

The National Coalition
on
School Diversity

AMERICAN ATTITUDES ON SCHOOL INTEGRATION

JULY 2024

Recent Polling Results

Several recent national surveys have found support for school integration. This fact sheet summarizes findings from three school integration polls, conducted by **The Washington Post-Ipsos**, **Brown's Promise**, and **The Century Foundation**, and offers key takeaways and sample messages on how to talk about school integration using a positive framing.

THE WASHINGTON POST-IPSONS

On the 70th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, The Washington Post published an [article](#) with the following headline: “70 years later, 1 in 3 Black people say integration didn’t help Black students.”

Despite this negative framing, more Americans support school integration than ever before. In fact, the very same Washington Post article, which uses data from an accompanying Washington Post-Ipsos survey of Black Americans and U.S. adults overall, notes that **2 in 3 U.S. adults believe that more should be done to racially integrate schools throughout the nation**. Moreover, the survey also finds:

- **3 in 4 U.S. adults support creating more regional magnet schools.**
- **More than 50% of U.S. adults support redrawing school district lines and expanding low-income housing in higher-income areas to create more racially diverse school districts.** This level of support did not, however, extend to policies requiring school districts to bus a percentage of students to a neighboring district (1 in 3 U.S. adults surveyed support this).
- **Among Black Americans and U.S. adults overall, support for policies that enable students to attend more integrated schools, as opposed to requiring them to attend racially and socioeconomically isolated neighborhood schools, is at its highest point in the past 30 years.**

Conducted online in April 2024, [The Washington Post-Ipsos](#) poll surveyed a national sample of 1,331 non-Hispanic Black adults and a partially overlapping sample of 1,029 U.S. adults overall.

On behalf of [Brown's Promise](#), Lake Research Partners conducted a survey of 1,000 adults nationwide with additional samples of 100 Black adults, 100 Latine adults, 100 Asian American and Pacific Islander adults, and 100 Indigenous adults.

On behalf of [The Century Foundation](#), Morning Consult surveyed 2,202 U.S. adults, and the data were weighted to approximate a target sample of adults based on age, gender, race, educational attainment, region, gender by age, and race by educational attainment.

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BROWN'S PROMISE (polling conducted by Lake Research Partners)

- **71% of Americans favor integrating public schools—only 12% oppose.**
 - These findings broadly hold across racial, ethnic, and political party lines. Further, their support for integration includes elements of **integration** (“reorganizing school districts to have more racially and economically diverse student bodies”) and **equity** (“providing more resources to the school districts that serve students who need the most help”).
- **A majority of Americans (62%) also favor integration by itself.**
 - This data point suggests that people support the idea of integration more when it is paired with repairing school funding inequities.
- **3 in 4 Americans favor allowing parents to send their children to school in nearby districts and providing transportation for those who need it, revising student assignment policies to enable students to attend more well-resourced school districts, and investing more in magnet schools.**
 - Black adults especially favor investing in magnet schools, while Latine adults strongly favor letting parents send their children to schools in nearby districts. One thing unites these policies: **transportation**. Research shows that interdistrict transfer programs and magnet schools are more effective tools for integration when free transportation is provided to and from school.
- **Overall, U.S. adults indicate that “preparing children for the real world” and “teaching children how to work well and get along with people who are different than they are” is more important than “teaching children how to work well and get along in a racially and economically diverse environment.”**
 - These findings demonstrate that parents are concerned about their children’s ability to navigate the future, and they want public schools to provide students with the skills and preparation necessary for adulthood. As the U.S. grows increasingly diverse, it is important to emphasize the positive, tangible benefits of integration: it increases critical thinking and problem-solving skills, confidence and leadership abilities, academic achievement, and the ability to interact with people from different backgrounds.

