

Let's Give Every Child an Opportunity

Key Findings from a National Survey Conducted for



Education Voters

Presented by Cornell Belcher, brilliant corners
Introduction by Elizabeth Sullivan, Education Voters

Background & methodology

- 1,000 telephone interviews conducted May 6-8, 2008
- Interviews conducted among a randomly selected sample of likely voters nationwide
- Margin of error is +/- 3.1 percent for the total sample



Connecting on values

- **Successful policy change efforts communicate with the public about what they care about – using language to connect to their values and priorities.**
- **Voters base their voting decision on shared values**
 - **Issues are the evidence we use to support key shared values.**
 - **More so than just issue, education is a preeminent broadly shared value.**



Overview

- **Education is an overarching value and should be communicated as such. The public nearly universally believes in the fundamental principle that every child, regardless of race or income, should have the opportunity for an excellent education.**
- **Education remains a top ranked voting issue concern despite growing angst about the rising prices, the economy and the Iraq war. The public prefers a candidate who rejects vouchers and supports sharing funding across district to ensure equity for all children.**



Overview

- Respondents believed that local schools are performing better than schools nationally. There is a broad sense of urgency about education as the respondents believe that public schools in general are growing worse, not better, and minorities tend to have a far less favorable view of all public schools.
- The public understands the need for adequate funding, with nearly three quarters expressing a willingness to increase taxes for education, and they overwhelmingly support lower income districts getting sufficient funds for education equal to wealthier districts.
- Respondents indicate that parents and teachers are most responsible for a child getting a quality education, while the role of elected officials is less clear.



