class when faced with more than 1,000 teachers and staff absent. Boston public school leaders said they expect there will be an increase in absences in upcoming months because the omicron variant.⁵ New Mexico's governor asked National Guard members and state employees to volunteer as substitute teachers amid a widespread staff shortage.⁶ The Kansas Board of Education voted to allow anyone with a high school diploma, rather than a college degree, to serve as substitute teachers. Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt signed an executive order permitting state employees to serve as substitutes without losing pay or benefits.⁷ And many jurisdictions are relying on the National Guard to drive school buses amid shortages.⁸

When COVID-19 eventually subsides, the K-12 worker shortage likely will not dissipate because fewer people are pursuing a career in education. Even before the pandemic, jurisdictions across the nation were confronting staff shortages. A 2016 national survey of college freshmen found the number of students indicating they will major in education has reached its lowest point in 45 years. Only 4.2 percent will major in education, a first step in becoming a teacher. This is down from 11 percent according to data from UCLA's Cooperative Institutional Research Program.⁹

Against this backdrop, the National Institute on Retirement Security (NIRS) polled Americans to ascertain their views about K-12 school personnel and their compensation. The research finds:

- **Americans are deeply concerned about teachers and public school employees.** Eighty-three percent are worried about staff shortages, 81 percent are concerned about staff burnout, 81 percent are concerned that fewer people are going into education. This concern is high across party lines.
- **Americans value K-12 employees.** Nearly all Americans (95 percent) say public school teachers and personnel are important to their community, while 89 percent say they deserve more respect. Eighty-eight percent say their pay should be increased.
- **Better pay and benefits, student loan forgiveness, and more school resources would help attract and retain teachers and school personnel.** Ninety-two percent of respondents said better pay would help drive more people into the profession. Eighty-nine percent pointed to more generous healthcare benefits, while 86 percent said more generous pensions would help. Eighty-eight percent responded that more funding and resources for schools would be a key factor, while 75 percent indicated student loan forgiveness would be important.
- **Healthcare and retirement benefits are viewed as magnets for attracting and retaining K-12 school personnel, and these benefits should be funded and protected.** Ninety-two percent of Americans indicated healthcare benefits are a good tool to attract and retain teachers and school personnel, while 91 percent agree pensions also help. Ninety-four percent of respondents said elected officials must ensure teacher and school personnel pension and healthcare benefits are sufficiently funded.

I. AMERICANS ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT TEACHERS AND PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

In 2016, the Learning Policy Institute issued a study detailing a coming teacher shortage crisis. The report indicated many school districts “had serious difficulty finding qualified teachers for their positions.” Moreover, school districts also were challenged with broadening curriculum offerings and meeting projected increases in student populations. The report authors estimated the annual teacher shortage would reach about 110,000 by the 2017–2018 school year.¹⁰

Also in 2016, a national survey of college freshmen found the number of students indicating they will major in education has reached its lowest point in 45 years. Only 4.2 percent will major in education, a first step in becoming a teacher. This is down from 11 percent, according to data from UCLA’s Cooperative Institutional Research Program.¹¹

Fast-forward to the pandemic years, and the problems have worsened. In a 2021 survey by MissionSquare Research Institute of the K-12 workforce, 37 percent of respondents said working during the pandemic has made them consider

changing jobs, and 52 percent reported burnout. That survey also found 59 percent of the K-12 employees said the risks of working during the COVID-19 pandemic are not on par with their compensation, while 50 percent said the pandemic has negatively impacted their finances.¹²

This research finds worry about the public education workforce is widespread among the general public. When asked about jurisdictions facing serious shortages of teachers, substitutes, bus drivers and other staff, 84 percent of Americans said they are concerned (**Figure 1**). Moreover, 82 percent (**Figure 2**) indicated they are worried about K-12 workforce burnout. Eighty-one percent are worried about teachers leaving their profession (**Figure 3**) and falling enrollment in teacher preparation programs (**Figure 4**). And while the nation remains deeply divided on many issues, the concerns about the public K-12 workforce are high across party lines (**Figure 5**).

Figure 1: Most Americans are worried about shortages of teachers and public school employees.

To what extent are you worried about each of the following statements related to teachers and public school employees: Many local jurisdictions face a serious shortage of teachers, bus drivers, substitutes, and other staff.

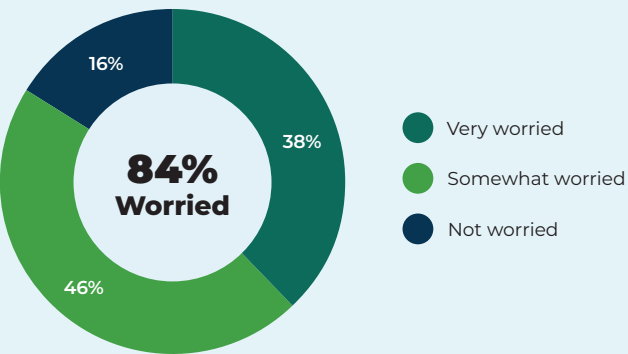


Figure 2: There is a high level of concern about teacher and school personnel burnout.

To what extent are you worried about each of the following statements related to teachers and public school employees: In the wake of COVID-19, burnout is rising.

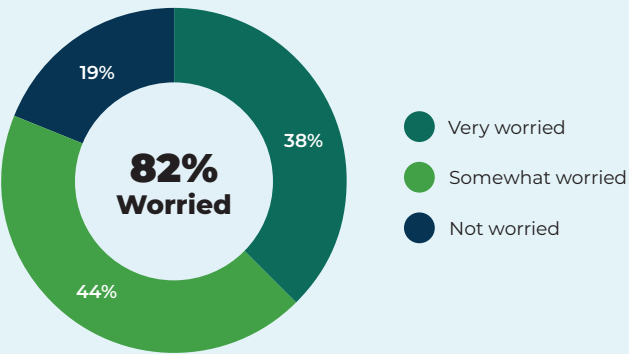


Figure 3: There is deep concern about public school educators leaving the profession.

To what extent are you worried about each of the following statements related to teachers and public school employees: Many teachers are considering leaving the profession.