THE CENTURY FOUNDATION (polling conducted by Morning Consult)

- **3 in 5 U.S. adults think that race and income-based segregation is a problem in public schools.**
 - While certain constituencies, such as Black adults, Democrats, adults under 35, and parents, are more likely to recognize segregation in U.S. public schools, these findings broadly hold across racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, age, and party lines. Almost half of Republicans agree that school segregation is a problem, and only 33% oppose it.
- **2 in 5 Americans believe segregation in public schools has improved in recent decades—and parents, young people, and those who earn more than \$100k are more likely to believe this.**
 - School integration advocates can do more to educate the public about the history and present-day realities of school segregation in the U.S. education system and explain how it is similar—and different—than previous understandings of what school segregation looks like.
- **Nearly half of U.S. parents say that the diversity of their child’s school is a very important consideration, and 3 in 4 parents say it is important.**
 - While Democrats, Millennials, and Black and Hispanic adults tend to place more weight on student body diversity, a majority of Americans across racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, age, and party lines agree a diverse student body is important, including 6 in 10 Republicans.
- **A majority of Americans support increasing government funding for communities seeking to diversify their public schools, but 1 in 3 Americans is ambivalent.**
 - These findings reveal that a sizable portion of the population supports giving U.S. tax dollars to school districts trying to make their schools more diverse. It is likely that many would prefer pairing school integration with more equitable funding.

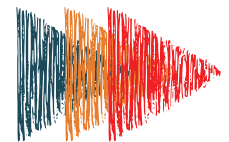
A NOTE ABOUT SEGREGATION LEVELS

Researchers use various methods to determine segregation levels and demographic changes over time, both in schools and communities. According to Stanford researcher sean reardon, “School segregation levels are not at pre-*Brown* levels, but they are high and have been rising steadily since the late 1980s,” even as communities have grown more diverse. “In most large districts, school segregation has increased while residential segregation and racial economic inequality have declined, and our findings indicate that policy choices—not demographic changes—are driving the increase.”

To learn more about segregation levels in specific communities, advocates can reference the recently-released [Segregation Explorer](#), created by Ann Owens and sean reardon via the Educational Opportunity Project at Stanford University.

Source: [70 years after Brown v. Board of Education, new research shows rise in school segregation](#), Stanford Graduate School of Education (May 6, 2024).

Key Takeaways and Sample Messages



Recent polling suggests that Americans want more integrated schools. We summarize four important lessons from the polls and include sample messages to communicate these lessons.

Remember, there’s broad support for school integration

- A majority of Americans—across racial, socioeconomic, and political differences—support school integration efforts. This includes strong support for creating more racially and economically diverse school districts through measures like regional magnet schools and redrawing school boundaries.
 - **Message:** “Americans want children to go to schools that are more racially and economically diverse. We need to build on modern, innovative integration strategies to ensure all students have access to a high-quality education.”

Emphasize the importance of equity and resources

- Support for school integration is even stronger when paired with initiatives that address funding inequities. Many Americans favor providing more resources to underserved school districts alongside integration efforts.
 - **Message:** “Integration is about ensuring every child has access to the resources they need to succeed. By making our schools more diverse, while also raising their quality, we can create a more just and effective education system for all.”

Clarify misconceptions about current segregation levels

- A significant portion of Americans incorrectly believe that school segregation is no longer a problem. When adults learn about current levels of segregation, their support for integration increases.
 - **Message:** “Even though our country is growing more diverse, many students continue to attend racially and economically isolated schools. School segregation is not a problem of the past, but something our nation is still grappling with today. We must take action to ensure every child has access to a diverse, well-resourced school.”

Explain why diversity is critical for real-world preparation

- Most Americans believe our schools should primarily teach foundational skills—such as reading, writing, and math—and prepare students for the real world. Learning in a diverse environment not only improves academic performance but helps children prepare for an increasingly diverse workplace.
 - **Message:** “When students learn alongside peers of different backgrounds, they are better prepared to succeed in an increasingly multicultural and global society. By enhancing their critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and ability to work with people from different backgrounds, students gain important skills for navigating the real world and adulthood.”