



Bipartisan Policy Center

Literacy Survey Research

N=1,016 registered voters in the likely electorate
nationwide

October 28 - November 2, 2025



Key Findings

- **Voters think literacy matters.** They think it is important for success in life and in the workforce, and they want to see their governor prioritize it.
- **Voters think their own state could improve how it teaches literacy.** Few voters think their state is doing great, and many worry that things have gotten worse over the last decade.
- **Voters value student-centered messages for why literacy matters.** Focusing on students and the opportunities they'll need to thrive in life is the most effective way to reach voters about the importance of literacy.



Key Findings

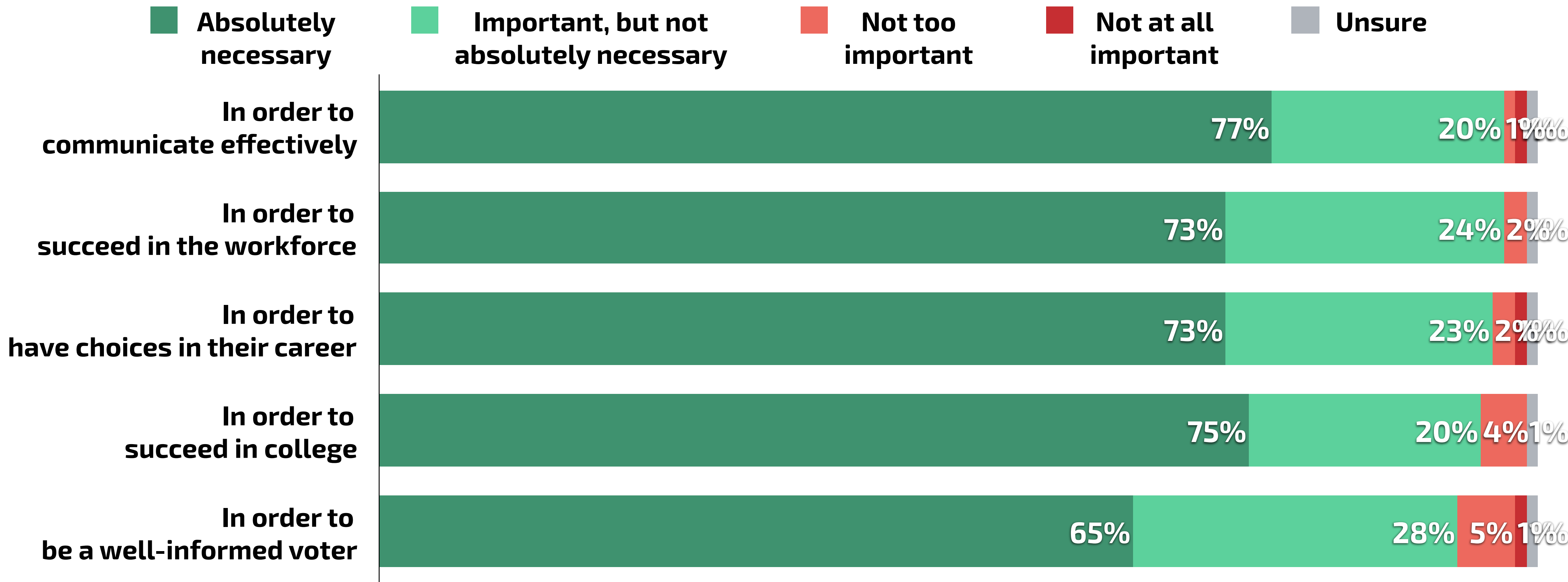
- **Voters are optimistic about some potential ways to improve literacy** — most think that informing parents if their child is falling behind, improving the curriculum, and offering more tutoring programs would do a lot to help literacy skills improve.
- **Voters also want their governors to make literacy a top priority and to play a role as convener and goal-setter.** While just 18% believe their governor currently makes literacy a top priority, 70% majority think they *should* do so. 81% say they would view their governor more favorably if they announced that improving literacy would be a key priority.



Importance of Literacy

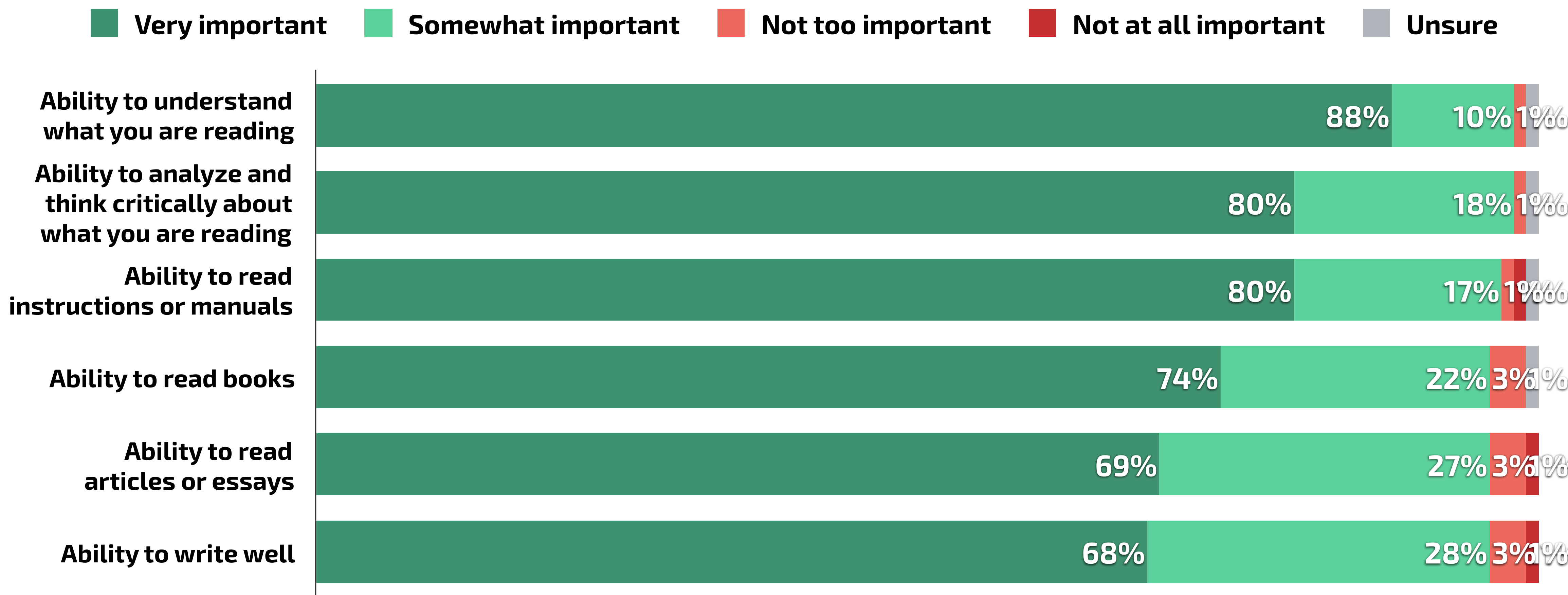


Most think strong literacy skills are absolutely necessary in order to communicate effectively and find career success



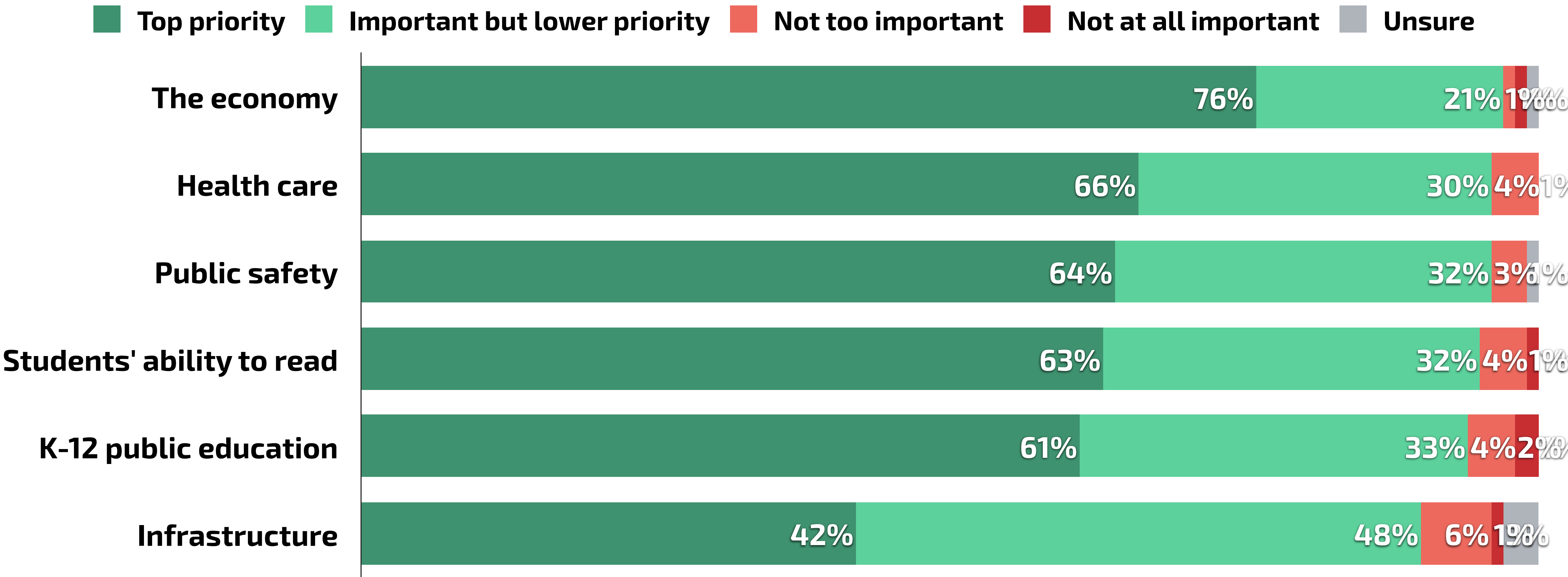
Q. How important do you think it is for someone to have strong literacy skills (reading and writing skills) in order to do each of the following?

