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School Choice Survey

*An opinion survey prepared for the Pioneer Institute
by DAPA Research, Inc.*

April 24, 2012



SURVEY:	500 Completes
ERROR:	+/- 4.4%
ITEM:	April Study
UNIVERSE:	Likely Voters Commonwealth of MA

DAPA Research, Inc.
One Central Road
Lynnfield, MA 01940

PREFACE

TO: Pioneer Institute
FROM: DAPA Research Team
DATE: April 24, 2012
RE: Survey Results

The following information is documented for your review:

1. This study was executed in the field from April 9 to April 12.
2. The survey included 500 completed interviews.
3. There is a 95% confidence level that the margin of error is within +/- 4.4% given the universe of likely voters in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
4. Area weighting was conducted by a random selection of all likely voters in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
5. Respondents were solicited randomly given the subset screen and area targets.
6. All phoning and statistical processing took place from our Philadelphia phone center for secure, automated, and neutral accent completion of the fieldwork.
7. Each interview timed out at approximately seven minutes.
8. The survey included 23 pre-coded closed-ended questions including screens.
9. This study is the sole property of the Pioneer Institute. No other individual, agency, company, media outlet, or institution may reproduce the following study, either in whole or in part, without the expressed written consent of the Pioneer Institute.

Highlights of Charter School Study

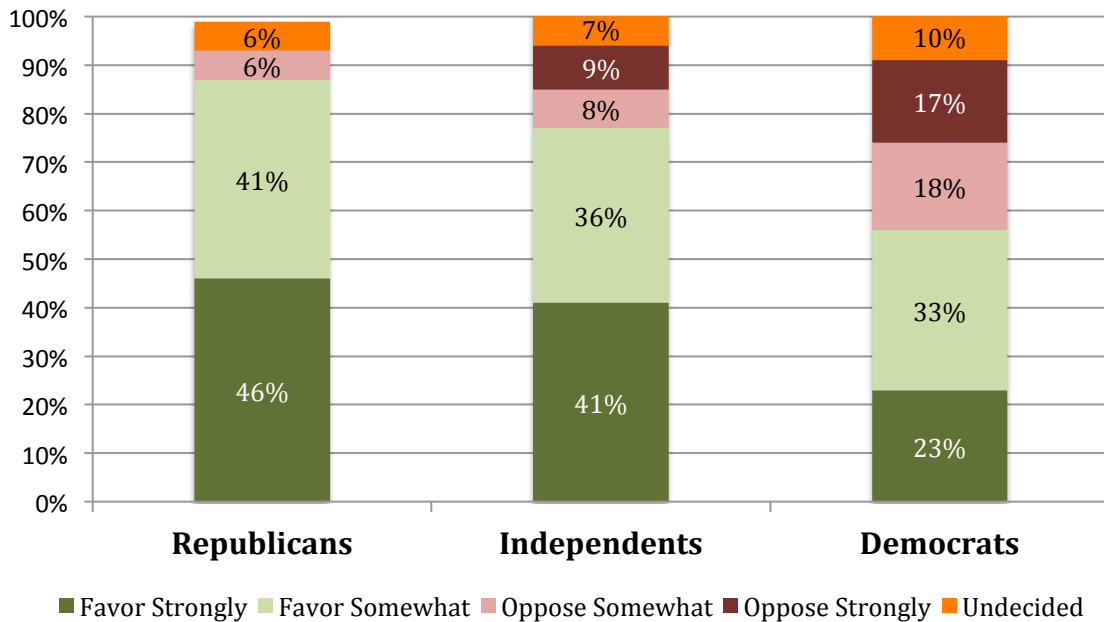
Overview:

Likely voters in Massachusetts looked favorably on charter schools in this survey, with a majority favoring policies that would allow these schools to operate with greater flexibility, including: increased enrollment, educational choice, tax credits and school vouchers.

Respondents were split on the state of the state, as 40% said Massachusetts is headed in the right direction compared with 39% who said it was on the wrong track. However, a majority (52%) rated the quality of Massachusetts schools as 5 or above on a seven point scale.