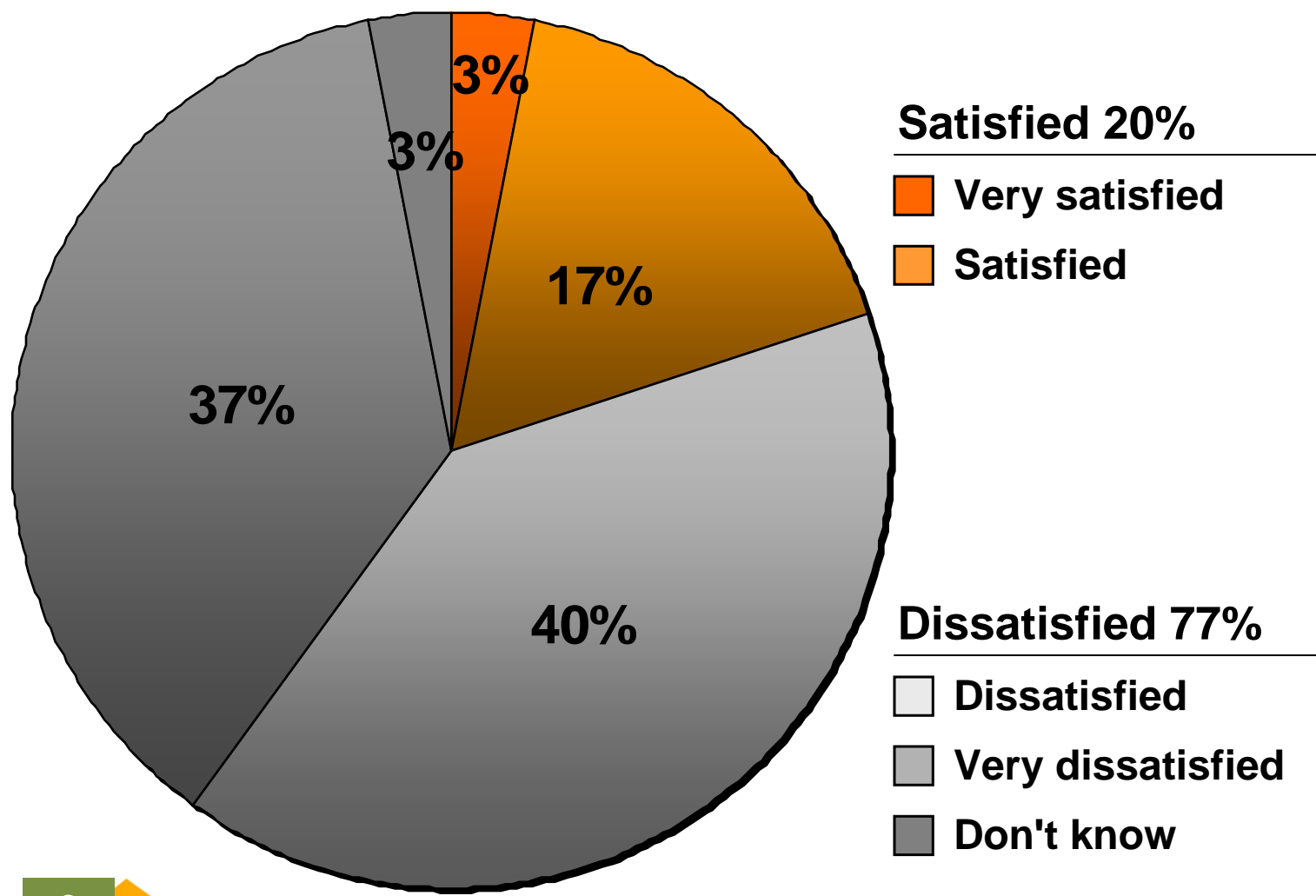
The Issue Landscape

Education remains a top concern

- **Education remains a top ranked voting issue concern despite growing angst about the economy, rising cost of everyday items and the Iraq war.**
- **Even as the nation slides further into historic dissatisfaction and economic concerns rise, 71% of those polled were at least somewhat willing to increase taxes to support public education.**