The abilities to understand and think critically about reading are considered the most important aspects of literacy needed to succeed in life



Q. How important do you think each of the following aspects of literacy are for succeeding in life?

While most voters consider reading ability a top priority, other issues like the economy are seen as more important

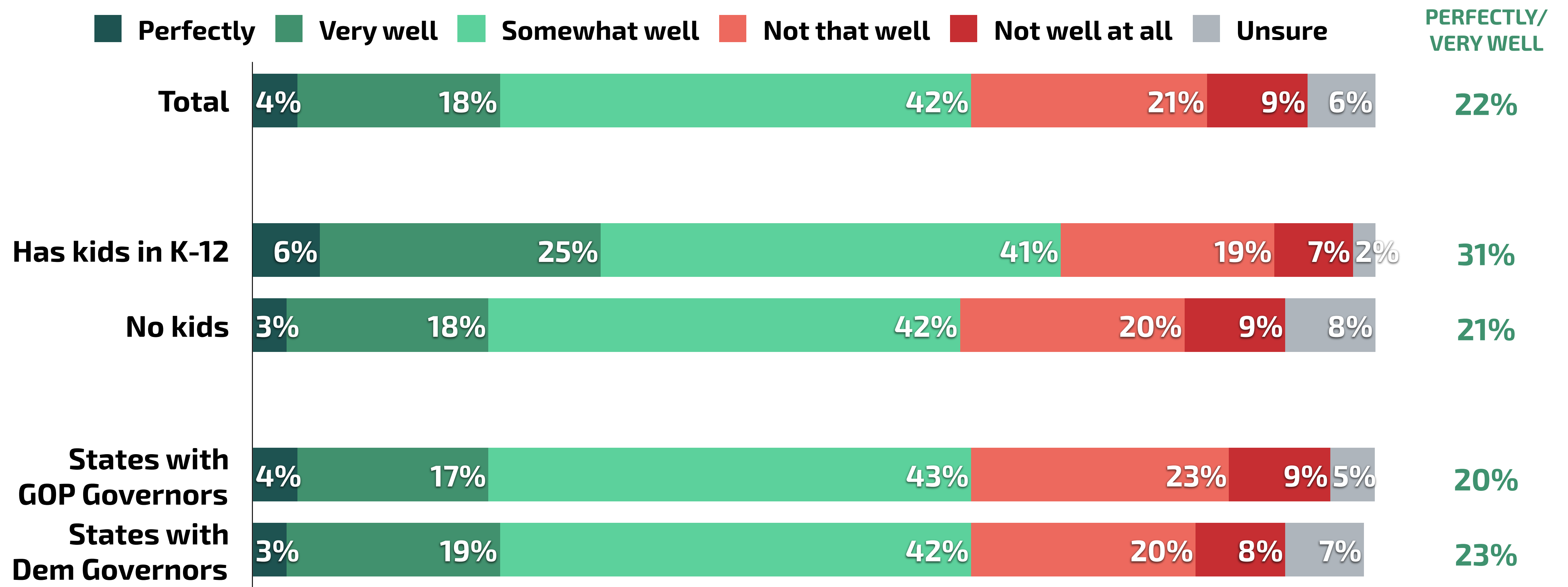


Q. How important do you think it should be for your state's governor to focus on improving each of the following in your state?

Current State of Literacy

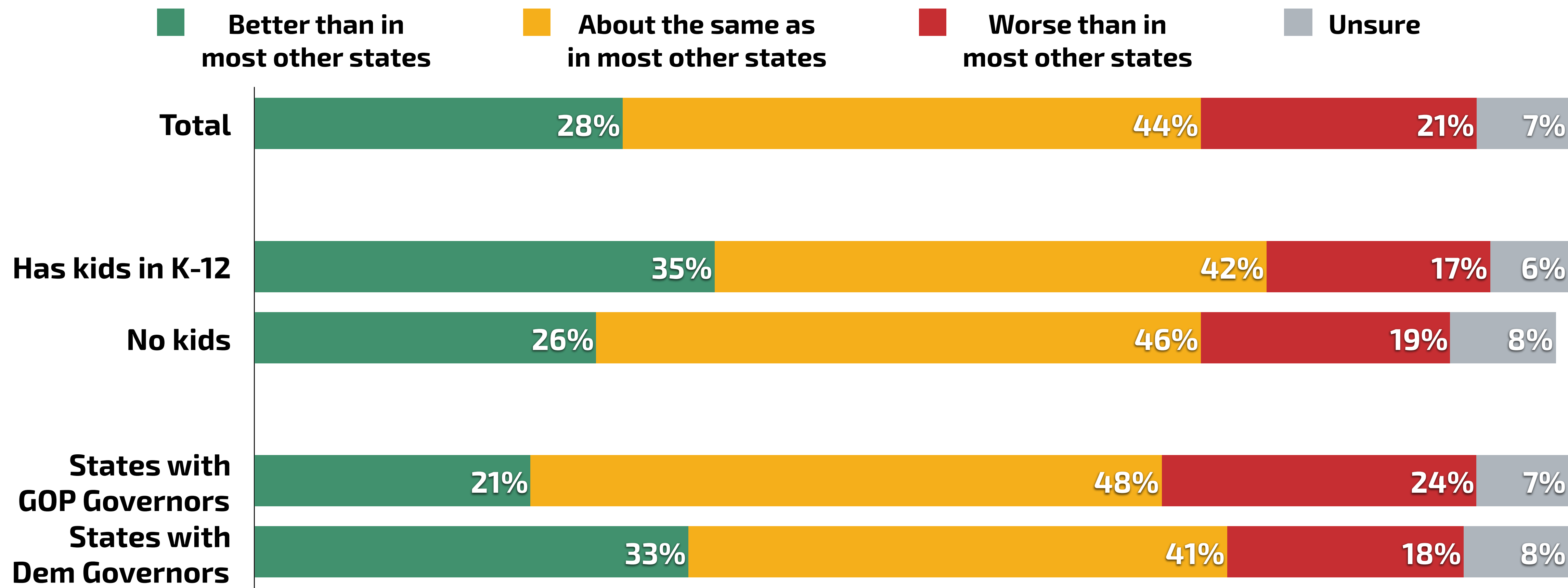


A plurality of voters say their state's K-12 public education system is working somewhat well



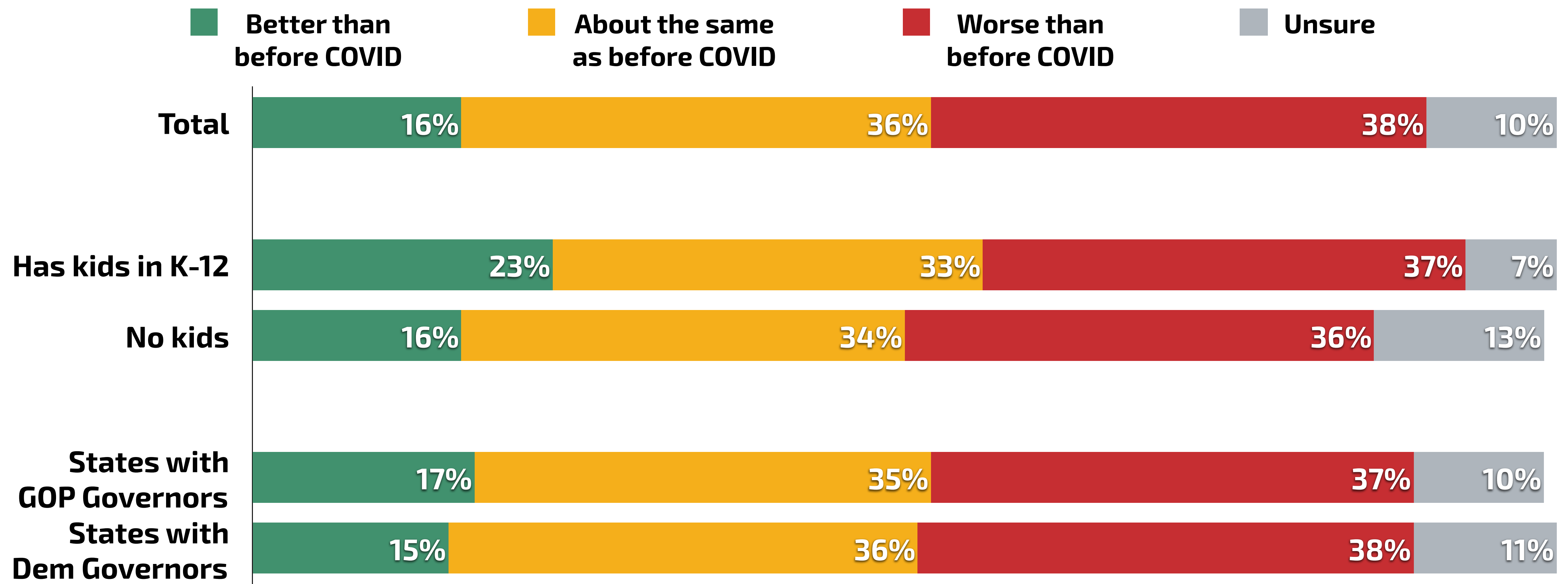
Q. Thinking about your state's public education system for grades kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12), would you say it is working...?

Pluralities say their state's education system compares similarly to those in other states



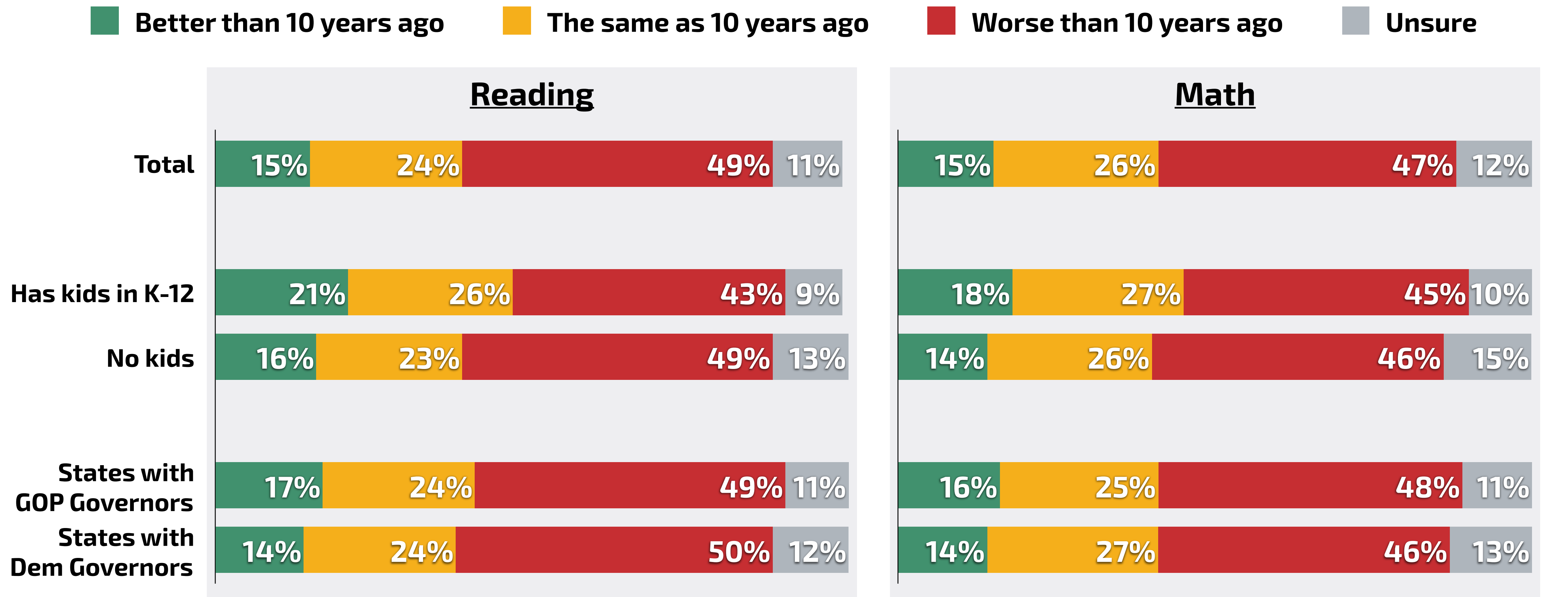
Q. Do you think the K-12 public education system in your state is better, about the same, or worse than in most other states in the U.S.?