Statewide, 70% of respondents said they either strongly favor (35%) or somewhat favor (35%) charter schools, with only 8% undecided on the issue (Q8). By party, support among registered Republicans who favor charter schools was particularly intense (strongly favor/somewhat favor 87%). However, a majority of Independents (77%) and Democrats (56%) also said they favor charter schools in Massachusetts (see chart below).

Support for Charter Schools by Party (Q8)



Support for Charter School Policies

Across all questions at least 51% of likely voters were in favor of policies that supported charter schools.

Increasing Student Enrollment for Charter Schools (Q9)

Some 60% of likely voters surveyed said they approve of a law that would “authorize increases in student enrollment for any new or existing public charter school that meets the state’s quality standards and is located in a city or town with a high level of poverty.” Households with children under the age of 18 were more likely to approve of an increase (68%) than households without (55%) by 13 percentage points.

Also, a majority of respondents across all party affiliations said they would vote “yes” on the measure (Rep 70%, Dem 59%, Ind 58%).

Educational Choice Among Less-Affluent Families (Q10 & Q11)

More than three-quarters of likely voters in Massachusetts (76%) said that less-affluent families should have “access to educational choices other than their local public schools,” (Q10). Similarly, 77% said that families with children that require alternative schooling should have access to that option “regardless of how much money they have,” (Q11).

By party, concerning access to educational choice for any less-affluent family (Q10) intensity of support was strongest among Republicans (81%) and Independents (80%) when compared with Democrats (68%). But, there was general agreement that “children who don’t respond well to the kind of schooling that is used for most kids,” (Q11) should have access (Ind 79%, Dem 75%, Rep 75%).

Tax Credits Programs for Charter Schools (Q12 & Q13)

A majority of likely voters (64%) said they favor offering educational tax credits to “individuals and businesses that make charitable contributions to fund educational choices,” (Q12: strongly support 25%, somewhat support 39%). Further, a majority (59%) also said they support educational tax credits “targeted towards those who are less-affluent,” (Q13: strongly support 25%, somewhat support 34%).

Strong opposition to tax credits remained consistent among Democrats and Independents across both questions, both increasing by just 2 percentage points from Q12 (strongly oppose: Dem 18%, Ind 13%) to Q13 (strongly oppose: Dem 20%, Ind 15%). However, the number of Republicans strongly

opposed increased by 9 percentage points from Q12 (strongly oppose 5%) to Q13 (strongly oppose 14%).

Amendments to Allow Voucher Programs (Q14, Q15 & Q16)

Overall, a slim majority (51%) of likely voters said they oppose the current constitutional amendments prohibiting public money from going to religious schools (Q14: strongly oppose 27%, somewhat oppose 24%).

By party registration, likely voters who identified as Independents fell in line with statewide averages (strongly oppose: Ind 26% vs. statewide 27%). However, among self-reported “moderates” opposition to the current amendments jumps by 16 percentage points (strongly oppose: moderate 42%). Further, it’s worth noting that moderates broke down as 59% Independent, 28% Democrat, 12% Republican.

Voucher programs for needy families found strong support among respondents (Q15: support strongly/somewhat 68%), as did repealing current amendments to allow vouchers for needy families (Q16: support strongly/somewhat 63%).

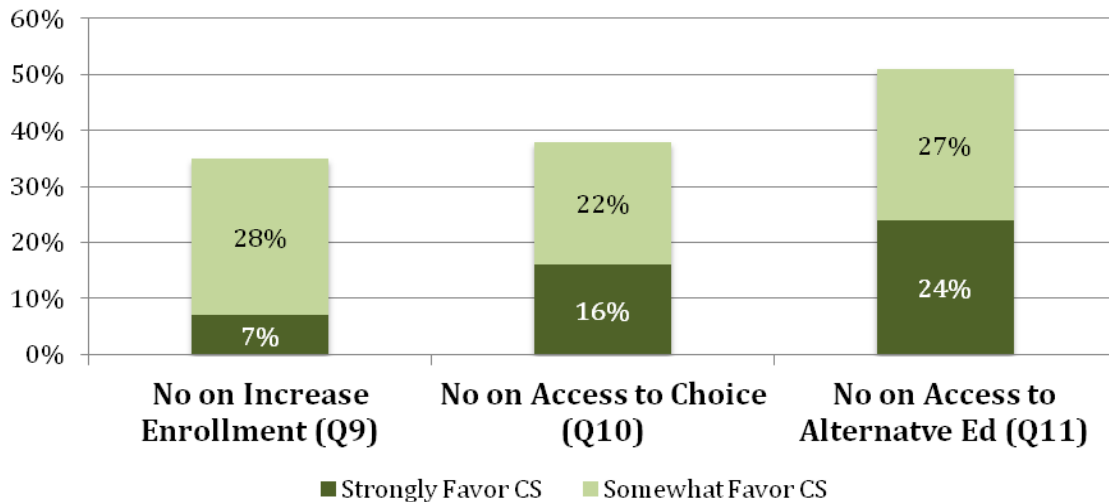
Strong Base of Support for Charter Schools