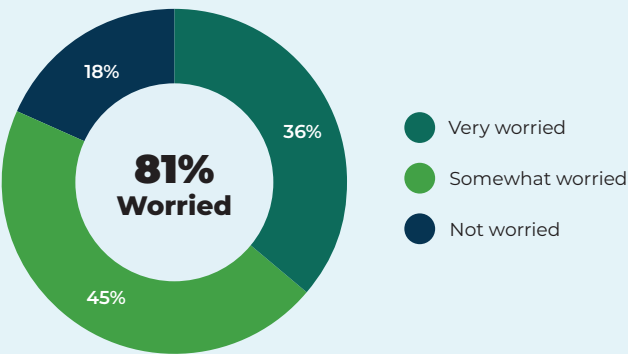


Figure 4: A substantial drop in student enrollment in teacher preparation programs that will worsen staff shortages is a significant worry.

To what extent are you worried about each of the following statements related to teachers and public school employees: In recent years, student enrollment in teacher preparation programs has dropped 42%, which experts predict will worsen teacher shortages.

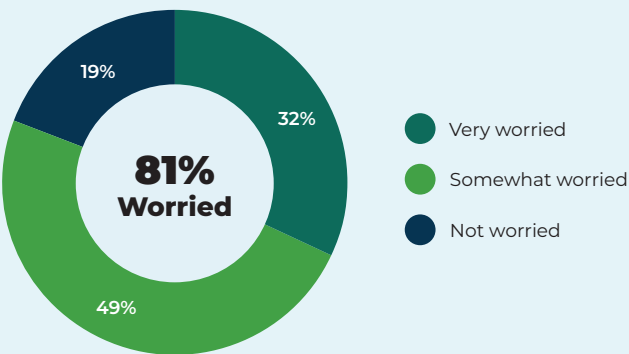
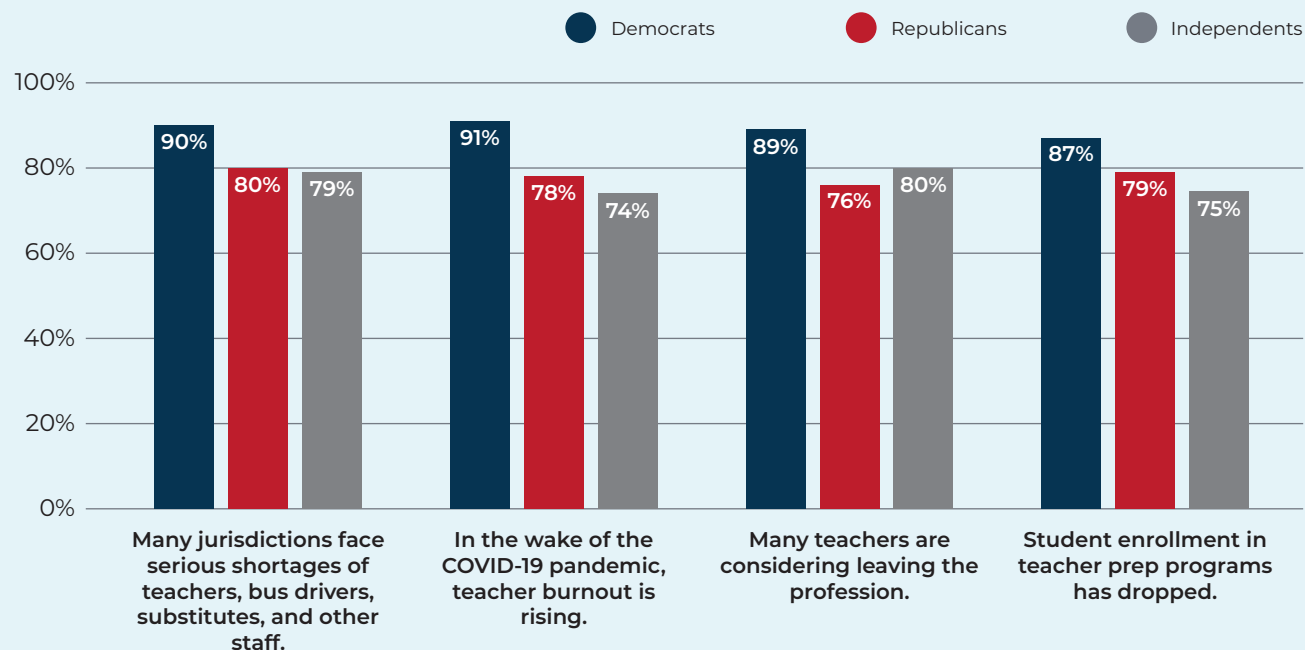


Figure 5: Across party lines, Americans are worried about teachers and school personnel.

To what extent are you worried about each of the following statements related to teachers and public school employees:



II. AMERICANS VALUE K-12 EMPLOYEES

Teachers have been in the public spotlight in recent years. In 2018, teachers in many jurisdictions were on strike calling for increased funding of schools and advocating for better pay and benefits. That same year, an Ipsos/USA Today poll found most Americans believe teachers are important, with 73% percent indicating that a teacher made a significant and positive impact on their lives.¹³

The spotlight on the K-12 workforce has expanded since the onset of the pandemic. In 2020, public school teachers and personnel faced the monumental challenge of pivoting to virtual education when the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in the U.S. It was grueling and frustrating for the K-12 workforce, for families and for students. As vaccines arrived and COVID-19 cases fell, schools largely were open for the 2021-22 school year. But then the arrival of the fast-spreading and highly infectious omicron variant

in late 2021 presented new obstacles for public school personnel. For example, many employees were out sick with COVID-19 amid a national worker shortage deemed “The Great Resignation.” Also, many school districts have been caught in the political crossfire related to vaccine and mask mandates, along with other high-profile political disagreements on school curriculum.

Despite this host of complicated issues, the public continues to value teachers and school personnel. This research finds nearly all Americans (95 percent) say the K-12 public workforce is an important part of their community (**Figure 6**), and 89 percent say these workers deserve more respect (**Figure 7**). Similarly, 88 percent agree K-12 worker pay should be increased (**Figure 8**). This sentiment about the value of teachers holds true across party lines despite deep political division on many issues (**Figure 9**).