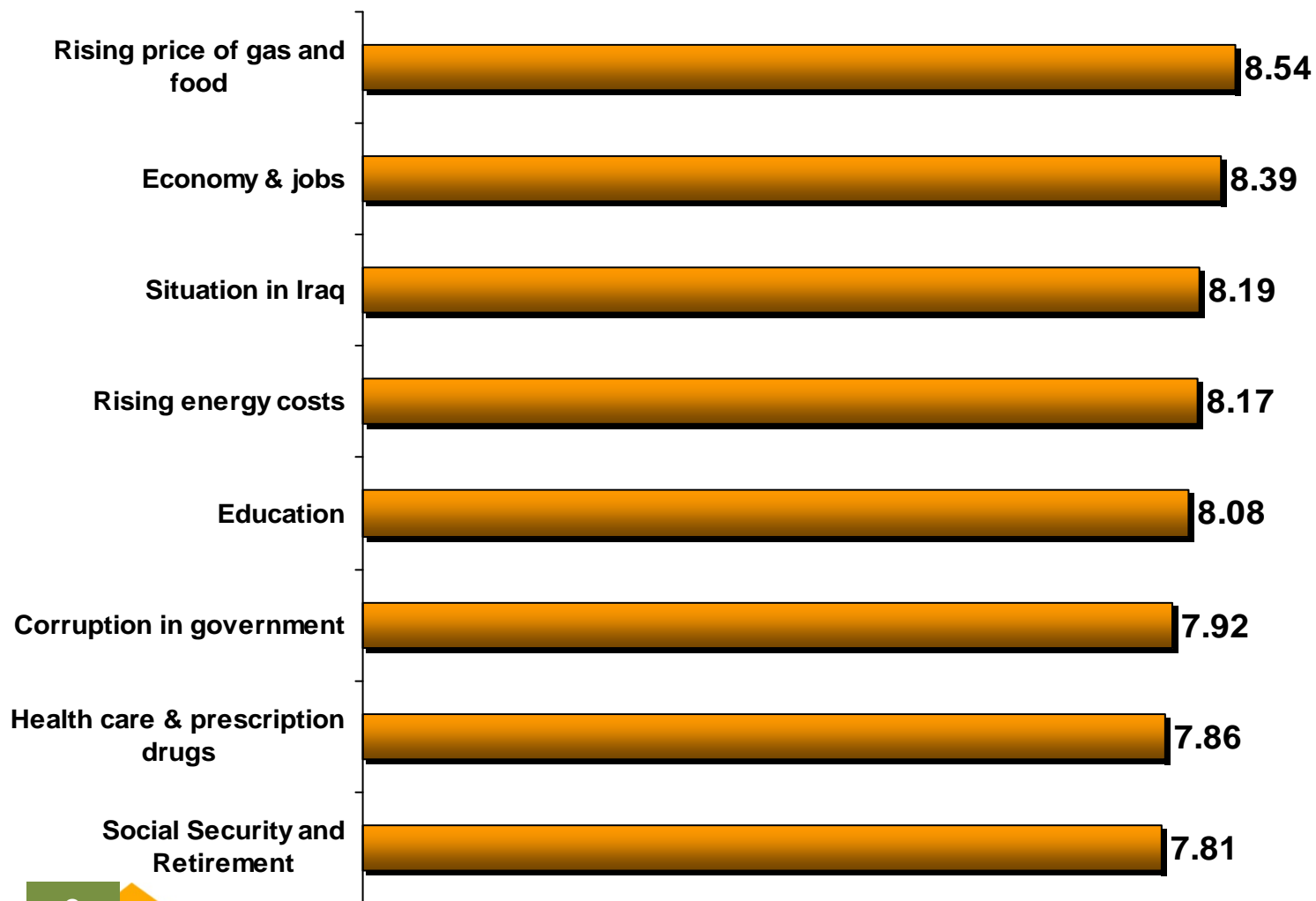
Direction of country



Q: Thinking about the direction the country is headed, generally speaking, are you very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with the direction in which the country is headed?



