

NATIONAL SCHOOL CHOICE AWARENESS FOUNDATION
NATIONAL SCHOOL CHOICE RESOURCE CENTER
SURVEY OF U.S. PARENTS OF SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN (CALIFORNIA SAMPLE)
JANUARY 2026
N=3,960 (US), N=599 (CA)

Q1. Within the last 12 months, did you think about, consider, search for, or choose a new or different school or learning environment for any of the school-aged children in your household?	Answer Choices	U.S. Parents (All)	California Parents (All)	Comparison: All U.S. Parents to All California Parents (California +/-)
	Yes	75%	81%	6%
	No	25%	19%	-6%
Q2. Which of the following reasons best describes why you thought about, considered, searched for, or enrolled your child in a new or different school? Asked only of parents who responded "Yes" to Q1	Answer Choices	U.S. Parents (All)	California Parents (All)	Comparison: All U.S. Parents to All California Parents (California +/-)
	I moved to a different community or state.	14%	11%	-2%
	My child was entering school for the first time (e.g., starting Pre-K or Kindergarten).	22%	25%	3%
	My child was moving from one school level to another (e.g., elementary to middle school).	26%	34%	8%
	I was not satisfied with my child's current school and/or wanted to find a better fit.	32%	24%	-8%
	Something else	7%	5%	-1%
Q3. Even if it was not the primary factor, did any of the following national issues significantly influence your decision to consider, search for, or enroll your child in a new or different school? Select up to three (3) responses. Asked only of parents who responded "Yes" to Q1	Answer Choices	U.S. Parents (All)	California Parents (All)	Comparison: All U.S. Parents to All California Parents (California +/-)
	Cost of living or affordability	46%	53%	8%
	Immigration policy or immigration enforcement	10%	11%	1%
	The job market or economic conditions	7%	6%	-2%
	Taxes or government spending	7%	4%	-3%
	Crime or public safety	40%	45%	4%
	Medical care or public health issues	13%	11%	-2%
	Foreign affairs or national security	9%	11%	2%
	Social or cultural issues	20%	16%	-3%
	Technology, privacy, or artificial intelligence	11%	11%	-1%
	Environmental or climate-related issues	20%	26%	5%
	Childcare availability or affordability	43%	53%	11%
	Political polarization	10%	8%	-3%
	None of the Above	9%	6%	-2%
Q4. What grade was your child in when you considered a new or different school? Select all that apply. Asked only of parents who responded "Yes" to Q1	Answer Choices	U.S. Parents (All)	California Parents (All)	Comparison: All U.S. Parents to All California Parents (California +/-)
	Not Yet Enrolled in School	9%	8%	0%
	Pre-K	20%	22%	3%
	Kindergarten	20%	23%	3%
	1st Grade	17%	23%	6%
	2nd Grade	12%	12%	0%
	3rd Grade	14%	15%	1%
	4th Grade	11%	17%	6%
	5th Grade	11%	12%	1%
	6th Grade	10%	9%	-1%
	7th Grade	7%	7%	0%
	8th Grade	8%	8%	1%
	9th Grade	7%	7%	0%
	10th Grade	5%	3%	-2%
	11th Grade	5%	4%	-1%
	12th Grade	5%	5%	-1%