Figure 6: Nearly everyone agrees that teachers and school personnel are important to communities.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements: Teachers & school personnel are an important part of our community.

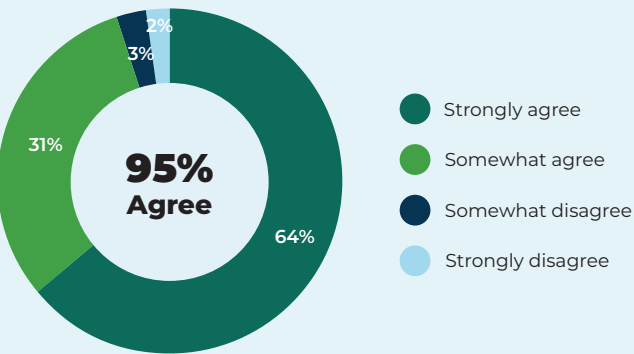


Figure 7: The overwhelming majority of Americans say teachers and school personnel deserve more respect.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements: Teachers & school personnel deserve more respect.

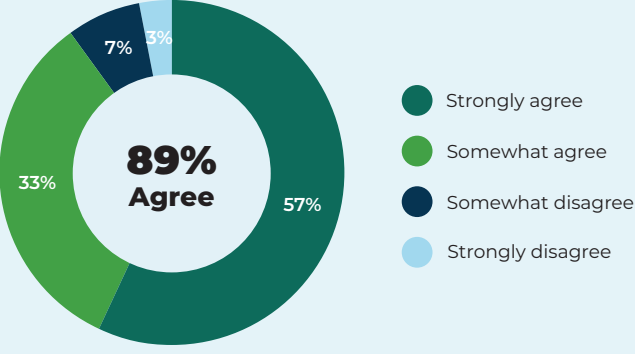


Figure 8: The overwhelming majority of Americans say teachers and school personnel should have their pay increased.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements: Teachers & school personnel pay should be increased.

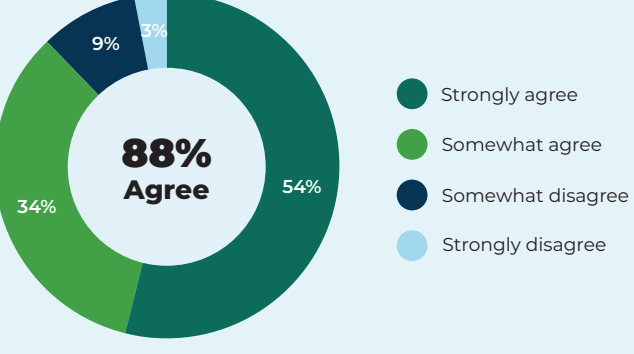
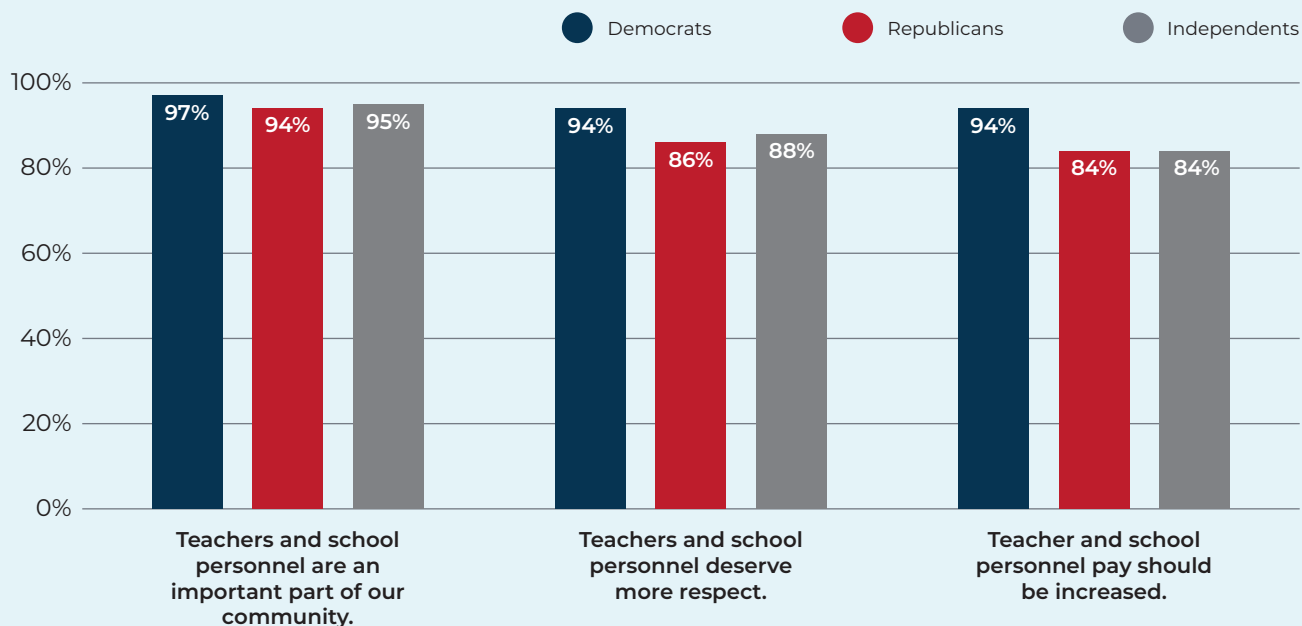


Figure 9: Regardless of party affiliation, Americans value teachers and school personnel.

