



SUTHERLAND  
INSTITUTE  
CIVICS INITIATIVE

# Civics Education in Utah

## Quantitative Data

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Conducted by: Heart+Mind Strategies



# Table of Contents



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Methodology	3
Executive Summary	5
Pre and Post Measures	9
State of Utah Schools and Curriculum	14
Framing Civics Education	22
Outcomes of Strong Civics Education	29
Reforming Civics Education	35
Community Involvement	44
Appendix	48

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# Methodology



	<b>MODE</b>	Online survey
	<b>LENGTH</b>	18 min
	<b>DATES</b>	April 1– April 16, 2021
	<b>AUDIENCE</b>	Utahns 18+, n=600 Parents of children aged 5-17, n=229
	<b>GEOGRAPHY</b>	State of Utah
	<b>WEIGHTING</b>	Data are adjusted to match US Census data for the state of Utah on age, gender, ethnicity and adults with school age children. Base sizes shown are unweighted.



# Methodology



Respondents were selected from among those who have volunteered to participate in online surveys and were then screened in the survey based on quotas and survey audience definition. The data (600 respondents) were gathered across multiple, large online survey panels that included a cross-section of the Utah population.

To ensure representation of a wide variety of demographic groups, we established quotas by age, gender and race/ethnicity based on U.S. Census data for people aged 18 and older.

## Sample Details

In a hypothetical case of a probability sample size of 600, the margin of error would be +/- 4% at the 95% confidence level. It should be noted that all sample surveys are subject to multiple sources of error, some known and some unknown, which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate. These includes some of the following types of error: sampling, coverage, nonresponse, question wording/placement, response options, interviewer (in phone-based surveys), and post-survey weighting. The margin of error should be used as a directional guide because of these types of error and to account for online panel self-selection.



# Executive Summary

- High-level support for “restoring a robust civics education curriculum in our schools” increased 7 points over the course of the survey from 46% to 53%.
- Overall, 29% of Utahns increased their support during the survey, even if they did not reach levels of “completely” or “largely” agreeing with the idea we need to restore civics education.
  - The highest jumps were made among those earning less than \$50,000/year and those living in transitional/suburban areas.
- After messaging, the importance of civics, compared to other subjects even beating out math.
  - There was a particularly large jump among the non-white community
- Half of Utahns, and nearly two-third of parents, give Utah schools high marks.
  - Just one-in-five say schools are poor.
- The people in Utah are generally satisfied with schools, including the teachers, curriculum and adaptations during COVID.
  - Parents are more positive than the public generally.
- While Civics is seen as a subject of key importance, Utahns say schools’ performance on teaching it is below average.
  - Parents are slightly more positive on the performance of schools teaching Civics but still believe teaching of the subject is inferior to that of math, science and English.
  - It feels as though Civics is treated as an important subject, but not one of the most important subjects.



# Executive Summary

- Concerns around Civics education center on needing more and better education in this area.
  - Utahns also want to see Civics lessons that are more relevant to students and help develop lifelong skills.
- Giving students an understanding of laws and individual rights should be the key focus of Civics education followed by responsibilities and expectations of citizens, tolerance for other, historical context of government and the powers and limits of government.
  - Activism comes at the very bottom of the list of things that are important to cover in Civics Education.
- By following the noted priorities within Civics education, Utahns believe that students will have the ability to sift through information to find the truth and learn to think for themselves.
  - These outcomes are seen as more likely to occur if teachers are given flexibility in how they teach but not in what they teach. Over half want state guidelines on Civics curriculum provided to teachers.
- Over four-in-ten believe that the lack of a strong Civics education has led to civil unrest, fueling misperceptions on how democracy, and specifically our democratic system works.



# Executive Summary

- As we look to reform Civics education, testing has a role but is seen as less critical than transparency for parents with students in the educational system.
  - In terms of evaluation of skills, Utahns prefer participations in capstone activities or programs to standardized testing or individual work portfolios.
- Majorities support a variety of reforms including requiring a full year of Civics in high school and establishing a formal curriculum for grades K-6.
- When talking about reforms, key language to use includes:
  - Learning to think for yourself
    - This is particularly effective when contrasting against being taught “what to think”
  - Parents able to see what is being taught
- Key principles to focus on are:
  - Good citizenship, Free speech, Open-mindedness, Critical thinking and Equality
- Although most Utahns support reforms and a change in the focus of Civics education, fewer than half are likely to take action.
  - Four-in-ten would sign a petition.
  - One-quarter would contact their representatives.
  - Parents, particularly men, are more likely to get involved in change.
- Half of parents are very/extremely likely to look up a specific curriculum being taught at the local school.



# A Productive Society with Civic Engagement

One way to think of Civics education is a tree.