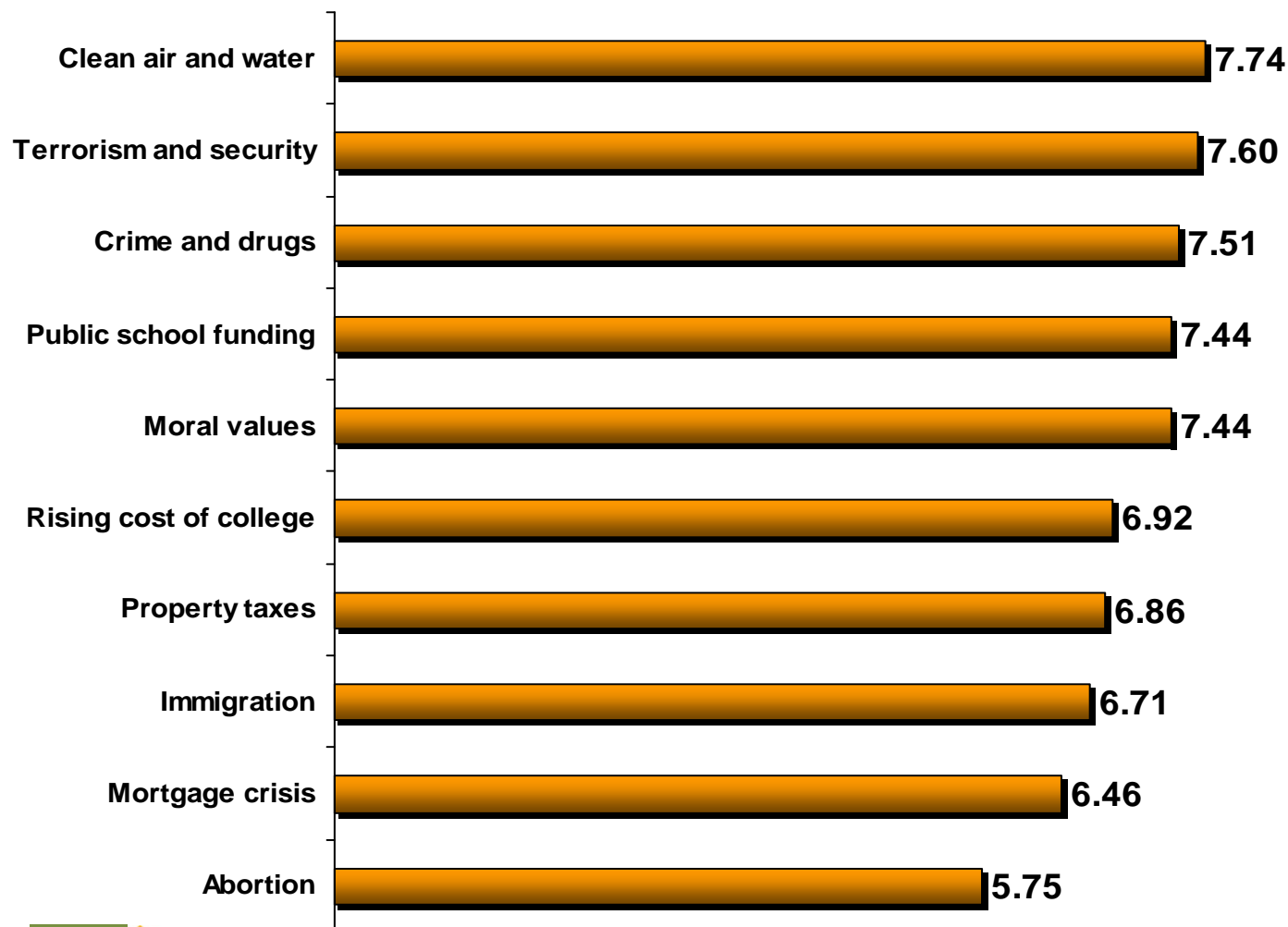
Issue concerns



Q: Now, I am going to read you a list of different issues and concerns some people have. For each, I want you to rate on a scale of 0 to 10 how important each is in deciding how you will vote in the upcoming November elections for president and other offices. Use a 0 if it isn't important at all, a 5 if it is somewhat important, and a 10 if it is the most important issue in deciding your vote.



Issue concerns, cont.



Q: Now, I am going to read you a list of different issues and concerns some people have. For each, I want you to rate on a scale of 0 to 10 how important each is in deciding how you will vote in the upcoming November elections for president and other offices. Use a 0 if it isn't important at all, a 5 if it is somewhat important, and a 10 if it is the most important issue in deciding your vote.

Importance of education issues

	TOTAL	Women	White	Black	Latino	Dems
More important than other issues	20%	22%	18%	32%	28%	27%
About as important as other issues	57%	59%	56%	59%	68%	62%
Less important than other issues	16%	14%	20%	5%	0%	10%
Not at all important	4%	3%	5%	4%	0%	1%

Q: When deciding between two political candidates, how important are the candidates' positions on education issues – more important to your decision than other issues, about as important as other issues, less important than other issues, or not at all important to your voting decision?



Rating the Schools

Rating of public schools in U.S.

	TOTAL	White	Black	Latino
Strongly approve	13%	14%	13%	11%
Somewhat approve	37%	40%	24%	35%
Total approve	50%	54%	37%	46%
Somewhat disapprove	24%	24%	29%	9%
Strongly disapprove	23%	19%	34%	45%
Total disapprove	47%	43%	63%	54%

Q: In general, do you approve or disapprove of the job public schools in the United States are doing educating children?



Rating of public schools in community

	TOTAL	White	Black	Latino
Strongly approve	30%	30%	30%	35%
Somewhat approve	38%	39%	23%	56%
Total approve	68%	69%	53%	91%
Somewhat disapprove	13%	13%	29%	0%
Strongly disapprove	12%	11%	18%	5%
Total disapprove	25%	24%	47%	5%

Q: In general, do you approve or disapprove of the job public schools in your community are doing educating children?



Rating of your child's public school

	TOTAL	White	Black	Latino
Strongly approve	35%	41%	19%	17%
Somewhat approve	41%	40%	43%	45%
Total approve	76%	82%	62%	62%
Somewhat disapprove	12%	10%	22%	15%
Strongly disapprove	10%	7%	11%	22%
Total disapprove	22%	17%	33%	37%

Q: Now thinking for a moment about the public schools your children and grandchildren attend, so you approve or disapprove of the job their public schools are doing educating them?