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements:



III. BETTER PAY AND BENEFITS, STUDENT LOAN FORGIVENESS, AND MORE SCHOOL RESOURCES WOULD HELP ATTRACT AND RETAIN SCHOOL PERSONNEL

According to the Learning Policy Institute, a proficient education workforce is foundational to children's education outcomes. But, growing teacher shortages are reaching crisis levels in some cases, particularly for mathematics, science and special education. The Institute also found the most effective approaches for recruiting and keeping teachers includes increasing their compensation, along with improving their preparation, professional support and working conditions.¹⁴

Research indicates teachers are paid less in wages and compensation than other college-educated workers with similar experience, which discourages students from entering the profession and creates challenges for schools to keep current teachers in the classroom. According to the Economic Policy Institute, the regression-adjusted

teaching wage penalty jumped from six percent in 1996 to 19.2 percent in 2019.¹⁵

The National Education Association (NEA) finds student loans are a significant burden to educators' financial well-being. About three-fifths (59 percent) of educators with unpaid loans reported that the debt hurt their ability to build up emergency savings, and four in 10 said paying off their student loans impacted their mental, emotional, and/or physical well-being. NEA also found black educators took on significantly more debt than other racial/ethnic groups, with an average initial total of \$68,300 among those who took out loans, compared to \$54,300 for white educators.¹⁶ Further complicating this issue is the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, which has been criticized for its complex and confusing application process that has left

many qualified borrowers unable to secure loan forgiveness. The U.S. Department of Education recently announced an overhaul of the program so more public service workers, including the K-12 employees, can have their student loan debts forgiven.¹⁷

This research finds Americans see many avenues to improving the problem of teacher recruitment and retention. Improving teacher pay was viewed as the most important factor, with 92 percent of Americans viewing this as important. When it comes to the benefits portion

of compensation, more generous healthcare benefits were high on the list of important factors (89 percent), as were more generous pension benefits (86 percent). Eighty-eight percent said more funding and resources for schools was a key recruitment and retention factor, while 75 percent said student loan forgiveness was important (**Figure 10**). And again, despite political polarization across the nation, Americans were fairly consistent across party lines on how to improve recruitment and retention of the K-12 workforce (**Figure 11**).

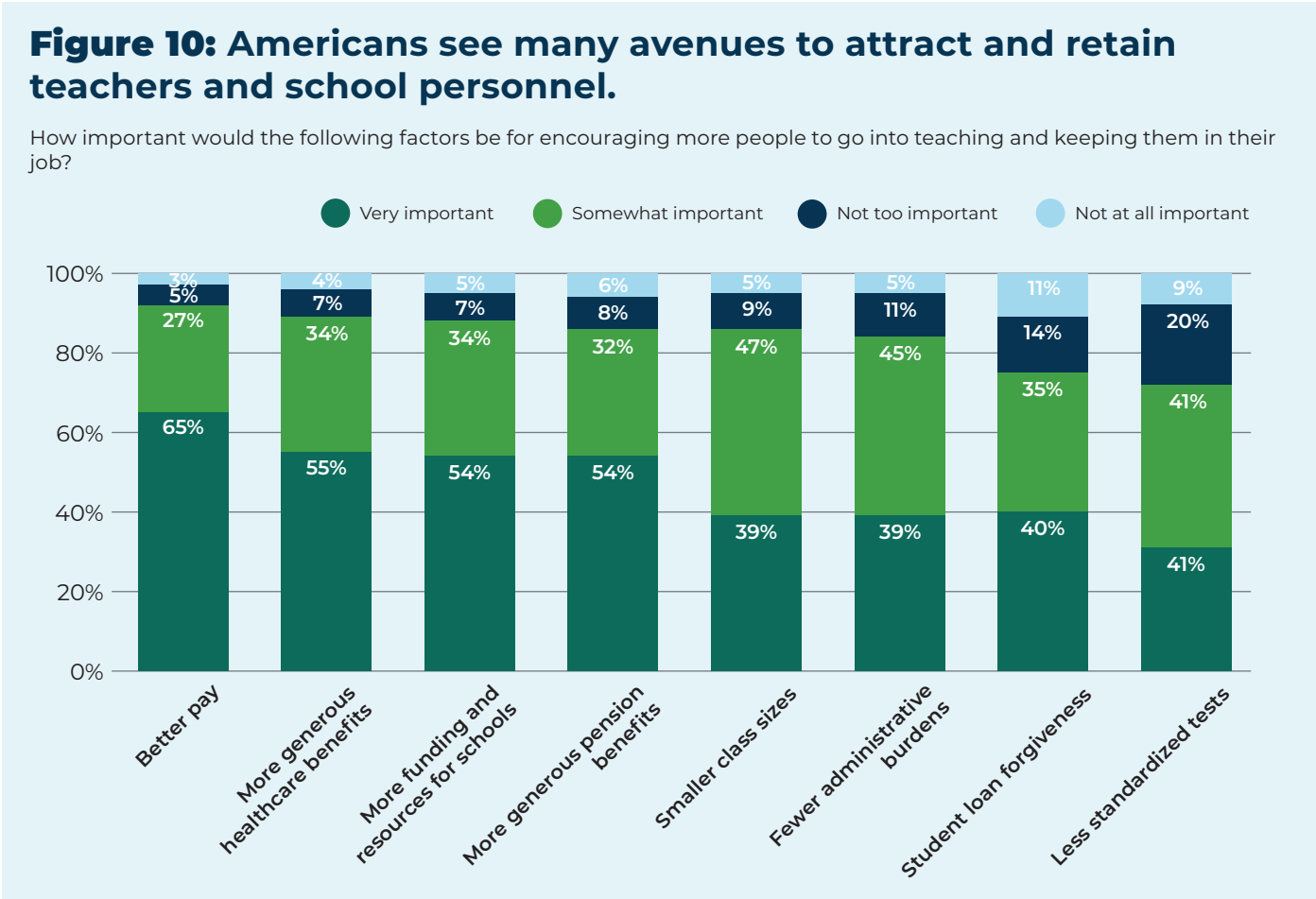
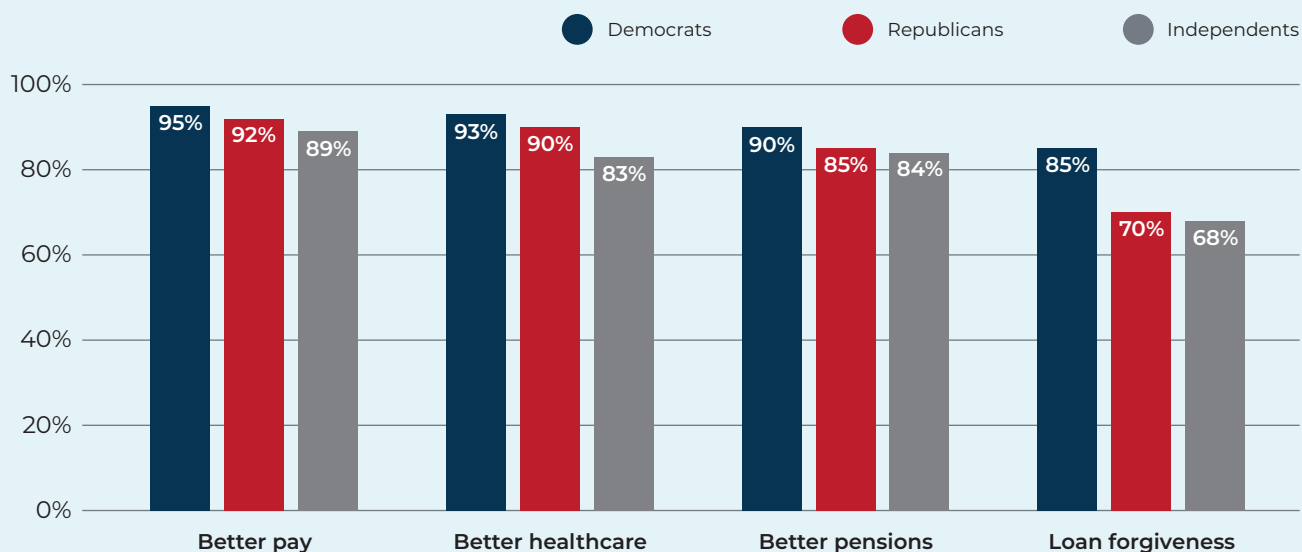