Most think education in their state has not improved since the COVID-19 pandemic



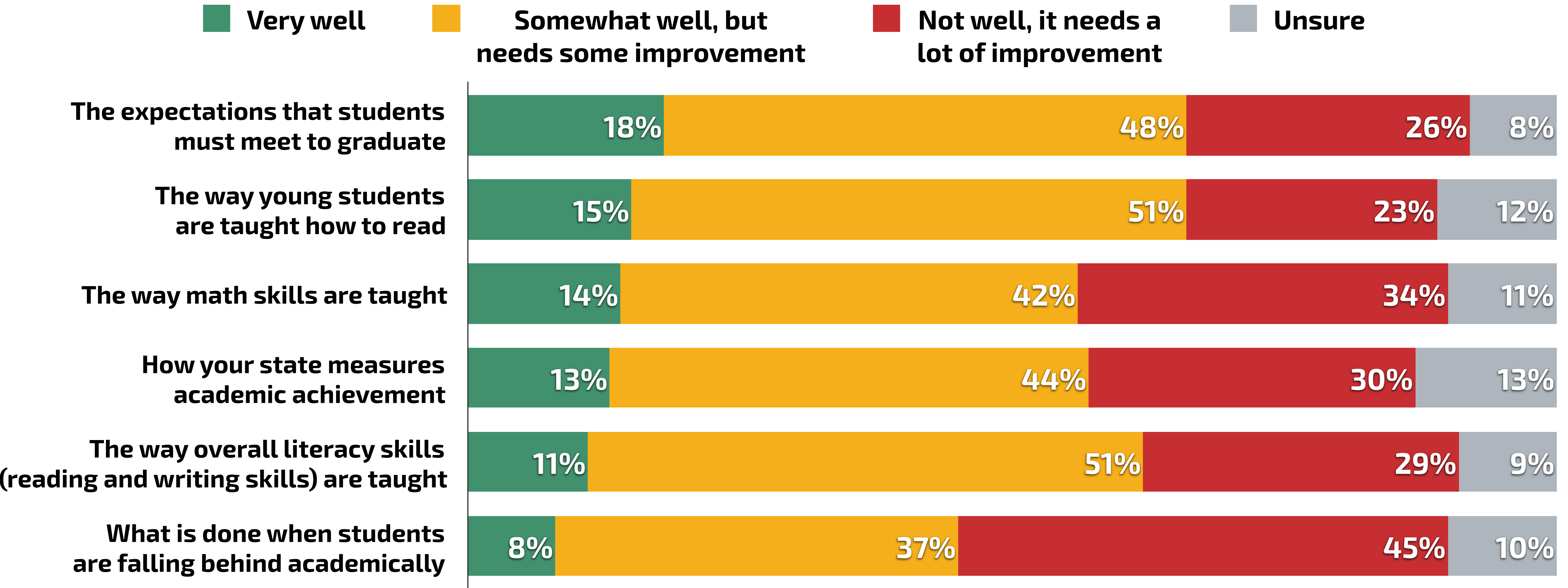
Q. Do you think the K-12 public education system in your state is doing better, about the same, or worse compared to how it was performing before the COVID-19 pandemic?

Just under half of voters think academic performance in reading and math in their state is worse than it was 10 years ago



Q. Do you think academic performance among public school students in your state is better, the same, or worse than it was 10 years ago?

Voters tend to think most aspects of public education are working somewhat well rather than needing a lot of improvement



Q. Thinking about the K-12 public education system in your state, how well do you think each of the following are working?

Motivations



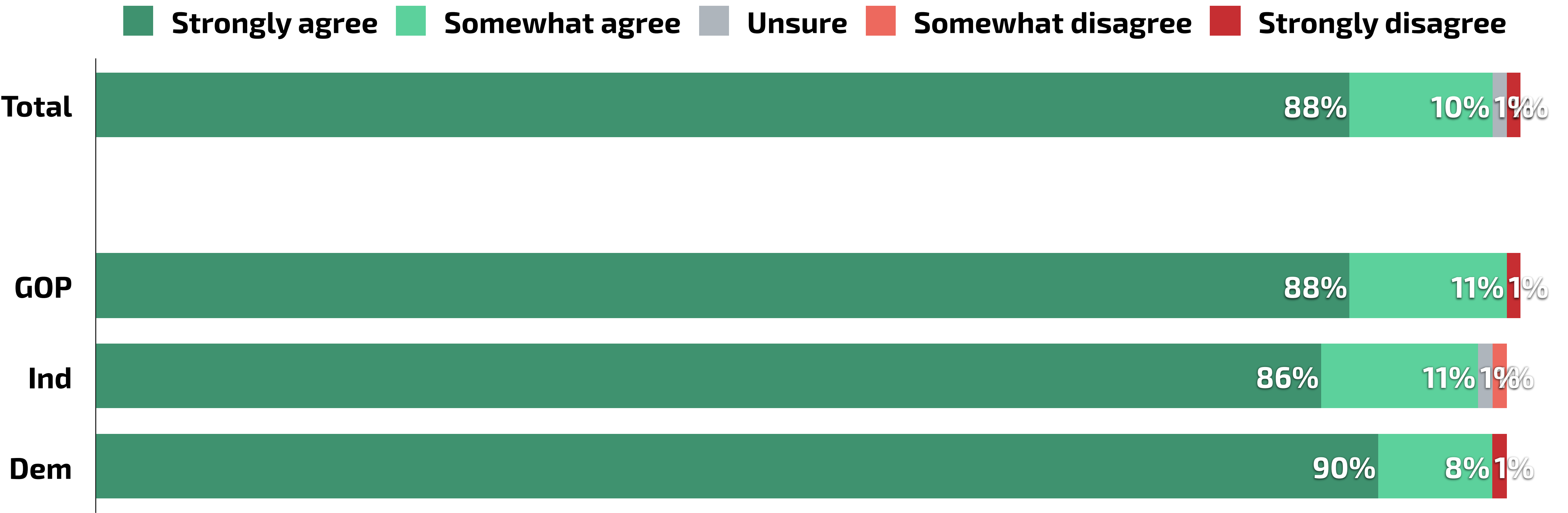
Voters strongly believe students deserve the support they need to read in order to unlock life opportunities

		Total % Agree	Total % Strongly Agree
Deserves	“Every child deserves to have the support they need to learn to read.”	98%	88%
Opportunities	“Strong literacy skills give students better opportunities in life.”	97%	80%
Democracy	“Strong literacy skills are important for the future of our democracy.”	94%	74%
Workforce	“Strong readers today mean a strong workforce tomorrow.”	95%	66%
Fall Behind	“If our state doesn’t get literacy right, we will fall behind other states.”	92%	64%
AI Tools	“Strong literacy skills are important for using AI tools that are a growing part of our economy.”	70%	35%



Strong bipartisan support for ensuring every child has what they need to learn to read

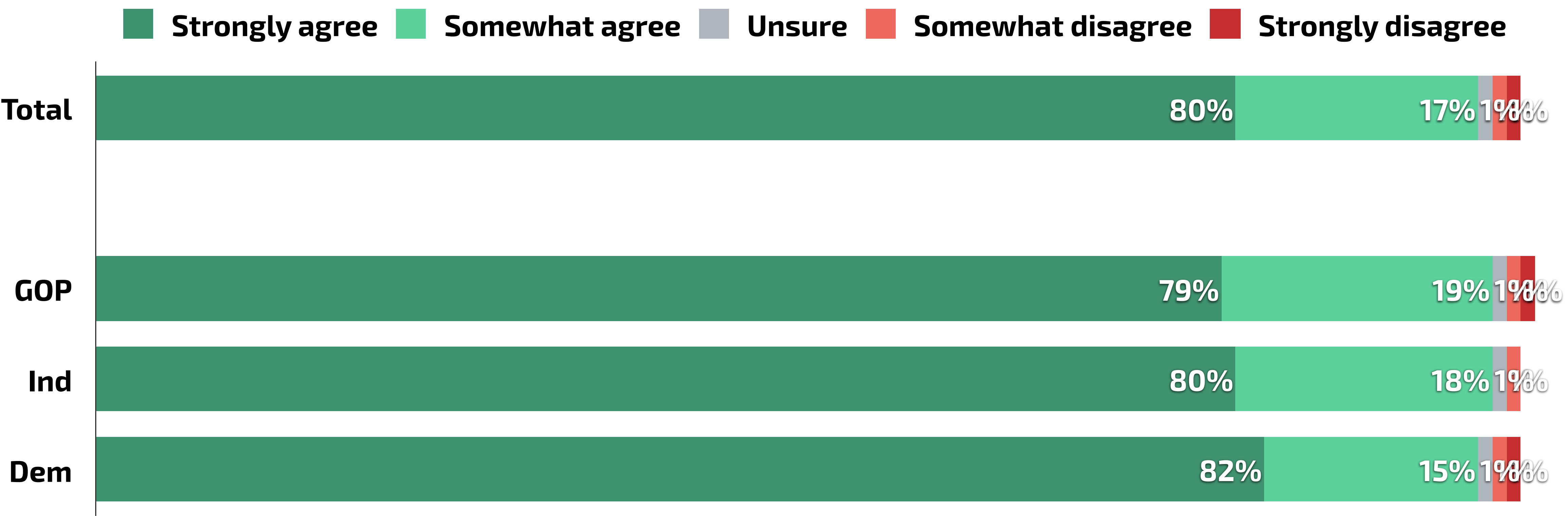
“Every child deserves to have the support they need to learn to read.”