Key Educational Beliefs

Key Finding – Top three messages

- **Every child, regardless of race and income, should have the opportunity to get an excellent education;**
- **We should work to make sure that lower income school districts get more funding from the state so children in those districts get the same education opportunities as those in wealthier districts;**
- **It is morally wrong that we allow more than one-third of the kids in a given state to drop out of school.**



Education beliefs

ranked by % strongly agree

TOTAL

Every child, regardless of race and income, should have the opportunity to get an excellent education (Split)

66%

Every child, regardless of race and income, should have the opportunity to attend a quality public school (Split)

63%

We should work to make sure that lower income school districts get more funding from the state so children in those districts get the same education opportunities as those in wealthier districts.

43%

It is morally wrong that we allow more than one-third of the kids in this state to drop out of school

38%

Q: Now I am going to read you a series of statements that some people have made about education. For each one, please tell me whether you agree or disagree. If you agree or disagree strongly, please say so.



Education beliefs

ranked by % strongly agree

	TOTAL
We should not spend tax dollars to subsidize people's private school tuition	29%
My local public schools don't get their fair share of education dollars from the state government	17%
Children in rural areas have just as many opportunities to get a good education as children in the suburbs	15%
Children in urban areas have just as many opportunities to get a good education as children in the suburbs	15%

Q: Now I am going to read you a series of statements that some people have made about education. For each one, please tell me whether you agree or disagree. If you agree or disagree strongly, just say so.



Poor performing schools are not just a funding problem

- **47 percent of the voters say this is closer to their view:**

Poor performing schools aren't failing because they lack funding. Poor performing schools are failing because the people running them are incompetent, the children attending them come from struggling families, and the parents don't get involved enough in their children's education.

- **37 percent of the voters say this is closer to their view:**

Poor performing schools are not the way that they are because of bad kids, bad parents and bad teachers. Poor performing schools are struggling because they are usually in a high poverty area that does not have a large enough tax base to support the same quality of facilities, textbooks, computers and teachers that schools in wealthier areas provide.



Poor performing schools: lack resources or parental involvement

	TOTAL
Lack tax resources - much closer	20%
Lack tax resources - somewhat closer	17%
Lack resources	37%
Not enough parent involvement - somewhat closer	23%
Not enough parent involvement - much closer	24%
Bad kids/ teachers/ parents	47%



Education and Candidates

Respondents strongly prefer candidates who support public education and education equity.

- The majority of poll respondents (**58 percent to 32 percent**) choose the candidate who opposes the use of public money for private school vouchers.
- The candidate who supports sharing funds to provide education equity garners significant support (62 percent) over the candidate who wants to keep all of the taxes raised in a district spent in that district (**28 percent**).



Candidate choice: public money to support private school vouchers or no vouchers

	TOTAL
No vouchers - much more likely	40%
No vouchers - somewhat more likely	18%
No vouchers	58%
Vouchers - somewhat more likely	18%
Vouchers - much more likely	18%
Vouchers	36%



Candidate choice: share funds to provide equity for all students or keep funds in district

	TOTAL
Share funds - much more likely	35%
Share funds - somewhat more likely	27%
Share funds	62%
Keep funds - somewhat more likely	13%
Keep funds - much more likely	15%
Keep funds	28%



State government preferred primary source of taxes for public education

	TOTAL
State government	44%
Federal government	26%
Local government	12%
Property taxes	9%

Q: What should the primary source of taxes for public education be, the federal government, state government, local government, or property taxes?