Figure 11: Across party lines, Americans agree on ways to attract and retain teachers and school personnel.

How important would the following factors be for encouraging more people to go into teaching and keeping them in their job?



IV. HEALTHCARE AND RETIREMENT BENEFITS ARE VIEWED BY AMERICANS AS MAGNETS FOR ATTRACTING AND RETAINING K-12 SCHOOL PERSONNEL, AND THESE BENEFITS SHOULD BE FUNDED AND PROTECTED.

According to MissionSquare Research Institute, nearly all public service workers have access to pension plans and healthcare benefits. Some 86 percent of state and local workers have access to a defined benefit pension plan, while 38 percent have access to a defined contribution retirement account. The overwhelming majority (89 percent) of state and local employees have access to health care benefits, which may include medical, dental, vision, and prescription drug coverage components.¹⁸

Pension plans have existed in the U.S. since the 19th century. Over time, employers have seen the value of offering pensions to employees because these benefits are valued not only by workers, but also from a human resource management perspective because they serve as a recruitment and retention tool.¹⁹ This workforce tool has

been especially important in the public sector as state and local governments faced steep recruitment and retention challenges when the labor market was tight prior to the pandemic.²⁰

Research from America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP) finds employer-provided health coverage is important for recruiting employees, but even more so for retention. Some 56 percent of U.S. adults with employer-sponsored health benefits said their health coverage is a key factor in deciding to stay at their current job, while 46 percent said health insurance was the deciding factor or a positive influence in choosing their job.²¹

A 2019 survey of state and local workers found that benefits are among the most important job features for this segment of the workforce. Health insurance was viewed as

very important to 78 percent of state and local employees, and retirement benefits were seen as very important to 73 percent. State and local workers view their salary as less important, at 71 percent. Moreover, these public sector workers said cutting employee benefits could drive them out of the public workforce. More than half (58 percent) say switching them out of a pension into an individual retirement plan, like a 401(k)-style plan, would make them more likely to leave their job. Some 73 percent say they would be more likely to leave their job if their pension were cut, and 79 percent say they would be more likely to leave their job if their healthcare benefits were cut.²²

State and local pensions typically are pre-funded during an employee's working years by employees, the employer and investment income. The funding levels have increased during the pandemic, thanks to the strong financial markets. The gap between the cost of pension benefits and what states have set aside to pay for the benefits dropped in 2021 to its lowest level in more than a decade. Now, state retirement systems are more than 85 percent pre-funded.²³ For plans with funding shortfalls, the cause typically is policymakers' failure to make the full required contributions over time.²⁴

Healthcare benefits are generally provided to full time workers in education. But the financial pressures faced

by public employers during the great recession caused some erosion in the quality of benefits being offered—for both current workers and for post-retirement health care. Educators may remain concerned that future recessions, along with the fiscal pressures they present, could cause further erosion in health insurance offerings.

This research finds Americans are in strong agreement that it's critically important that state and local workers have access to good retirement and healthcare benefits through their employers during their working years and in retirement, and these benefits serve as employee magnets. There's also strong support for the notion that these benefits should be properly funded by lawmakers and delivered as promised, especially since workers contribute to the costs each pay period.

Regarding healthcare benefits, **Figure 12** indicates nearly all Americans (90 percent) are in favor of providing the K-12 public workforce with healthcare benefits. Additionally, 92 percent see healthcare benefits as a magnet for attracting and keeping employees (**Figure 13**). Ninety-five percent say they agree teachers and school personnel should receive the healthcare benefits they were promised (**Figure 14**), while 94 percent say elected officials must ensure these benefits are funded properly (**Figure 15**).

Figure 12: The overwhelming majority of Americans say teachers and school personnel should have healthcare benefits while working and in retirement.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Teachers & school personnel should have access to healthcare benefits through their employer in their working years and in retirement.

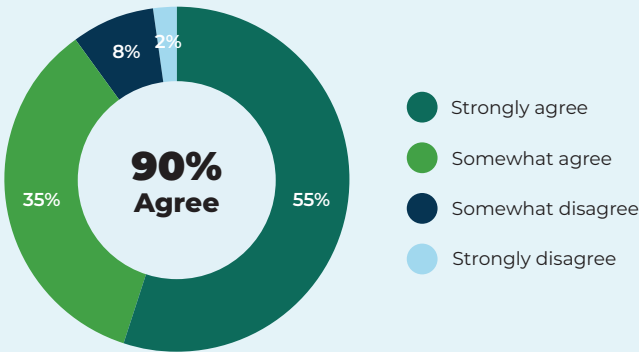


Figure 13: The overwhelming majority of Americans say healthcare benefits are a good way to attract and retain teachers and school personnel.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Healthcare benefits are a good way to attract and retain teachers & school personnel.