This survey found strong support for charter schools in Massachusetts among likely voters statewide (strongly/somewhat favor 70%). However, support for specific policies regarding charter schools did not always find equally high levels of support.

The strong baseline of support for charter schools may represent an opportunity to persuade some voters to change their attitudes. Further, low numbers of undecideds on most policy questions means building wider support may depend on persuading those who have (for the time being) already formed an opinion on the issues.

Among likely voters who said they oppose increasing enrollment in charter schools (Q9), 35% either strongly favor (7%) or somewhat favor (28%) charter schools in Massachusetts. Of those who said they oppose access to educational choice for less-affluent families (Q10) a total of 38% either strongly favor (16%) or somewhat favor (22%) charter schools. And finally, of respondents who said they oppose access to alternative education for less-affluent families (Q11), a majority (51%) reported they strongly favor (24%) or somewhat favor (27%) charter schools (see chart below).

Support for Charter Schools among Respondents Opposed to Policies (Q9-11)



Similar levels of support for charter schools in Massachusetts were found among respondents who stood opposed to other policies tested in the survey. More simply, among respondents opposed to various policies typically more than half favored charter schools in general (Q8) (see table below).

	Strongly Favor CS	Somewhat Favor CS
No on Increase Enrollment (Q9)	7%	28%
No on Access to Choice (Q10)	16%	22%
No on Access to Alternative Ed (Q11)	24%	27%
Oppose Tax Credit (Q12)	20%	29%
Oppose Targeted Tax Credit (Q13)	40%	24%
Support Current Amendments (Q14)	32%	36%
Oppose Vouchers (Q15)	26%	31%
Oppose Repealing Amendments (Q16)	21%	33%

Variation in Support by Respondent Voting Intention

This survey screened out respondents who said their intention to “vote in the general election for President” was 50-50, not likely, or undecided. In total, 91% of respondents let through the screen said they were “very likely” to vote this fall, and 9% said they were “somewhat likely.”

Interestingly, while both responses are aptly grouped together as “likely voters,” there were several sharp differences between them on some questions.

For example, respondents who self-identified as somewhat likely to vote this fall were less informed on the issue of charter schools than those who said they were very likely to vote. On the questions of having “seen, heard, or read anything recently” about charter schools, very likely voters outpaced somewhat likely voters by 24 percentage points (yes “seen, heard, or read”: very likely 60% vs. somewhat likely 36%).

However, while intensity of support for charter schools in general was weaker among somewhat likely voters (favor strongly: very likely 37% vs. somewhat likely 15%), somewhat likely voters consistently exceeded the statewide average with their support for specific policy questions, typically by 10 or more percentage points.

This indicates the possibility that these voters’ opinions may be more easily pulled in either direction as their knowledge base is significantly smaller than very likely voters.

Variation of Support for Charter Schools by Party

Intensity of support for charter schools and the policies tested was consistently high among registered Republicans, and often weaker among registered Democrats. However, the attitudes of Unenrolled/ Independents fluctuated.

On the question of charter schools in Massachusetts (Q8), Independents nearly matched the intensity of support among Republicans (favor strongly: Rep 46%, Ind 41%). However, on the question of authorizing increases of student enrollment (Q9), approval among Independents fell in line with Democrats (approve Dem 59%, Ind 58%). In general, Independents fell in line with Republican attitudes on policy questions, but often with less intensity of support.