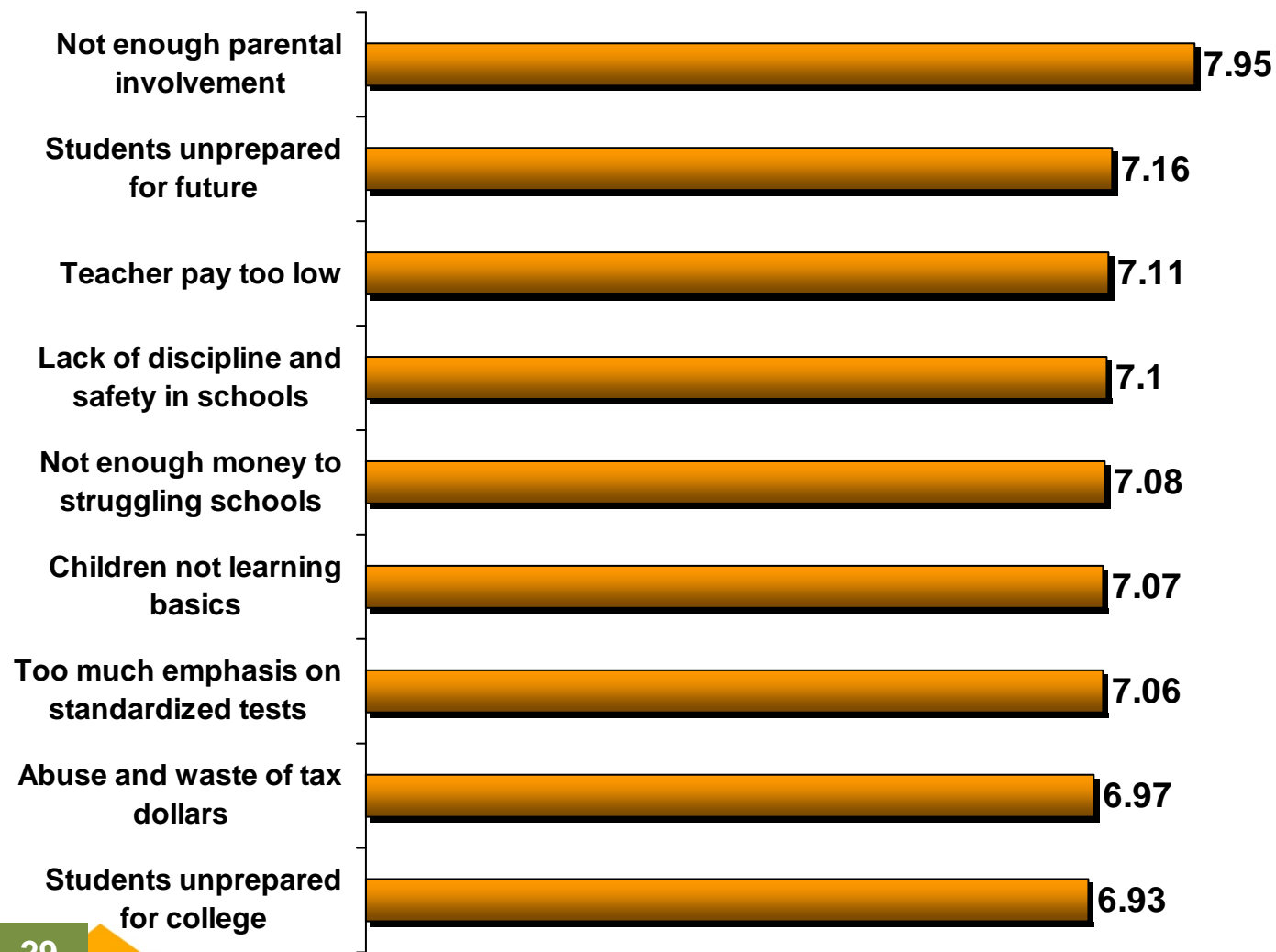
Problems in Education

Problems in Public Education

- **Voters fear public school students aren't being properly prepared for the future. Their primary education issue concerns are:**
 1. **Parents aren't involved enough in their children's education**
 2. **More safety and discipline is needed in the public schools**
 3. **Better pay is needed to attract and retain good teachers**
 4. **More resources should be targeted toward struggling schools**
 5. **Too much emphasis is currently being put on teaching simply toward standardized testing, and that children need to be learning more of the basics**