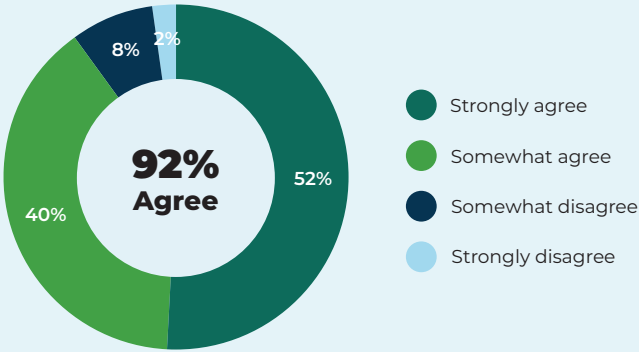


Figure 14: Nearly all Americans agree that retired teachers and school personnel should receive the healthcare benefits they were promised.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Retired teachers & school personnel should receive the healthcare benefits they were promised.

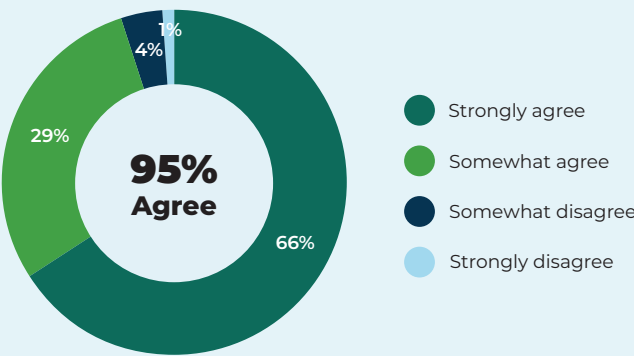
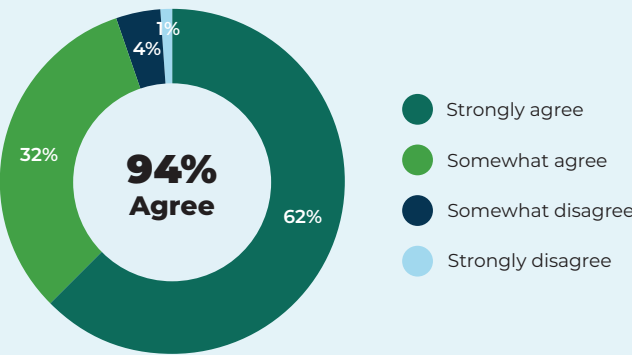


Figure 15: Nearly all Americans agree that elected officials must ensure retiree healthcare plans are sufficiently funded.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Elected officials must ensure that pension plans are sufficiently funded.



Regarding pensions, **Figure 16** indicates nearly all Americans (90 percent) favor providing the K-12 public workforce with this benefit so they can have a secure retirement. Additionally, 91 percent view pension benefits as a magnet for attracting and keeping K-12 public school

workers (**Figure 17**). Ninety-six percent agree teachers and school personnel should receive the pension benefits they were promised (**Figure 18**), while 94 percent say elected officials must ensure pension benefits are funded properly (**Figure 19**).

Figure 16: Nearly all Americans agree that teachers and school personnel should have a pension so they have a secure retirement after a career in education.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Teachers & school personnel should have a pension, so they have a secure retirement after a career in education.

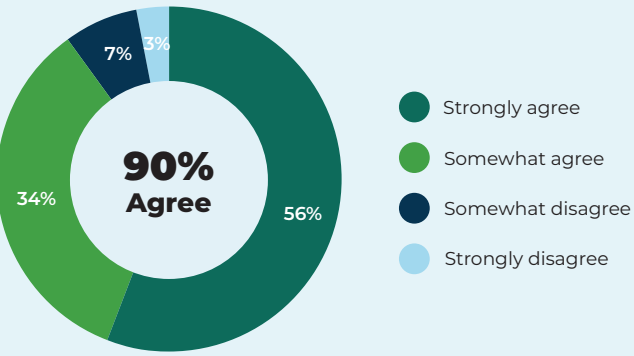


Figure 17: Nearly all Americans agree that pensions are a good way to attract and retain school personnel.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Pensions are a good way to attract and retain teachers & school personnel.

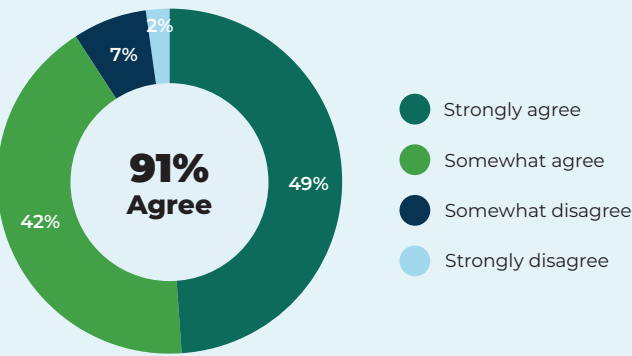


Figure 18: Nearly all Americans agree that retired teachers and school personnel should receive the pension benefits they were promised.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Retired teachers & school personnel should receive their promised pension benefits.