Variation in Support for Charter School by Primary Media Source

There were some correlations between media source and likely voter’s opinion of charter schools and related policies. Of note, respondents who cited Internet/Blogs/E-mail as their primary media source were more likely to support charter schools when compared with the statewide average.

Finally, likely voters who said they get most of their information about public issues via Television were less likely to have “seen, heard, or read anything recently about charter schools,” (Television 49% vs. statewide 58%).

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Question-By-Question Summary Demographics

	Area	
	Worcester/West	(24%)
	North East	(35%)
	Suffolk	(09%)
	SE Mass/Cape	(32%)
Q1.	Vote for President	
	Very Likely	(91%)
	Somewhat Likely	(09%)
Q2.	Gender	
	Men	(48%)
	Women	(52%)
Q3.	Age Category	
	18-25	(08%)
	26-35	(15%)
	36-45	(15%)
	46-55	(19%)
	56-65	(20%)
	66-75	(15%)
	Over 75	(08%)
Q4.	Party	
	Democrat	(35%)
	Republican	(13%)
	Unenrolled/Ind.	(50%)
	Other	(02%)

Q5. Respondents Split on Direction of MA

Respondents were near evenly split on the question of whether Massachusetts is heading in the right direction (40%) or on the wrong track (39%), with 22% undecided.

Men were more likely than women to think that Massachusetts is headed in the right direction (men 45% vs. women 34%). However, women were more likely to be undecided (women 26% vs. men 17%).

A majority of Democrats held a positive view regarding the direction of the state (right direction 56%). GOP respondents disagreed; a majority (56%) said they think the state is on the wrong track. Republicans were also more likely to say they were undecided (Rep 27% vs. statewide 22%). Independents were split on this question (right direction 34%, wrong track 42%) with 24% undecided.

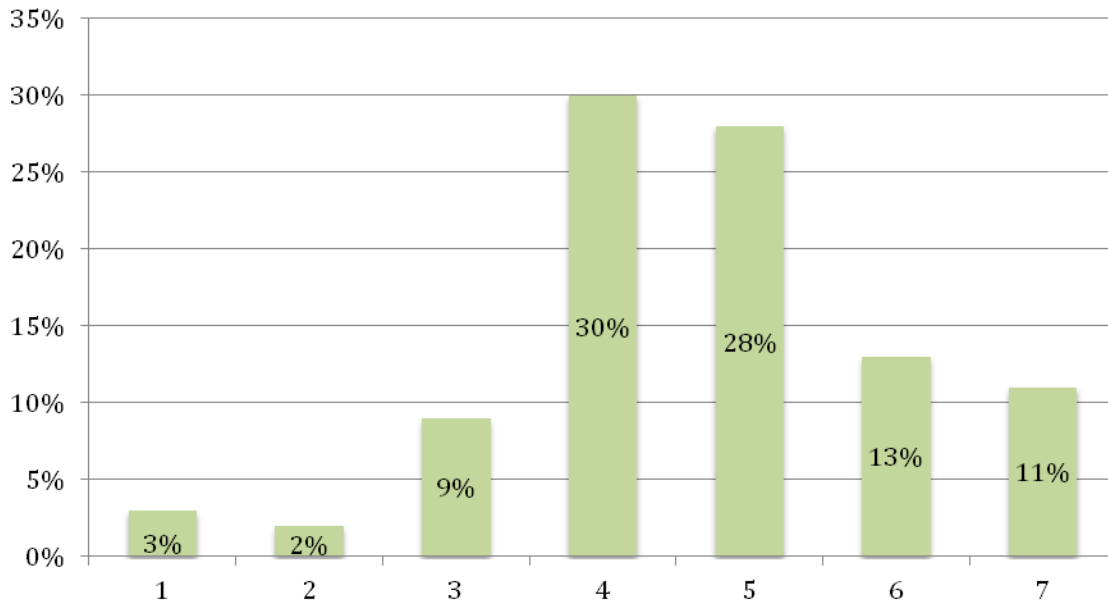
Among all age groups, middle age respondents were least likely to say they think the state is heading in the right direction (36-45 y/o 30% and 46-55 y/o 34%).

Of note, there was a strong correlation between education level and feelings about the direction of the state. Respondents with graduate or professional school experience were more likely to feel that Massachusetts is headed in the right direction (49%) than those with a high school diploma or less (31%), a gap of 18 percentage points.