<p>Q5. What type of school was your child enrolled in before you considered a new or different school? Select all that apply.</p> <p>Asked only of parents who responded "Yes" to Q1</p>	Answer Choices	U.S. Parents (All)	California Parents (All)	Comparison: All U.S. Parents to All California Parents (California +/-)
	Traditional public school in your neighborhood	34%	30%	-4%
	Traditional public school outside of your neighborhood	18%	20%	2%
	Public charter school	17%	24%	7%
	Public magnet school	12%	12%	0%
	Private school (religious or faith-based)	14%	16%	2%
	Private school (not religious or faith-based)	17%	23%	6%
	Microschool or pod learning	8%	11%	4%
	Homeschool	12%	15%	2%
	Full-time online school	15%	18%	4%
	Something else	6%	9%	2%
	Not Applicable – Child Not Yet Enrolled in School	4%	4%	-1%
<p>Q6. When you were looking for a new school or learning environment for your child, what were your top priorities? Select up to three (3) responses.</p> <p>Asked only of parents who responded "Yes" to Q1</p>	Answer Choices	U.S. Parents (All)	California Parents (All)	Comparison: All U.S. Parents to All California Parents (California +/-)
	Strong academics and high-quality teaching(academics, qualified teachers, curriculum fit, specific classes/programs)	25%	20%	-5%
	A safe, supportive environment(safety, bullying prevention, positive school culture)	58%	64%	5%
	Smaller classes or more individualized attention	15%	11%	-4%
	A particular educational theme or approach(STEM, arts, Montessori, career-focused, faith-based)	41%	45%	4%
	Affordability or manageable costs(tuition-free, affordable tuition, scholarships)	29%	33%	4%
	Convenient logistics(transportation, location, scheduling)	20%	19%	0%
	A positive social environment(friendships, sense of belonging)	50%	56%	6%
	Opportunities outside the classroom(sports, extracurricular activities, gifted programs)	18%	18%	0%
	None of these	2%	1%	0%
<p>Q7. Which of the following best describes your school search experience?</p> <p>Asked only of parents who responded "Yes" to Q1</p>	Answer Choices	U.S. Parents (All)	California Parents (All)	Comparison: All U.S. Parents to All California Parents (California +/-)
	We considered making a change but did not actively search	31%	33%	3%
	We actively searched but did not enroll any of our children in a new school	41%	40%	-1%
	We enrolled one or more of our children in a new school or switched to homeschooling	29%	27%	-1%
	Considered (as % of Population)	23%	27%	4%
	Actively searched, did not enroll (as % of Population)	31%	32%	1%
	Enrolled (as % of Population)	21%	22%	1%
<p>Q8. You mentioned that over the past year you considered a new or different school but did not enroll your child in a different school. Why not? Select up to three (3) responses.</p> <p>Asked only of parents who responded "We actively searched but did not enroll any of our children in a new school" to Q7.</p>	Answer Choices	U.S. Parents (All)	California Parents (All)	Comparison: All U.S. Parents to All California Parents (California +/-)
	The process was too complicated or confusing.	19%	21%	2%
	I couldn't afford the options I was considering.	22%	20%	-2%
	Transportation would have been too difficult.	25%	29%	3%
	There were not enough good options near me.	26%	17%	-9%
	I decided my child's current school was a better fit after all.	20%	26%	5%
	I ran out of time to make a change.	15%	16%	1%
	The schools I wanted had no available space or were waitlisted.	26%	27%	1%
	I didn't know where to start or how to get information.	16%	20%	4%
	I was worried about disrupting my child's academic or social life.	33%	39%	7%
	I was concerned I might make the wrong choice.	26%	27%	1%
	Something else	6%	3%	-4%