Q. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

About 8 in 10 Republicans and Democrats strongly agree that literacy skills give students better opportunities

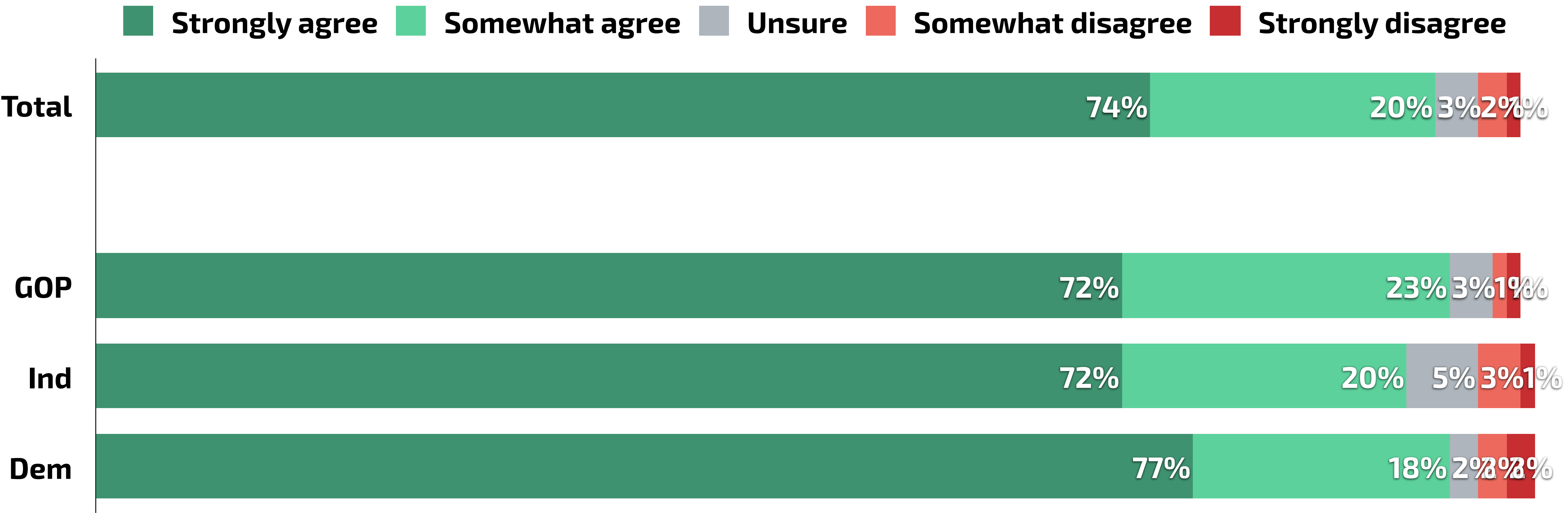
“Strong literacy skills give students better opportunities in life.”



Q. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

The importance of literacy to democracy's future is salient across the political spectrum

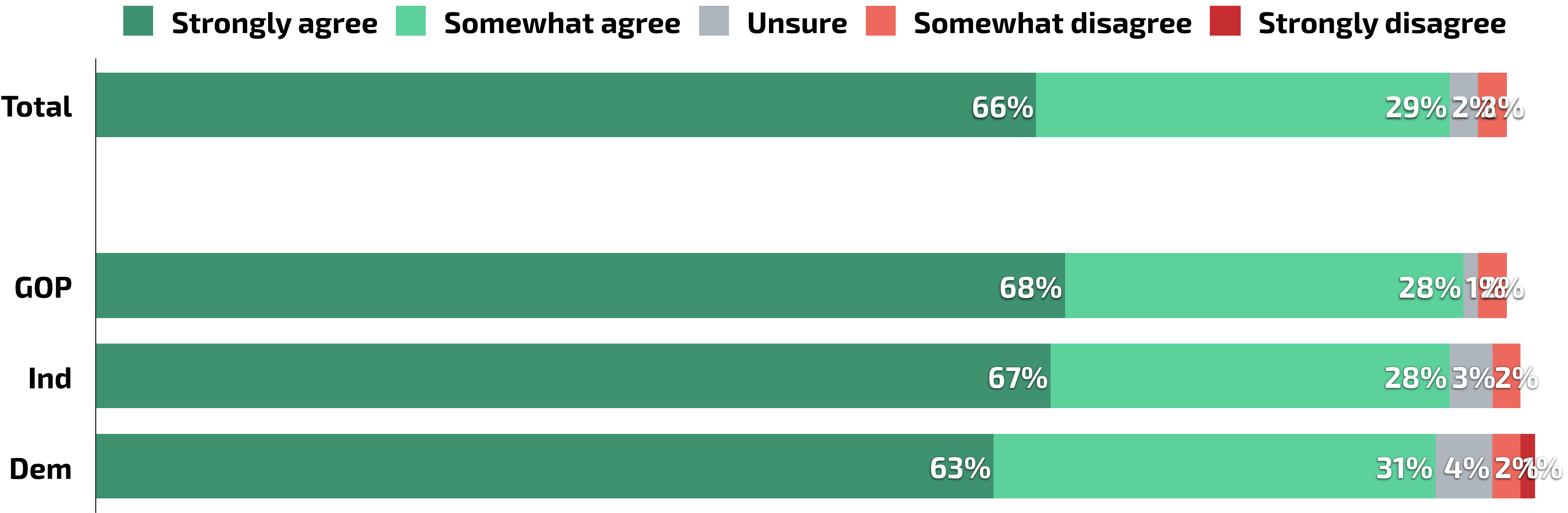
“Strong literacy skills are important for the future of our democracy.”



Q. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

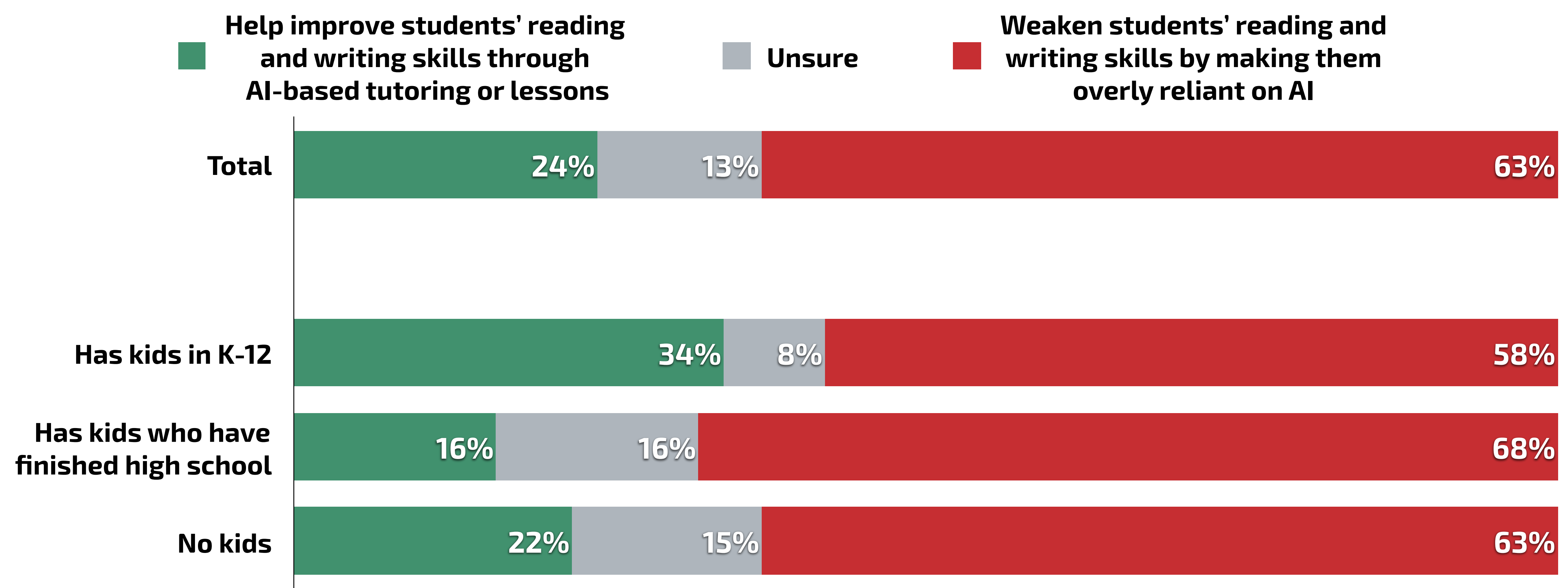
Voters largely agree that strong readers contribute to a strong workforce

“Strong readers today mean a strong workforce tomorrow.”



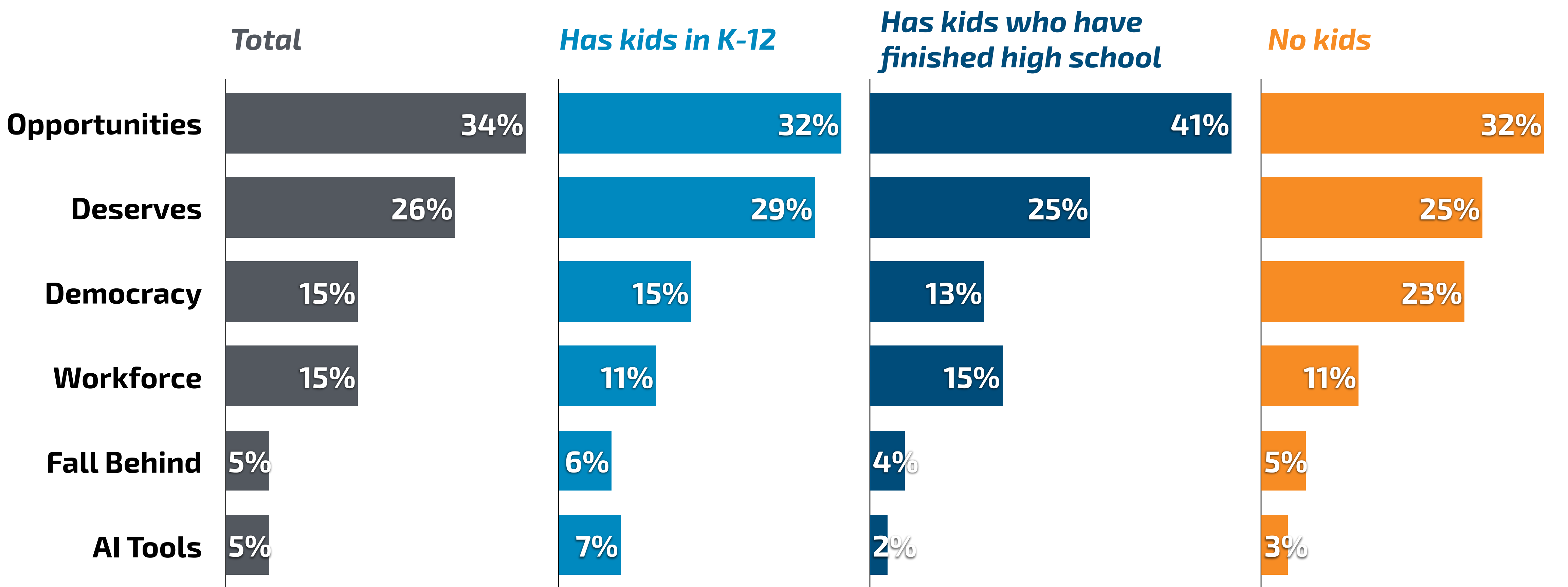
Q. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Most think AI is more likely to weaken literacy skills, with K-12 parents more optimistic that it can help



Q. Do you think the use of artificial intelligence (AI) is more likely to . . .

A plurality chose “strong literacy skills give students better opportunities in life” as the single strongest message