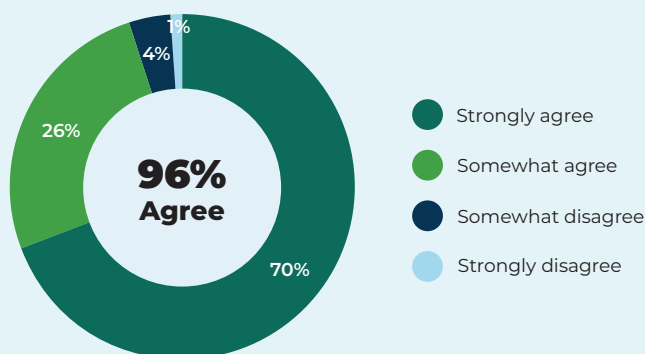
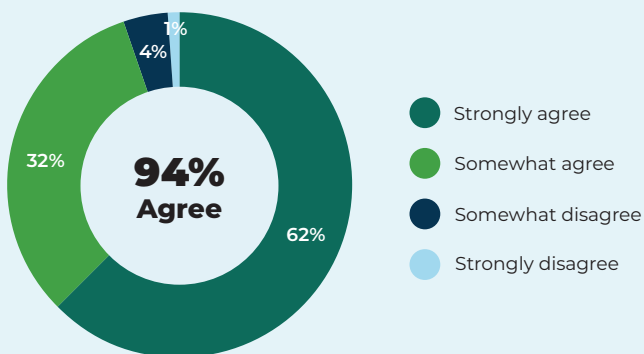


Figure 19: Nearly all Americans agree that elected officials must ensure that pension plans are sufficiently funded.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Elected officials must ensure that pension plans are sufficiently funded.



When asked about the level of pension income received by K-12 retirees, 55 percent of Americans say the benefit is too low (**Figure 20**). The average K-12 worker pension is about \$34,000 annually, and about 40 of these workers do not participate in Social Security.²⁵ Most Americans (90 percent) see a strong pension benefit as all the more important for K-12 workers lacking Social Security (**Figure 21**). When it comes to cost-of-living adjustments, most Americans (86 percent) see this feature of a pension as important (**Figure 22**). About three-fourths of states and local pension plans provide an automatic cost-of-living-adjustment.²⁶

Nearly all Americans (93 percent) support the notion that public school teachers and personnel should receive their promised pensions because they contribute to this benefit every pay period (**Figure 23**). Ninety one percent of public sector employees with a pension plan are required to contribute to their plan, at an average of 7.2 percent of annual earnings.²⁷ Moreover, 70 percent of Americans agree that K-12 pensions should not be replaced with 401(K)-style retirement accounts (**Figure 24**). A few states have opted to make this shift, but it has been fraught with problems. In some cases, jurisdictions reverted back to pensions or funding levels dropped dramatically. Interestingly, the vast majority of Americans agree everyone – not just K-12 workers – should receive a pension (**Figure 25**).²⁸

Figure 20: More than half Americans believe the average teacher pension benefit is too low.

Given that roughly 40% of teachers do not participate in Social Security, do you think the average teacher pension of about \$34,000 is...?

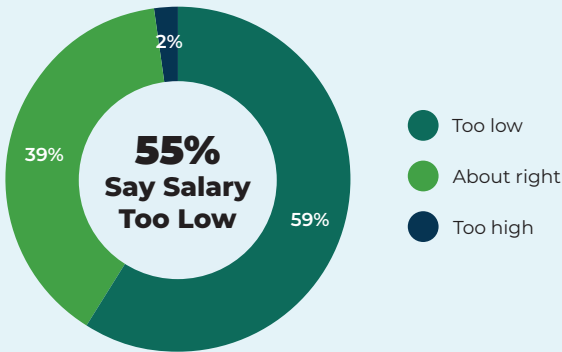


Figure 21: For teacher and school personnel without Social Security, Americans overwhelmingly agree that they need a strong pension for retirement security.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement about teacher & school personnel pensions: In states where teachers & school personnel cannot participate in Social Security, teachers must receive a strong pension, so they have financial security in retirement.

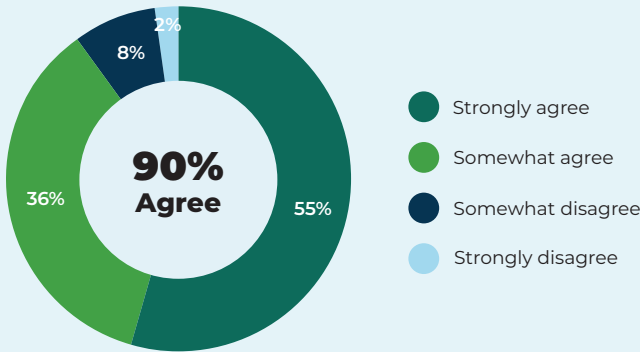


Figure 22: There is strong public support for cost-of-living adjustments for teacher and school personnel pensions.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement about teacher & school personnel pensions: Because of inflation, teachers & school personnel should receive cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) to their pension, similar to Social Security COLAs.

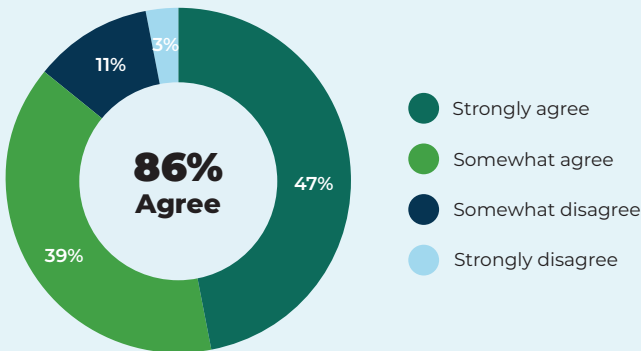


Figure 23: Because teachers contribute to their pension each pay period, it is important that they receive their guaranteed pension.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement about teacher & school personnel pensions: Teachers & school personnel should receive their guaranteed pensions because they help fund part of the cost by contributing money out of every paycheck.

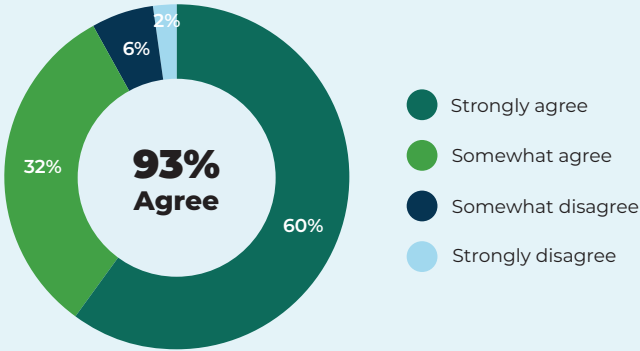


Figure 24: Nearly three-fourths of Americans agree that teacher and school personnel pensions should not be replaced by 401(k)-style accounts.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement about teacher & school personnel pensions: Teachers & school personnel pensions should never be replaced with 401(k)-style retirement accounts.