Q6. Majority Give MA Schools Positive Rating

A majority of respondents (52%) rated the quality of Massachusetts schools as 5 or above on a seven point scale. In total, 24% gave MA schools a rating of 6/7 (6 13%, 7 11%) compared with just 5% who gave a rating of 1/2 (1 3%, 2 2%).

Overall Quality Rating of Public Schools in MA (Q6)



By region, respondents from Worcester/West were less likely to give MA schools a high rating when compared with the statewide average (6/7: Worcester/West 16% vs. statewide 24%). In contrast, those from Suffolk were more likely to have a positive opinion of overall school quality in MA (6/7: Suffolk 40% vs. statewide 24%).

Democrats were more likely to consider MA schools high quality when compared with Republicans (6/7: Dem 32% vs. Rep 20%), while Independents fell in line with the statewide average (6/7: Ind 20% vs. statewide 24%).

Interestingly, regarding the quality of MA schools, early-middle age respondents had the lowest opinion of any age group (1/2/3/4: 36-45 y/o 52% vs. 44% statewide). This group was also more likely to report having children under 18 in their household (53%) compared with the statewide average (31%). Respondents between 56-65 y/o were the only other age group with a majority (51%) that rated the quality of MA public schools as 4 or lower.

Q7. Charter Schools Widely Known

Overall, 58% of respondents said that “yes,” they had “seen, heard, or read” something recently about charter schools in Massachusetts, while 41% said “no,” and just 1% were undecided.

Compared with Democrats, Republicans had considerably less exposure to the topic of charter schools (yes: Dem 66% vs. Rep 40%). Independents again fell in line with the statewide average (yes: Ind 57% vs. 58% statewide).

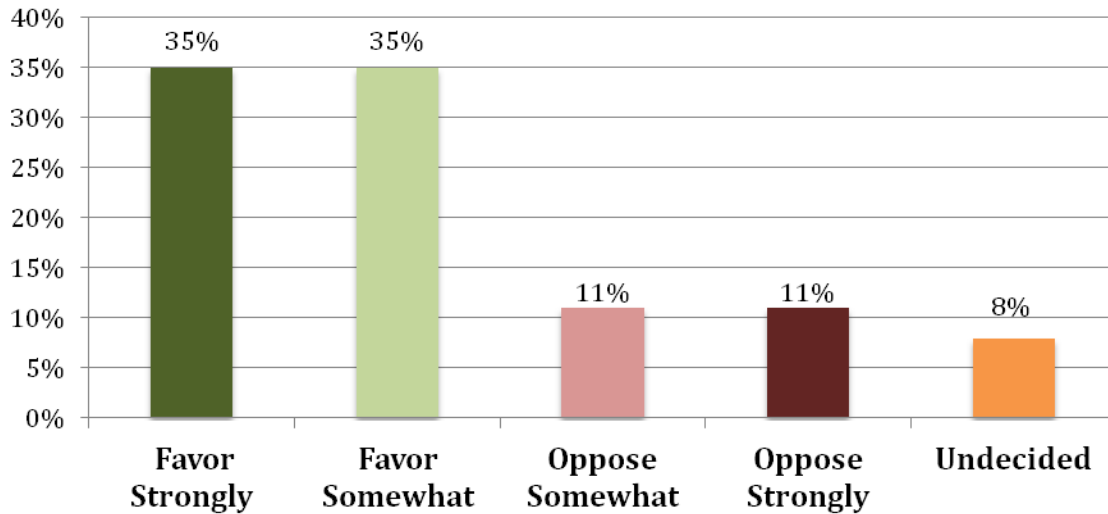
By age group, those with the most exposure to the topic of charter schools were early-middle age respondents 36-45 y/o (66%) and those 66-75 y/o (65%).

Finally, of respondents who said TV was their main source for public issues only 49% reported that yes, they had “seen, heard, or read” something about charter schools, 9 percentage points below the statewide average (58%).

Q8. Strong Support for Charter Schools

Statewide, 70% of respondents said they either strongly favor (35%) or somewhat favor (35%) charter schools in Massachusetts. Only 22% said they somewhat oppose (11%) or strongly oppose (11%) charter schools, and 8% reported they were undecided.