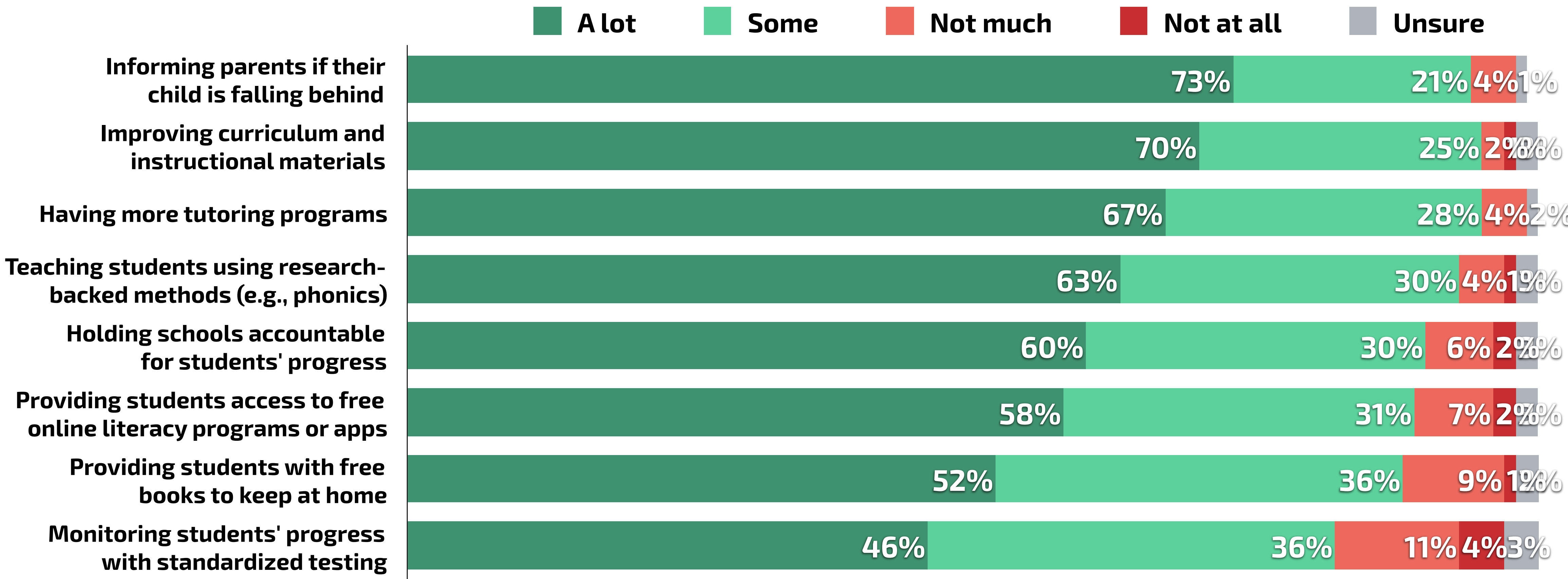


Q. In your opinion, which of the following statements makes the strongest case for your governor to prioritize improving student literacy?

Approaches to Action

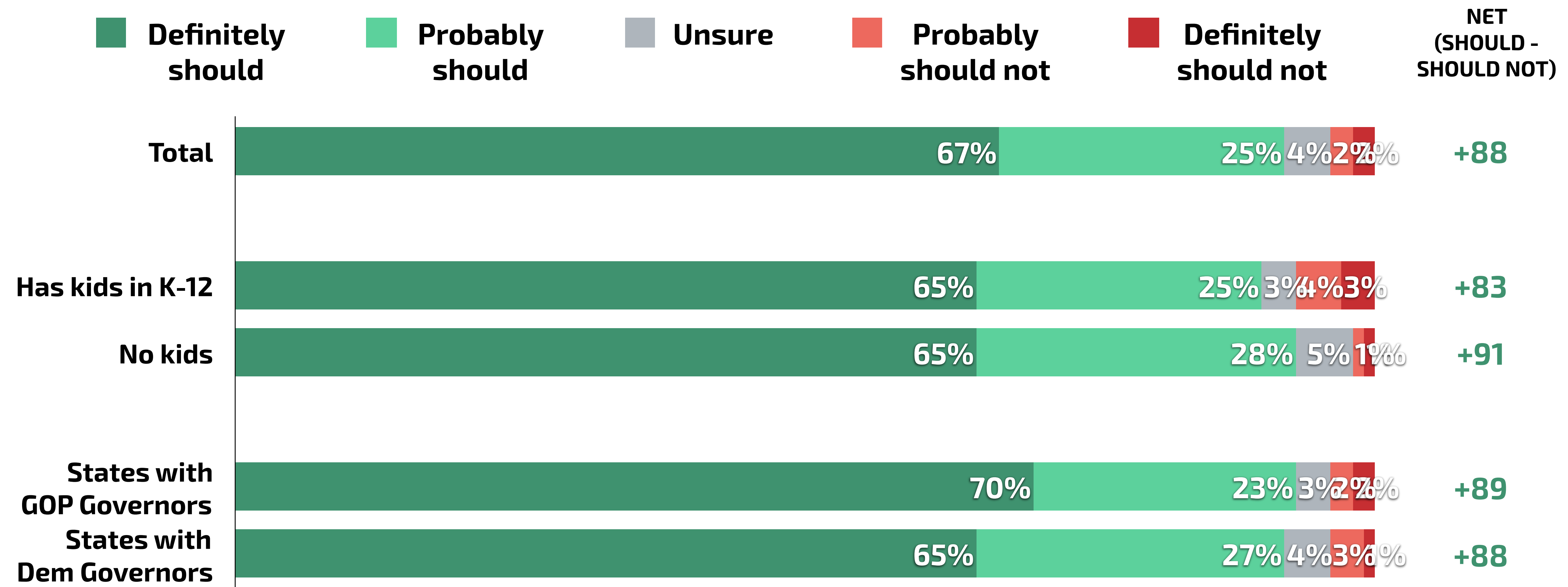


Most think more information for parents, a better curriculum, and more tutoring would do a lot to help improve literacy skills



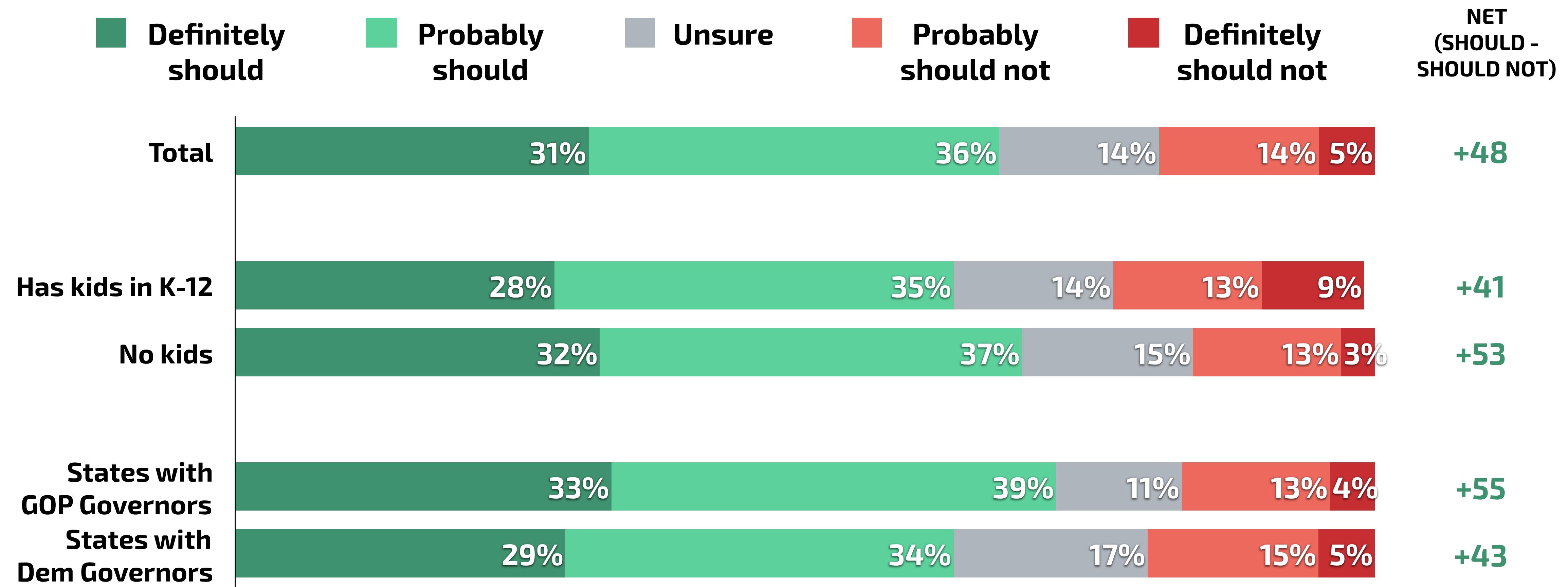
Q. How much do you think each of the following would help to improve literacy skills and academic performance in reading among K-12 public school students?

While a goal to have students reading on grade level by the end of 3rd grade is widely supported...



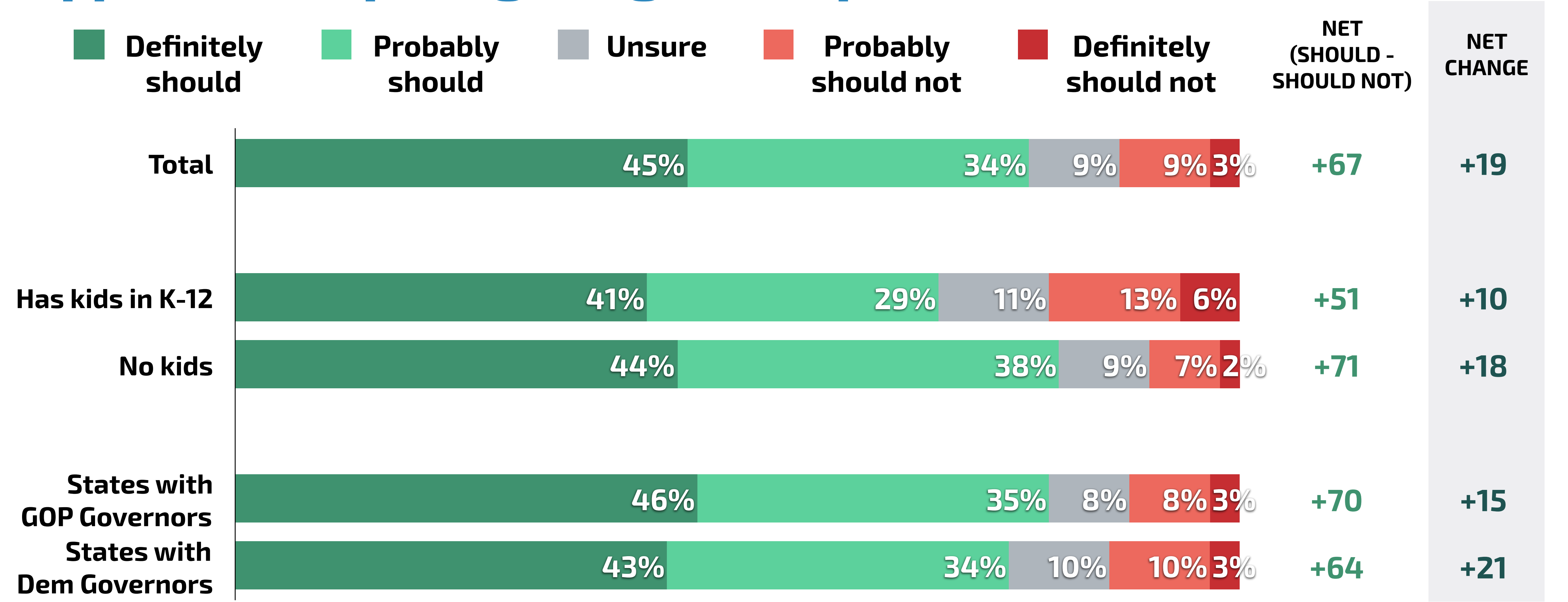
Q. Do you think your state should or should not set a goal to have public school students reading on grade level by the time they finish 3rd grade?