<p>Q9. What type of school did you choose? Select all that apply.</p> <p>Asked only of parents who responded, "We enrolled one or more of our children in a new school or switched to homeschooling" to Q7.</p>	Answer Choices	U.S. Parents (All)	California Parents (All)	Comparison: All U.S. Parents to All California Parents (California +/-)
	Traditional public school in your neighborhood	27%	27%	-1%
	Traditional public school outside of your neighborhood	18%	16%	-2%
	Public charter school	17%	25%	8%
	Public magnet school	10%	8%	-1%
	Private school (religious or faith-based)	21%	22%	1%
	Private school (not religious or faith-based)	20%	23%	3%
	Microschool or pod learning	6%	8%	2%
	Homeschool	17%	20%	3%
	Full-time online school	15%	15%	0%
	Something else	3%	2%	-2%
<p>Q10. When you were actively searching for new schools or learning options for your child, which of the following, if any, did you do? Select all that apply.</p> <p>Asked only of parents who responded, "We actively searched but did not enroll..." or "We enrolled..." to Q7.</p>	Answer Choices	U.S. Parents (All)	California Parents (All)	Comparison: All U.S. Parents to All California Parents (California +/-)
	Visited school websites	39%	40%	1%
	Looked at online school-rating sites (e.g., GreatSchools, Niche)	30%	30%	0%
	Conducted general online searches (e.g., Google)	34%	32%	-2%
	Asked other parents or families	32%	28%	-4%
	Spoke with teachers, counselors, or school staff	27%	25%	-2%
	Visited schools in person	31%	30%	-2%
	Attended open houses or school tours	25%	27%	3%
	Participated in a school fair or school-choice event	15%	15%	0%
	Reviewed school materials (brochures, flyers, handbooks)	27%	31%	4%
	Checked social media groups or forums	20%	20%	0%
	Watched videos or virtual tours	17%	17%	0%
	Used a school-search tool or school-finder website	21%	22%	2%
	Consulted your child's current teacher(s)	17%	15%	-2%
	Talked with friends or relatives	31%	30%	-2%
	None of these	1%	2%	1%
<p>Q11. When thinking about the decisions you make for your child's schooling and education, what topics— if any—do you most wish you had more information about now? Select up to three (3) responses.</p> <p>I would like more information about...</p>	Answer Choices	U.S. Parents (All)	California Parents (All)	Comparison: All U.S. Parents to All California Parents (California +/-)
	How to find and compare different schools and education programs in my area	25%	25%	0%
	The process, deadlines, and requirements to enroll my child in new schools or programs	10%	9%	-1%
	Open houses, school tours, school fairs, and sample questions to ask at these events	16%	15%	-1%
	Government programs or funding that parents can use to better afford private schools or homeschooling	42%	47%	5%
	Free or low-cost transportation options for different schools or programs	37%	42%	5%
	How to determine whether a school or program is a good fit for my child	34%	37%	3%
	My legal rights as a parent to direct my child's education and learning	17%	18%	1%
	Any new, nontraditional, or alternative learning options now available in my area	40%	45%	5%
	Specialized schools such as career and technical education, trade schools, STEM, or arts schools	22%	20%	-1%
	None of these	6%	4%	-2%

<p>Q12. When thinking about your child's experience at their current school, what topics—if any—do you most wish you had more information about? Select up to three (3) responses.</p> <p>I would like more information about how I can...</p>	Answer Choices	U.S. Parents (All)	California Parents (All)	Comparison: All U.S. Parents to All California Parents (California +/-)
	support my child's learning at home	12%	9%	-3%
	understand my child's academic progress beyond grades and report cards	16%	16%	-1%
	access free or low-cost tutoring	36%	36%	0%
	address concerns such as bullying or behavioral issues	21%	20%	-2%
	help my child transition back to school after summer break or holidays	11%	10%	-1%
	access special programs or extracurriculars	30%	33%	3%
	prepare for parent-teacher conferences or meetings, including questions to ask	8%	9%	1%
	communicate effectively with teachers or school staff	21%	20%	-1%
	access special education or programs for students with disabilities	31%	36%	5%
	simplify transportation	6%	7%	0%
	access Spanish-language resources	21%	27%	6%
	access supplemental learning options such as dual enrollment, hybrid learning, online learning, or summer enrichment	28%	31%	3%
	None of these	6%	3%	-3%
<p>Q14. Within the next 12 months, how likely are you, if at all, to think about, consider, search for, or enroll any of your children in a new or different school?</p>	Answer Choices	U.S. Parents (All)	California Parents (All)	Comparison: All U.S. Parents to All California Parents (California +/-)
	Very likely	27%	30%	4%
	Likely	18%	23%	5%
	Somewhat likely	17%	16%	-2%
	Not sure	15%	14%	-1%
	Somewhat unlikely	5%	5%	-1%
	Unlikely	7%	4%	-2%
	Very unlikely	11%	8%	-2%
	Total LIKELY	62%	69%	7%
	Total UNLIKELY	23%	18%	-6%