Support for Charter Schools Statewide (Q8)



While men and women equally supported charter schools overall, support among men was more intense by 11 percentage points (favor strongly: men 41% vs. women 30%).

A majority of Democrats (56%) said they support charter schools (23% favor strongly, 33% favor somewhat), however, they were also the most likely to oppose them when compared with Republicans (oppose somewhat/strongly: Dem 35% vs. Rep 6%). Independents supported charter schools with somewhat more intensity than respondents statewide (favor strongly: Ind 41% vs. statewide 35%).

Finally, respondents who said they “strongly oppose” charter schools (11% of total respondents) were more likely to give MA public schools a high rating (6/7: oppose strongly 32% vs. statewide 24%).

Q9. Majority Approve of Enrollment Increase

By more than two to one, respondents said they would approve of a law authorizing an “increases in student enrollment” for new or existing public charter schools (60% approve vs. 27% disapprove) with 13% undecided.

Support for the law was very strong among Republicans (70%), while Democrats and Independents fell in line with the statewide average (Dem 59%, Ind 58%).

Households with children under the age of 18 were more likely to approve of an increase (68%) than households without (55%) by 13 percentage points.

Of note, approval for the measure was slightly stronger among those who had completed graduate or professional school (67%) versus those whose highest education level was high school or less (59%).

Q10. Educational Choice Favored for Less Affluent Families

Just over three-fourths of respondents (76%) said they think less-affluent families should have access to educational choice other than their local public schools. Only 18% felt these families should not be provided with a choice and 6% said they were undecided.

Respondents who rated the quality of public schools in MA as poor were more likely to favor choice for less-affluent families (3 or below: 83% favor) compared to those who rated the quality of MA schools more highly (6 or above: 73% favor).

Democrats were less likely to favor choice (68%) when compared with Republicans (81%) or Independents (80%), a gap of roughly 12 percentage points.

By age, support for more access was strongest among respondents between 18-35 y/o (86% approve). When compared with those between 66-75 y/o (70% approve) support dropped by 16 percentage points.

Q11. Most Favor Access to Alternative Education

Again, a clear majority of respondents (77%) said they think families with “children that don’t respond well to the kind of schooling that is used for most kids” should have access to educational choices, regardless of how much money they have. Only 14% stood in opposition and 8% said they were undecided.

Across party affiliation there was unanimous positive support for access to alternative education options for some children (Dem 75%, Rep 75%, Ind 79%).

Two groups that fell significantly below the statewide average also had the highest number of undecided. Respondents in Northeast Massachusetts (67% yes, 15% undecided) and those between 56-65 y/o (69% yes, 14% undecided).

Q12. Wide Support for Educational Tax Credits

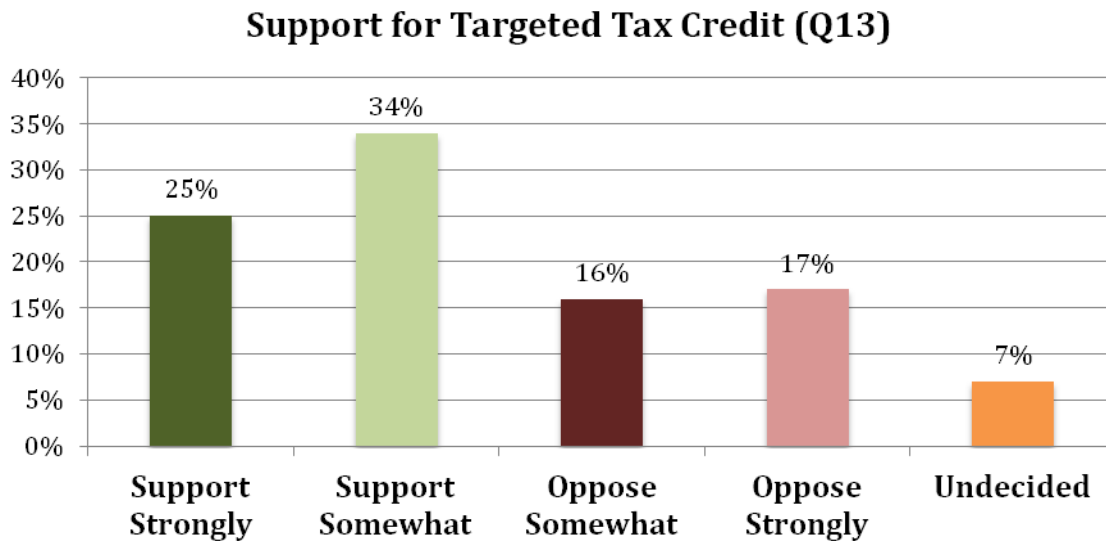
A majority of respondents (64%) said they either strongly support (25%) or somewhat support (39%) offering “educational tax credits to individuals and businesses that make charitable contributions to fund educational choices.” Some 28% of respondents said they either somewhat oppose (15%) or strongly oppose (13%) the idea, with 7% undecided.