...fewer think students who fall short of this goal should be held back



Q. If a student is not reading on grade level by the time they finish 3rd grade, do you think your state should or should not require them to repeat the 3rd grade?

After learning the implications of not reading on grade level, support for requiring 3rd grade repeats rises

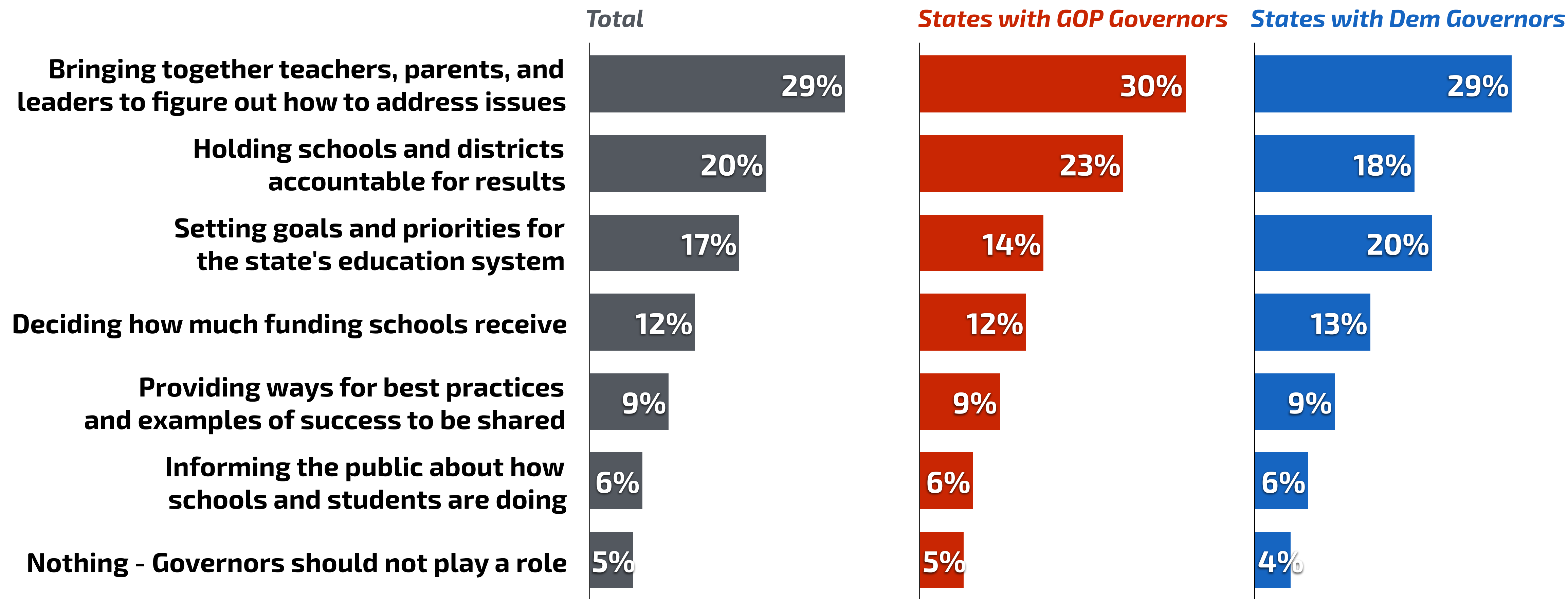


Q. Research shows that children who cannot read on grade level by the end of 3rd grade are much less likely to graduate from high school. Knowing that, do you think your state should or should not require a student to repeat the 3rd grade if they are not reading on grade level by the time they finish 3rd grade?

Role for Governors



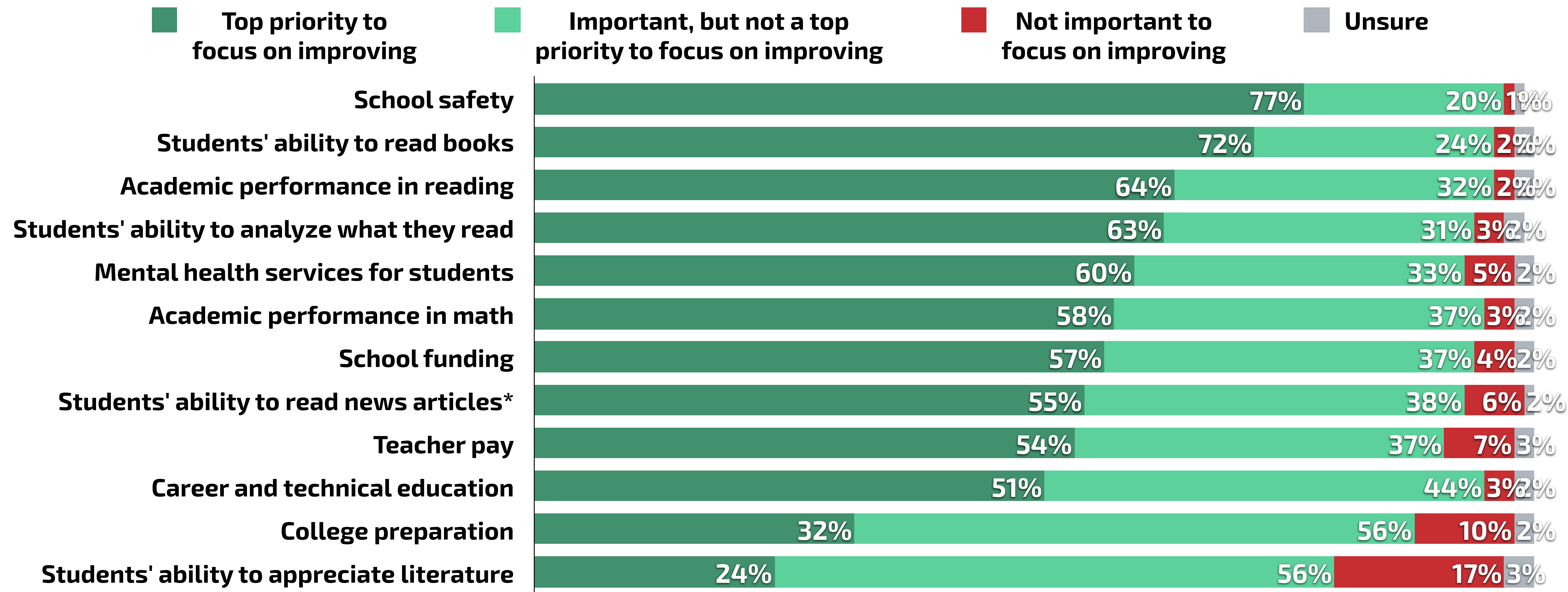
Voters most want their governors to convene decision-makers, hold stakeholders accountable, and set education goals



Note: "Something else (please specify)" (1% overall) not shown

Q. Governors don't directly run public schools, but they work with the state legislature, state education agency or state department of education and can influence priorities. In your view, what is the most important role governors should play in improving K-12 public education?

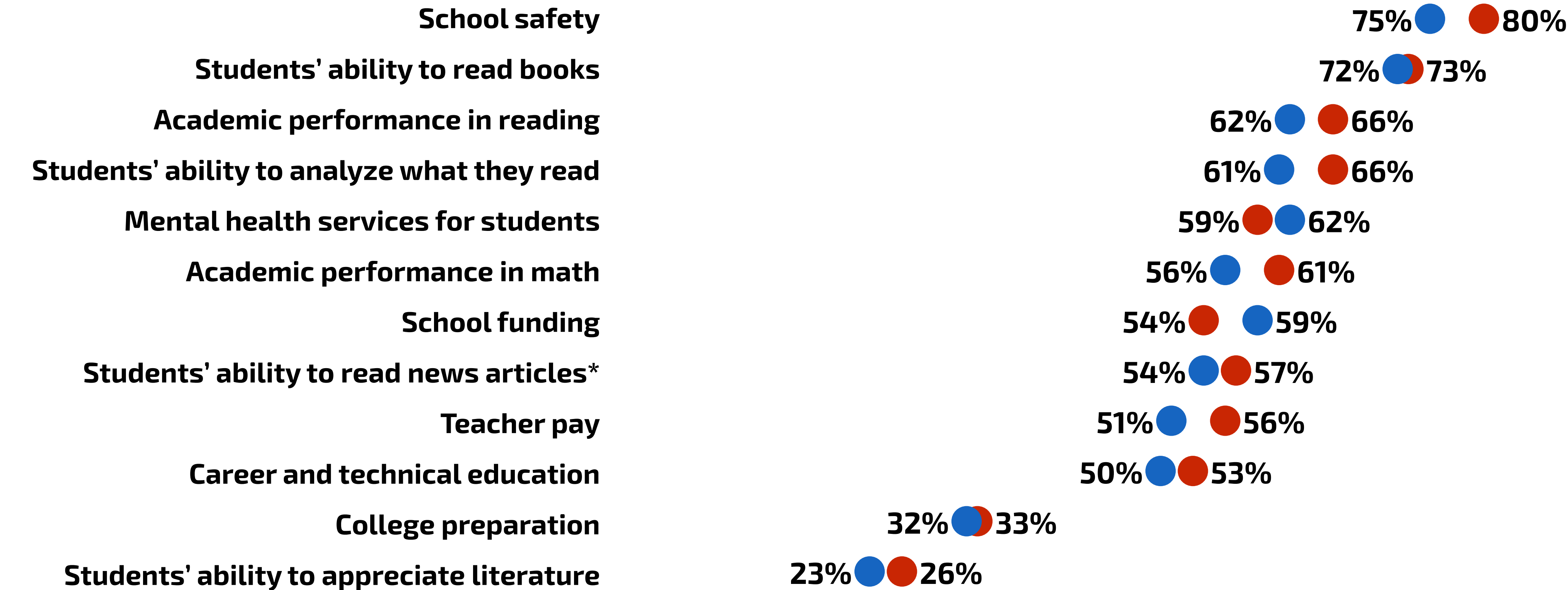
Most see reading ability and performance as among the top education priorities for governors to focus on improving



*Answer shortened from "Students' ability to read and understand news articles"
Q. How important do you think it should be for state governors to focus on improving each of the following aspects of the K-12 public education system?