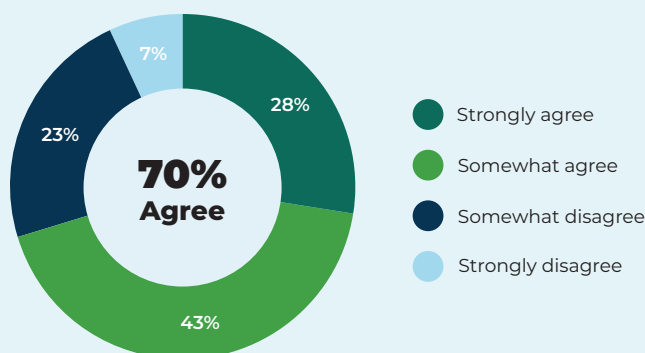
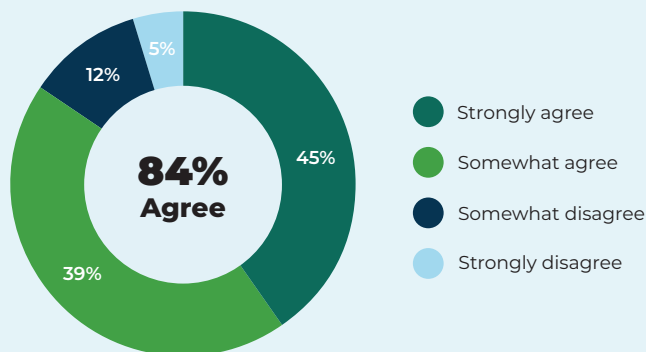


Figure 25: The majority of Americans agree that all workers should have a pension so they can be self-reliant in retirement.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: All workers in the U.S. should have a pension so they can be self-reliant in retirement.



V. CONCLUSION

The past two years have seen devastating health, economic, workforce and education challenges attributable to the arrival of COVID-19 in the U.S. Throughout the pandemic, the role of state and local public employees has become increasingly important. From first responders to public health professionals to teachers, more than 18 million individuals who are employed by state and local government continue to ensure essential services are available to their communities.

Not surprisingly, recent research finds the pandemic and economic crisis are taking a heavy toll on state and local employees. Negative job sentiment among the state and local workforce is on the rise, and workers feel the risks they are taking during the pandemic are not on par with their compensation.

With respect to the educators, the pandemic has been extremely challenging. K-12 teachers and personnel were confronted with the complex challenge of pivoting to virtual education in 2020, which was grueling and frustrating for

the K-12 workforce, for families and for children. While schools largely opened for the 2021-22 school year for in-person learning, the omicron variant has presented even more challenges. Also, many school districts have had to contend with being caught in the political crossfire in jurisdictions opposed to vaccine and mask mandates, along with other high-profile disagreements related to school curriculum. Research indicates that as the pandemic lingers, K-12 public school employees have been struggling with a multitude of issues. A 2021 national poll found 52 percent of the K-12 workforce is stressed and burnt out, while more than one-third (37 percent) of these workers say the pandemic has them considering a job change.

In recent days, the K-12 public workforce shortage has reached crisis levels across the nation thanks, in part, to the omicron variant that has pushed new infection figures above 1 million per day. High infection rates across the workforce have resulted in a shortage of teachers, bus drivers, custodians and cafeteria workers, forcing some

school districts to close temporarily or pivot back to virtual learning. Even when COVID-19 subsides, the shortage likely will not dissipate.

Given these circumstances, NIRS surveyed working-age Americans to gain insight into their views about K-12 school personnel and their compensation. The research finds:

- **Americans are deeply concerned about teachers and public school employees.** Eighty-three percent are worried about staff shortages, and 81 percent are concerned about staff burnout. This concern is consistent across party lines.
- **Americans value K-12 employees.** Nearly all Americans (95 percent) say public school teachers and personnel are important to their community, while 89 percent say they deserve more respect. Eighty-eight percent say their pay should be increased.
- **Better pay and benefits, student loan forgiveness, and more school resources would help attract and retain teachers and school personnel.** Ninety-two percent of respondents said better pay would help drive more people into the profession. Eighty-nine percent pointed to more generous healthcare benefits, while 86 percent said more generous pensions would help.

Eighty-eight percent responded that more funding and resources for schools would be a key factor, while 75 percent indicated student loan forgiveness would be important.

- **Healthcare and retirement benefits are viewed as magnets for attracting and retaining staff K-12 school personnel, and these benefits should be funded and protected.** Ninety-two percent of Americans indicate that healthcare benefits are a good tool to hire and keep teachers and school personnel, while 91 percent agree pensions also help. Ninety-four percent of respondents said elected officials must ensure teacher and school personnel pension and healthcare benefits are sufficiently funded.

Going forward, it will be critically important for policymakers and the state, local and federal levels to fully understand the issues confronting the K-12 workforce, along with ways to recruit and retain these workers. Armed with this information, government leaders can make informed decisions about ways to address the growing and alarming shortfall of public school teachers and personnel that is impacting virtually every jurisdiction across the nation.

METHODOLOGY

Conducted by Greenwald Research, information for this study was collected from online interviews in December 2021. A total of 1,005 individuals aged 25 and older completed the survey. The final data were weighted by age, gender, and income to reflect the demographics of Americans aged 25 and older. The sample was selected using Dynata, an online sample provider. Tabulations in some of the charts may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

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The National Institute on Retirement Security is a non-profit research and education organization established to contribute to informed policymaking by fostering a deep understanding of the value of retirement security to employees, employers, and the economy as a whole.

Our Vision

Through our activities, NIRS seeks to encourage the development of public policies that enhance retirement security in America. Our vision is one of a retirement system that simultaneously meets the needs of employers, employees, and the public interest. That is, one where:

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- employees can count on a secure source of retirement income that enables them to maintain a decent living standard after a lifetime of work; and
- the public interest is well-served by retirement systems that are managed in ways that promote fiscal responsibility, economic growth, and responsible stewardship of retirement assets.

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