



Most Americans Believe Teachers Have a Big Impact, But Are Paid Unfairly

Ipsos/USA Today poll shows broad support for local public school teachers, along with recent strikes

Washington, DC, September 12, 2018 — Teachers are often thought to be an important factor in students' education success and personal growth. In fact, according to an Ipsos/USA Today poll, three-quarters (73%) of Americans say that growing up, a teacher made a significant, positive impact on their life. Six in 10 (61%) parents of children under 18 would even encourage their own child to become a teacher. Three-quarters (76%) say that they approve of teachers in their local public school district, and 61% approve of their local school district leadership.

Though views of teachers are largely positive, the poll shows some underlying issues with the education profession. After a series of teacher strikes across the country earlier this year, two-thirds of Americans support public school teachers' right to strike. A majority (59%) of Americans do not believe that public school teachers are compensated fairly, and 78% agree that teachers spend too much of their own money on school supplies.

While the opinion of Republicans and Democrats do not differ widely on the performance of teachers themselves, politics seem to come to play in the evaluation of teacher unions, private/charter schools, and The U.S. Department of Education leadership. Half of Americans (48%) believe that teachers' unions improve the quality of education, but Democrats are almost twice as likely as Republicans to agree with the statement (64% vs. 36% of Republicans). Americans are also divided on whether teachers' unions improve the quality of teachers (50%); two-thirds of Democrats agree, compared to 38% of Republicans. A majority of all Americans (66%) believe teachers' unions make it harder to fire bad teachers, though Republicans (77%) are more likely than Democrats (60%) to hold this view. More than 1 in 3 Republicans (35%) disapprove of public school teachers' right to strike, versus 17% of Democrats.

In contrast, Republicans (74%) are significantly more likely than Democrats (49%) to believe that private and charter schools provide better education than public schools. Opinions about The U.S. Department of Education leadership are also highly politicized, as one third (32%) of Democrats say they *strongly* disapprove, versus only a tiny fraction (8%) of Republicans.

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1. Do you approve or disapprove of the following?

Total approve

	Total (n=2010)	Republicans (n=695)	Democrats (n=693)	Independents (n=419)
National teachers' unions	60%	50	76	54
The U.S. Department of Education leadership	44%	57	37	38
Your local school district leadership	61%	60	65	55
Teachers in your local public school district	76%	76	83	73

a. National teachers' unions

	Total	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Strongly approve	23%	15%	33%	21%
Somewhat approve	20	18	24	19
Lean toward approve	17	16	19	15
Lean toward disapprove	9	11	5	11
Somewhat disapprove	6	10	3	8
Strongly disapprove	9	16	2	11
Don't know	16	13	13	16
<i>Approve (Net)</i>	60%	50%	76%	54%
<i>Disapprove (Net)</i>	24	37	11	30

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b. The U.S. Department of Education leadership

	Total	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Strongly approve	12%	17%	11%	7%
Somewhat approve	16	21	13	16
Lean toward approve	16	19	13	15
Lean toward disapprove	13	15	12	11
Somewhat disapprove	9	9	10	10
Strongly disapprove	20	8	32	25
Don't know	14	11	10	17
<i>Approve (Net)</i>	44%	57%	37%	38%
<i>Disapprove (Net)</i>	43	32	53	46

c. Your local school district leadership

	Total	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Strongly approve	16%	17%	18%	13%
Somewhat approve	24	25	28	22
Lean toward approve	20	19	20	21
Lean toward disapprove	10	12	8	11
Somewhat disapprove	7	6	5	10
Strongly disapprove	5	6	3	5
Don't know	18	15	18	19
<i>Approve (Net)</i>	61%	60%	65%	55%
<i>Disapprove (Net)</i>	21	25	17	26

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d. Teachers in your local public school district

	Total	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Strongly approve	31%	27%	37%	29%
Somewhat approve	28	29	30	25
Lean toward approve	18	19	17	18
Lean toward disapprove	5	6	3	6
Somewhat disapprove	3	4	2	6
Strongly disapprove	2	3	1	1
Don't know	14	12	10	15
<i>Approve (Net)</i>	<i>76%</i>	<i>76%</i>	<i>83%</i>	<i>73%</i>
<i>Disapprove (Net)</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>13</i>

2. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Total agree

	Total	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Public school teachers have the right to strike	66%	56	78	64
Teachers' unions make it harder to fire bad teachers	66%	77	60	64
Teachers' unions improve the quality of education	48%	36	64	42
Teachers' unions improve the quality of teachers	50%	38	66	43
Public school teachers are paid fairly	34%	46	29	30
Private and charter schools usually provide better education than public schools	60%	74	49	58
Public schools are worth the tax money that goes into them	68%	66	77	61

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a. Public school teachers have the right to strike

	Total	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Strongly agree	33%	22%	46%	30%
Somewhat agree	33	34	32	34
Somewhat disagree	15	19	12	13
Strongly disagree	10	16	5	12
Don't know	9	9	5	11
<i>Agree (Net)</i>	66%	56%	78%	64%
<i>Disagree (Net)</i>	25	35	17	25

b. Teachers' unions make it harder to fire bad teachers

	Total	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Strongly agree	30%	44%	19%	34%
Somewhat agree	35	34	41	30
Somewhat disagree	14	8	18	15
Strongly disagree	5	4	7	4
Don't know	16	10	15	17
<i>Agree (Net)</i>	66%	77%	60%	64%
<i>Disagree (Net)</i>	19	12	25	19

c. Teachers' unions improve the quality of education

	Total	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Strongly agree	18%	14%	26%	14%
Somewhat agree	30	22	38	28
Somewhat disagree	21	25	15	24
Strongly disagree	14	24	5	17
Don't know	17	14	15	16
<i>Agree (Net)</i>	48%	36%	64%	42%
<i>Disagree (Net)</i>	35	50	21	41

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d. Teachers' unions improve the quality of teachers

	Total	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Strongly agree	18%	15%	25%	14%
Somewhat agree	32	23	41	29
Somewhat disagree	21	29	16	21
Strongly disagree	13	21	4	20
Don't know	16	12	15	16
<i>Agree (Net)</i>	50%	38%	66%	43%
<i>Disagree (Net)</i>	34	50	19	41

e. Public school teachers are paid fairly

	Total	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Strongly agree	12%	18%	10%	11%
Somewhat agree	22	28	20	20
Somewhat disagree	30	29	29	31
Strongly disagree	29	20	38	29
Don't know	7	5	4	9
<i>Agree (Net)</i>	34%	46%	29%	30%
<i>Disagree (Net)</i>	59	49	66	60

f. Private and charter schools usually provide better education than public schools

	Total	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Strongly agree	24%	35%	18%	22%
Somewhat agree	35	39	31	37
Somewhat disagree	16	11	20	18
Strongly disagree	11	6	18	10
Don't know	13	9	12	13
<i>Agree (Net)</i>	60%	74%	49%	58%
<i>Disagree (Net)</i>	27	17	38	28

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g. Public schools are worth the tax money that goes into them

	Total	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Strongly agree	34%	29%	43%	29%
Somewhat agree	34	37	34	32
Somewhat disagree	17	18	13	22
Strongly disagree	8	12	4	10
Don't know	7	4	6	7
Agree (Net)	68%	66%	77%	61%
Disagree (Net)	25	30	17	32

3. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Total agree

	Total	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
It is easy to become a teacher	33%	39	31	30
If I wanted to, I would be an excellent teacher	58%	63	58	56
Teachers spend too much of their own money on school supplies	78%	75	84	77
Most teachers are able to take a vacation all summer	43%	53	38	41
I would encourage my child to become a teacher (base: respondents with children in household)	61%	63	63	52

a. It is easy to become a teacher

	Total	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Strongly agree	10%	14%	9%	5%
Somewhat agree	23	25	22	25
Somewhat disagree	36	35	37	39
Strongly disagree	22	18	26	22
Don't know	9	8	6	9
Agree (Net)	33%	39%	31%	30%
Disagree (Net)	58	53	63	61

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b. If I wanted to, I would be an excellent teacher