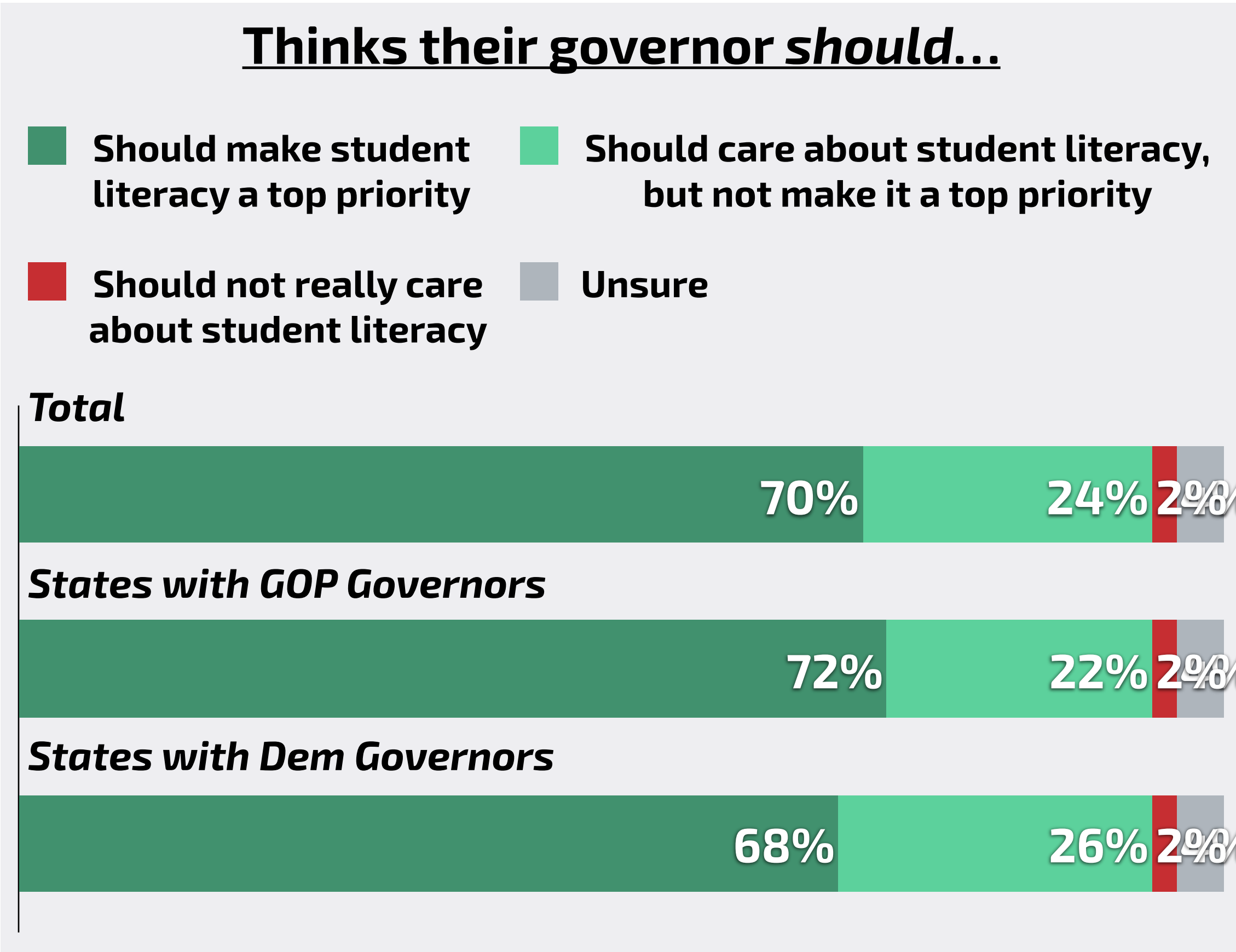
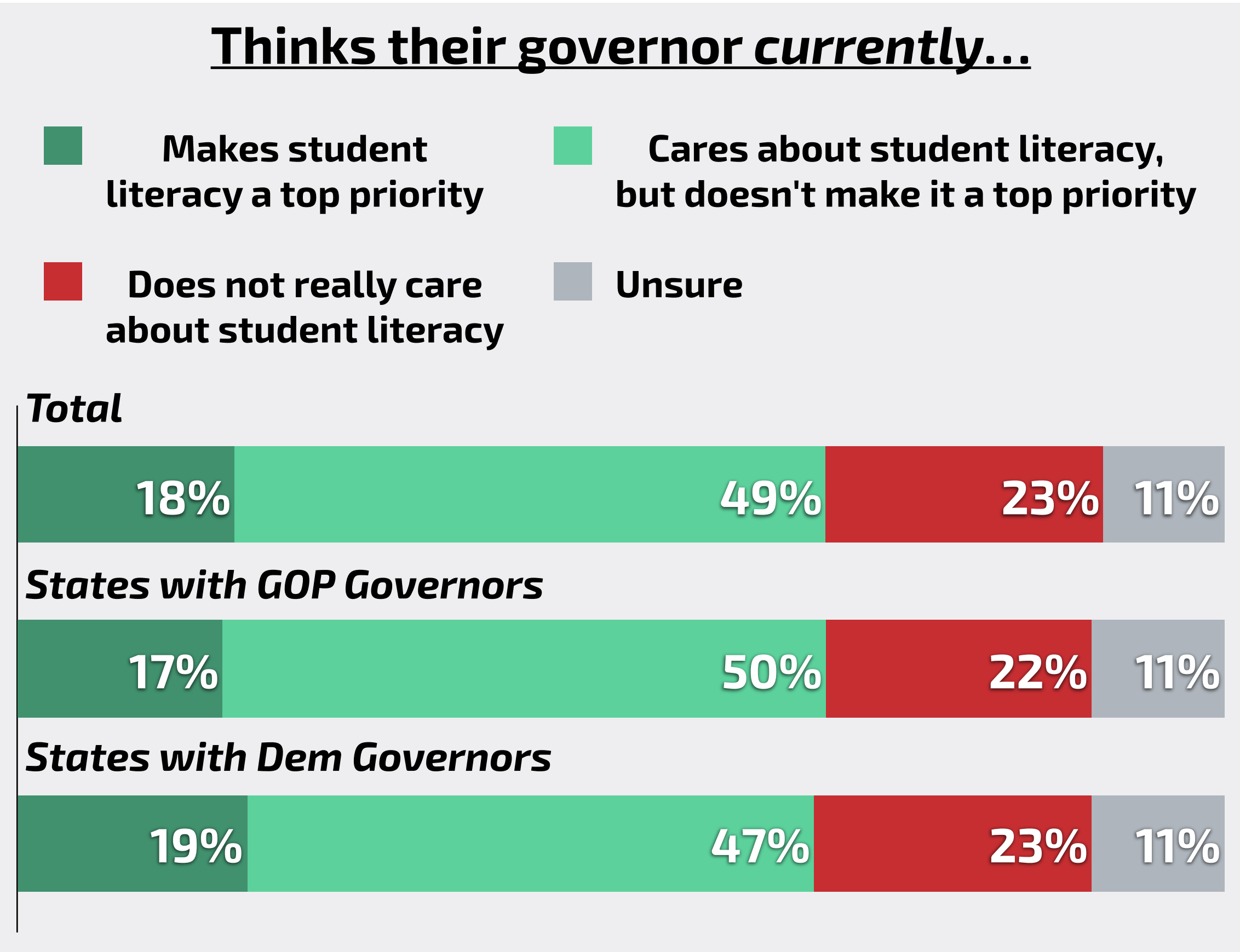
Those in GOP-governed states are slightly more likely than those with Democratic governors to see most education issues as a top priority for their governor

% TOP PRIORITY TO FOCUS ON IMPROVING ● States with Dem Governors ● States with GOP Governors



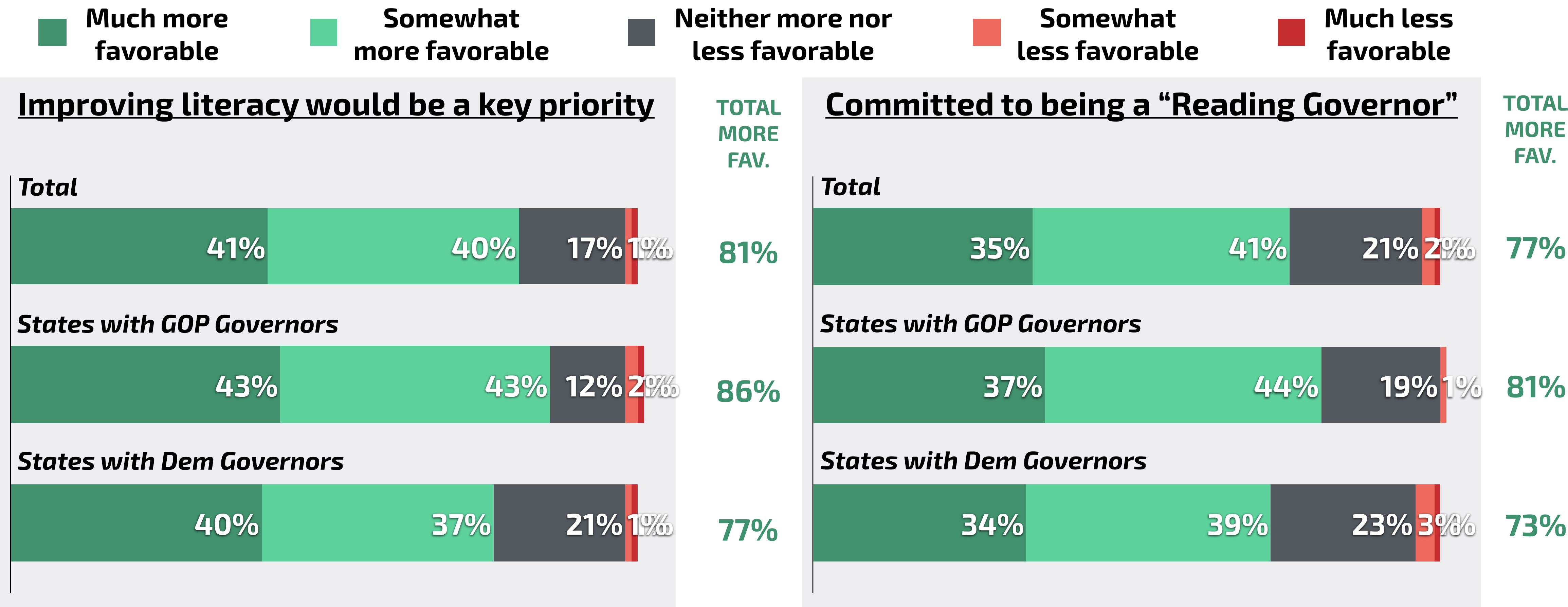
*Answer shortened from "Students' ability to read and understand news articles"
Q. How important do you think it should be for state governors to focus on improving each of the following aspects of the K-12 public education system?