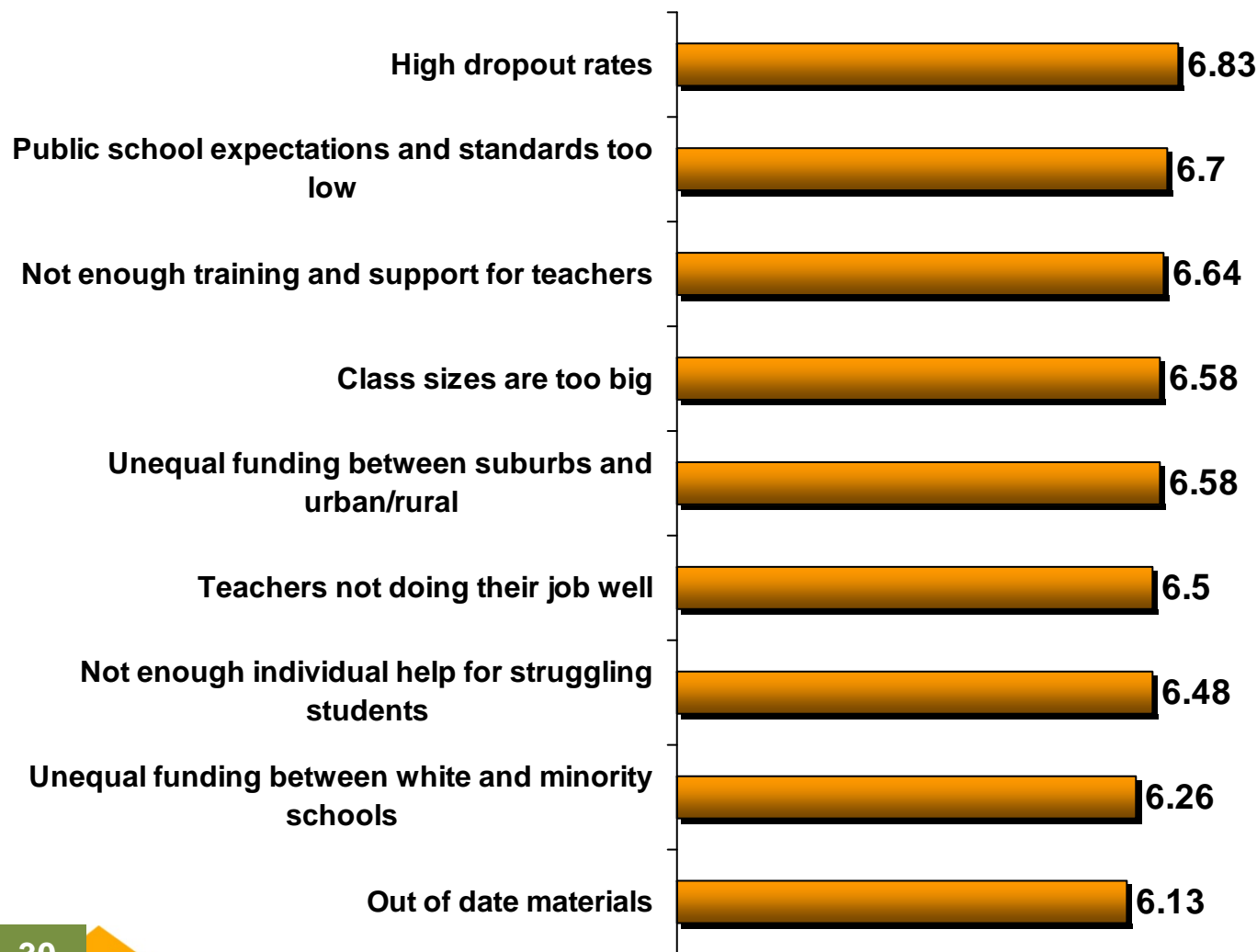
Education problems



Q: Now I'm going to read you a list of things that some people say are problems with public education. For each one, please rank on a scale of 0 to 10 how big a problem you think it is. Us 10 if it is an extremely serious problem, a 5 if it is a somewhat serious problem, and a 0 if it is no problem.