Compared with women, support for the tax credit was more intense among men by 10 percentage points (strongly support: men 30% vs. women 20%).

Across all party affiliations, the only significant variation from the statewide average was that Republicans were more likely to “somewhat support” the tax credit by 9 percentage points (Rep 48% vs. statewide 39%).

Q13. Majority Favor Tax Credit Targeting Less-Affluent

Overall, 59% of respondents said they strongly support (25%) or somewhat support (34%) education tax credit programs that would target “those who are less-affluent.” One-third of respondents (33%) said they either somewhat oppose (16%) or strongly oppose (17%) the idea, and 7% said they were undecided.



Of those who said they think the state is on the “wrong track,” 44% somewhat/strongly oppose targeting education credits toward those who are less-affluent—11 percentage points above the statewide average (somewhat/strongly oppose 33%).

Q14. Slim Majority Oppose Existing Amendments

A narrow majority of respondents (51%) said they either somewhat oppose (24%) or strongly oppose (27%) current amendments to the Massachusetts constitution that prohibit “public money from going to religious schools.” In total, 36% of respondents said they somewhat support (22%) or strongly support (14%) the current amendments, and 13% said they were undecided.

While Democrats and Independents fell in line with statewide averages, opposition to these constitutional amendments among Republicans was more intense by 10 percentage points (strongly oppose: Rep 37% vs. statewide 27%).

Q15. Wide Support for Scholarship Voucher Programs

Overall, 68% of respondents said they either somewhat support (33%) or strongly support (35%) scholarship voucher programs for students in failing public schools. Some 24% said they somewhat oppose (12%) or strongly oppose (12%) these programs, and 8% said they were undecided.

While Democrats and Republicans both said they support voucher programs, intensity of support was strongest among Republicans (support strongly: Rep 51% vs. Dem 27%), Democrats were less enthusiastic but not opposed to the idea (support somewhat: Rep 24% vs. Dem 40%). Independents fell in line with the statewide average.

Support for vouchers was more intense among those who felt the state was on the wrong track (strongly support 42%) compared with those who said the state was headed in the right direction (strongly support 29%).

Q16. Strong Majority Support Repealing Amendments

A strong majority (63%) would support repealing MA’s constitutional amendments regarding non-public school funding “if it meant needy families could have access to more educational choices.” Some 22% oppose a repeal, 13% said they were undecided.

Q17. Children Under 18 in Household

Yes	(31%)
No	(67%)

Q18. Children Enrolled in Charter School (of Q17)

Yes	(12%)
No	(86%)

Q19. Children Enrolled in Public School (of Q17)

Yes	(77%)
No	(23%)

Q20. Children Enrolled in Private/Parochial (of Q17)

Yes	(14%)
No	(86%)

Q21. Last Grade Completed

Less than high school	(03%)
Graduated high school	(22%)
Some college/TECH/VOKE	(16%)
Graduated college	(35%)
Completed grad/prof school	(20%)
Undecided	(03%)

Q22. Political Ideology

Liberal	(35%)
Conservative	(36%)
Moderate	(16%)
Undecided	(09%)

Q23. Get Info on Public Issues

Newspapers	(30%)
Television	(30%)
Internet/Blogs/E-mail	(20%)
Radio	(08%)
Word of mouth/friends	(07%)
Other	(03%)
Undecided	(01%)

Primary Media Source for Public Issues (Q23)