Most think their governor cares but hasn't made literacy a top priority, while seven-in-ten wish literacy was a top priority



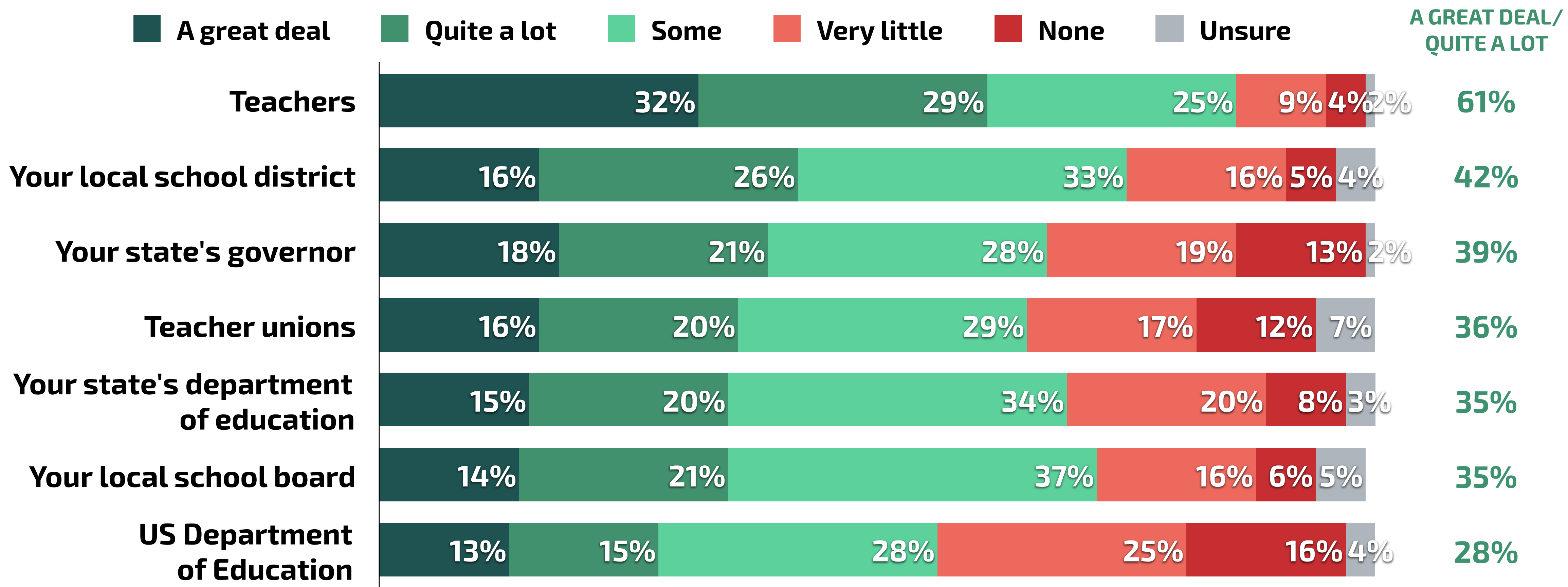
Q1. Do you think your governor currently...?
Q2. What do you think your governor SHOULD do?

Most voters would view their governor more favorably if they announced that improving literacy would be one of their key priorities



Note: half of respondents were only shown Q1, and half were only shown Q2.
Q1. If the governor of your state announced that improving literacy was going to be one of their key priorities, would that make your opinion of them more or less favorable?
Q2. If the governor of your state said they were committed to being a "Reading Governor" and would make improving literacy one of their key priorities, would that make your opinion of them more or less favorable?

Voters trust teachers the most to make good K-12 education policy decisions, but four-in-ten trust their governor a lot

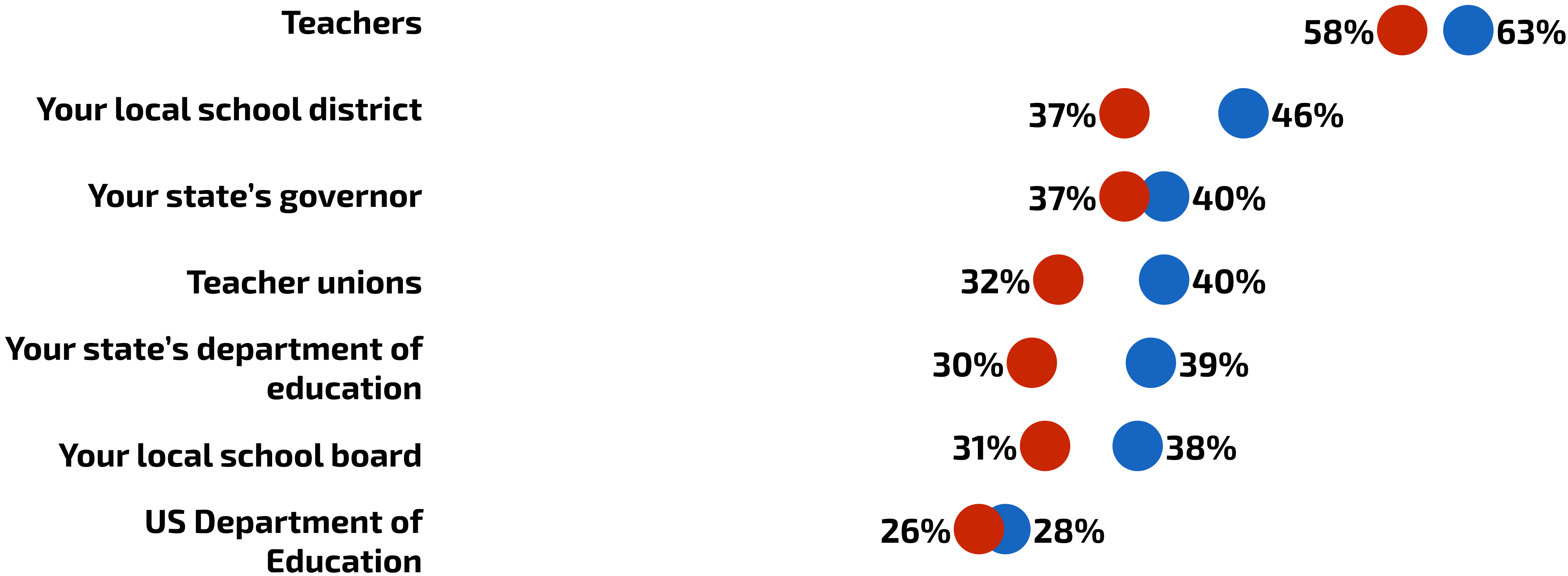


Q. How much trust and confidence do you have in each of the following to make good decisions regarding policies for K-12 public education?

Those in Democratic-governed states are more likely to trust decision-makers on education policy than those in GOP-governed states

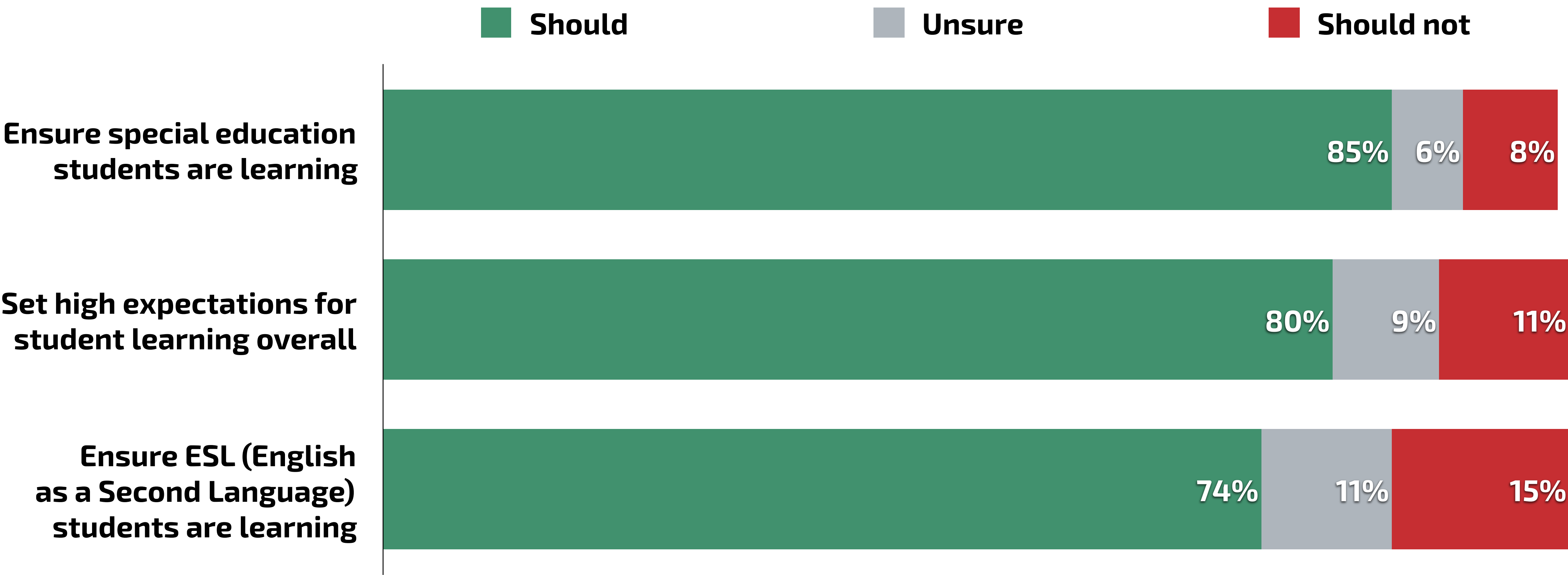
% A GREAT DEAL/QUITE A LOT

● States with GOP Governors ● States with Dem Governors



Q. How much trust and confidence do you have in each of the following to make good decisions regarding policies for K-12 public education?

Majorities say the federal government should have a role in setting learning expectations and ensuring students with additional needs are learning



Q. Please indicate if you think the federal government SHOULD or SHOULD NOT have a role in ensuring states do each of the following.

Methodology



Methodology

The survey was fielded online from October 28 – November 2, 2025 in English among a sample of 1,016 registered voters in the likely electorate nationwide using non-probability sampling. The sample was drawn from the Cint sample exchange based on demographic quota targets for registered voters in the likely electorate nationwide, and matched to the L2 voter file to verify respondents' voter registration status.

Measures taken to ensure data quality included measures to prevent duplicate responses, questions designed to disqualify inattentive respondents, and the removal of respondents from the data file who answered more than one-third of the questions they were asked in less than one-third of the median response time per question.

The sample was weighted to reflect modeled turnout and demographic characteristics of the population of voters in the likely electorate nationwide based on a probabilistic model that incorporates data from the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey and Current Population Survey Voting and Registration Supplement, as well as L2 voter file data. Weighting dimensions included gender, age, race/ethnicity, educational attainment, region, party identification, and turnout probability, as well as gender by age, gender by education, gender by race/ethnicity, race/ethnicity by age, and education by age.

Calculated the way it would be for a random sample and adjusted to incorporate the effect of weighting, the margin of sampling error is ± 3.5 percentage points.





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