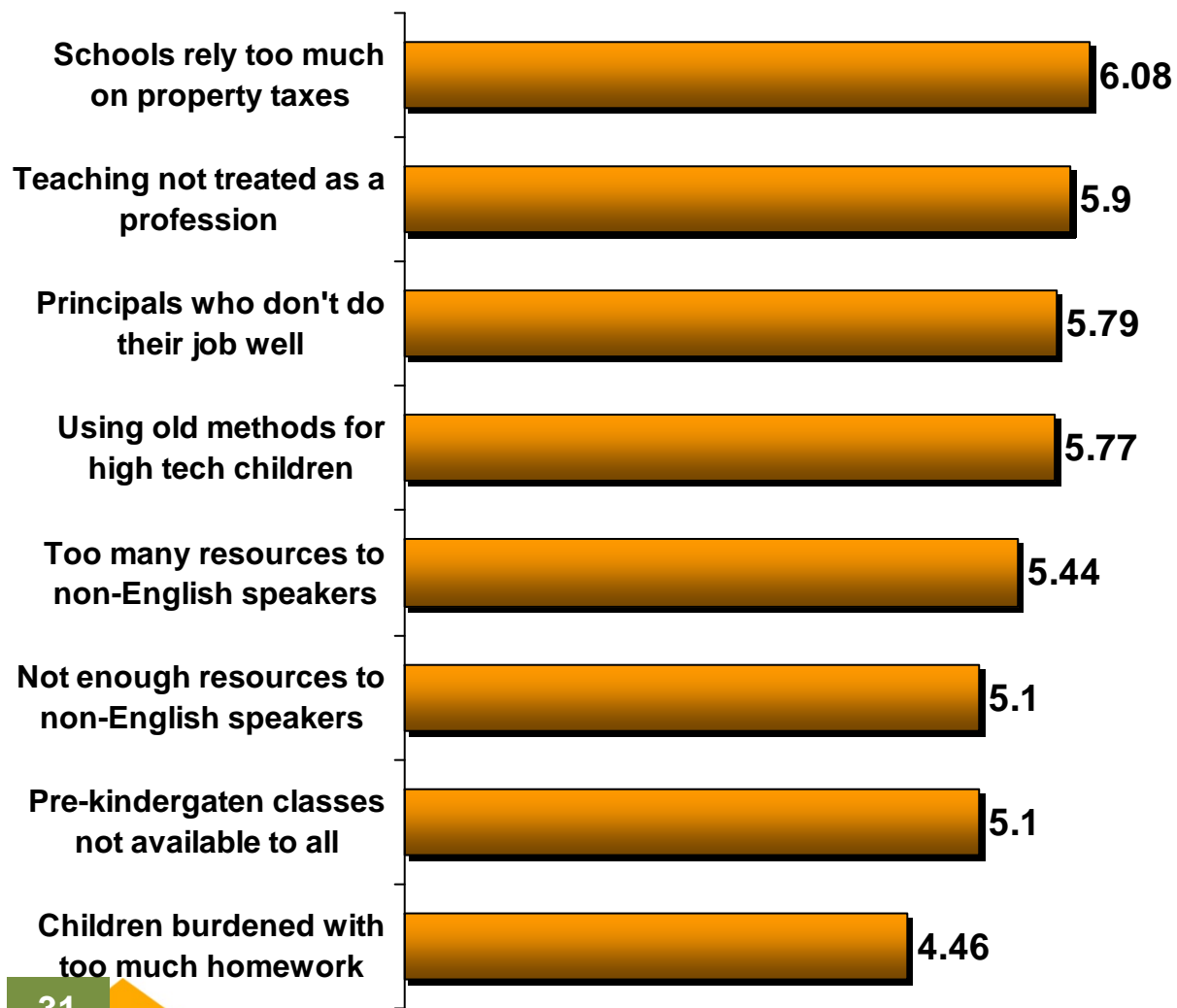


Education problems



Q: Now I'm going to read you a list of things that some people say are problems with public education. For each one, please rank on a scale of 0 to 10 how big a problem you think it is. Us 10 if it is an extremely serious problem, a 5 if it is a somewhat serious problem, and a 0 if it is no problem.

Education problems



Q: Now I'm going to read you a list of things that some people say are problems with public education. For each one, please rank on a scale of 0 to 10 how big a problem you think it is. Us 10 if it is an extremely serious problem, a 5 if it is a somewhat serious problem, and a 0 if it is no problem.



Summary

- **Education is first and foremost a strongly shared value and electoral priority.**
- **We should be building accountability tools (communications, advocacy and organizing) to ensure that every child has the opportunity to get an excellent education.**