	Total	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Strongly agree	27%	30%	27%	26%
Somewhat agree	31	34	31	30
Somewhat disagree	18	16	18	20
Strongly disagree	16	15	17	17
Don't know	8	6	7	8
Agree (Net)	58%	63%	58%	56%
Disagree (Net)	34	31	35	37

c. Teachers spend too much of their own money on school supplies

	Total	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Strongly agree	46%	41%	54%	44%
Somewhat agree	32	34	29	32
Somewhat disagree	9	11	6	10
Strongly disagree	4	5	3	3
Don't know	9	8	7	10
Agree (Net)	78%	75%	84%	77%
Disagree (Net)	12	16	9	13

d. Most teachers are able to take a vacation all summer

	Total	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Strongly agree	16%	22%	14%	11%
Somewhat agree	28	31	24	30
Somewhat disagree	29	24	33	29
Strongly disagree	19	15	22	18
Don't know	9	9	7	12
Agree (Net)	43%	53%	38%	41%
Disagree (Net)	47	38	55	47

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e. I would encourage my child to become a teacher (**Base: Respondents with children in household**)

	Total	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Strongly agree	22%	26%	24%	10%
Somewhat agree	39	37	39	42
Somewhat disagree	20	19	16	30
Strongly disagree	9	10	8	10
Don't know	10	8	13	7
Agree (Net)	61%	63%	63%	52%
Disagree (Net)	29	29	24	41

4. Thinking back to your own education, was there a teacher you had growing up that made a big, positive impact in your life? Please select all that apply.

	Total	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Yes, an elementary school teacher	37%	36%	39%	35%
Yes, a middle school teacher	23	20	25	22
Yes, a high school teacher	44	44	44	44
No	27	27	26	28
Yes (Net)	73%	73%	74%	72%

5. Which type of school do your child or children attend? Please select all that apply. (**Base: Respondents with children in household**)

	Total	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Public school	69%	63%	67%	81%
Charter school	8	8	10	4
Private school – religious or parochial	17	21	15	13
Private school – non-religious	11	14	14	2
Other	7	7	5	8

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6. Have you ever had children in school? If so, which type of school did your child or children attend? **(Base: Respondents with no children in household)**

	Total	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Public school	51%	57%	50%	45%
Charter school	2	3	3	2
Private school – religious or parochial	12	17	9	10
Private school – non-religious	3	5	1	3
Other	1	2	2	-
None/no children	42	31	45	50

7. Do you have any teachers in your immediate family, meaning parents, siblings, or children?

	Total	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Yes	29%	32%	30%	28%
No	71	68	70	72

8. How would you describe the area in which you live?

	Total	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Rural	23%	25%	18%	28%
Suburban	49	50	47	50
Urban	28	25	36	21

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About the Study

These are findings from an Ipsos poll conducted August 9-13, 2018, on behalf of USA Today. For the survey, a sample of roughly 2,010 adults 18+ from the continental U.S., Alaska and Hawaii were interviewed online in English. The sample includes 695 Republicans, 693 Democrats, and 419 Independents.

The sample for this study was randomly drawn from Ipsos' online panel (see link below for more info on "Access Panels and Recruitment"), partner online panel sources, and "river" sampling (see link below for more info on the Ipsos "Ampario Overview" sample method) and does not rely on a population frame in the traditional sense. Ipsos uses fixed sample targets, unique to each study, in drawing a sample. After a sample has been obtained from the Ipsos panel, Ipsos calibrates respondent characteristics to be representative of the U.S. Population using standard procedures such as raking-ratio adjustments. The source of these population targets is U.S. Census 2013 American Community Survey data. The sample drawn for this study reflects fixed sample targets on demographics. Post-hoc weights were made to the population characteristics on gender, age, race/ethnicity, region, and education.

Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online polls. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error and measurement error. Where figures do not sum to 100, this is due to the effects of rounding. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll has a credibility interval of plus or minus 2.5 percentage points for all respondents. Ipsos calculates a design effect (DEFF) for each study based on the variation of the weights, following the formula of Kish (1965). This study had a credibility interval adjusted for design effect of the following (n=2,010, DEFF=1.5, adjusted Confidence Interval=+/-4 percentage points).

The poll also has a credibility interval plus or minus 4.2 percentage points Republicans, 4.2 percentage points for Democrats, and 5.5 for Independents.

For more information about conducting research intended for public release or Ipsos' online polling methodology, please visit our [Public Opinion Polling and Communication](#) page where you can download our brochure, see our public release protocol, or contact us.

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Ipsos researchers assess market potential and interpret market trends. They develop and build brands. They help clients build long-term relationships with their customers. They test advertising and study audience responses to various media and they measure public opinion around the globe.

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