The roots are set and what everything else grows from. This includes the background that students come to the classroom with:

- Culture
- Religion
- Economic situations
- Geography

The base of the tree is a foundation for high-level skills and understanding. Utahns largely believe that foundations should be made of:

- Laws and individual rights
- Citizen responsibilities/expectations
- How our government works
- History of our government

A strong base produces healthy branches of skills that connect civics education to life-skills.

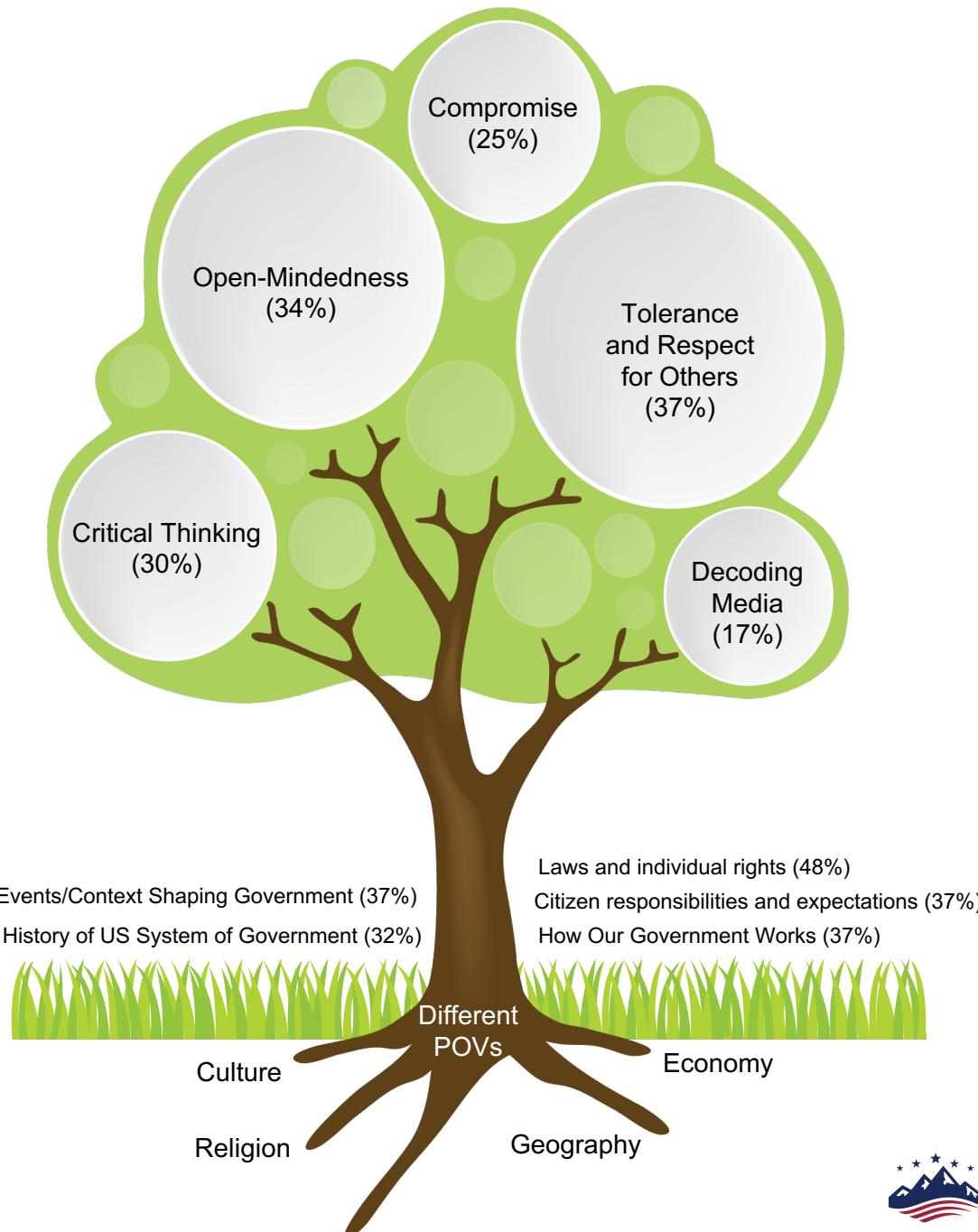
- Tolerance and Respect
- Open-Mindedness
- Critical Thinking
- Compromise
- Decoding Media

## The fruit of the tree is a Productive Society with Civic Engagement

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=600)

Q300. Civics education can include many topics.

Pg. 8 Which of the following do you feel are most important for civics education to cover? Please choose up to 5 options.



# Pre and Post Measures



# Pre and Post Measures Summary

- High-level support for “restoring a robust civics education curriculum in our schools” increased 7 points over the course of the survey from 46% to 53%.
- Overall, 29% of Utahns increased their support during the survey, even if they did not reach levels of “completely” or “largely” agreeing with the idea we need to restore civics education.
  - The highest jumps were made among those earning less than \$50,000/year and those living in transitional/suburban areas.
- After messaging, the importance of civics, compared to other subjects even beating out math.
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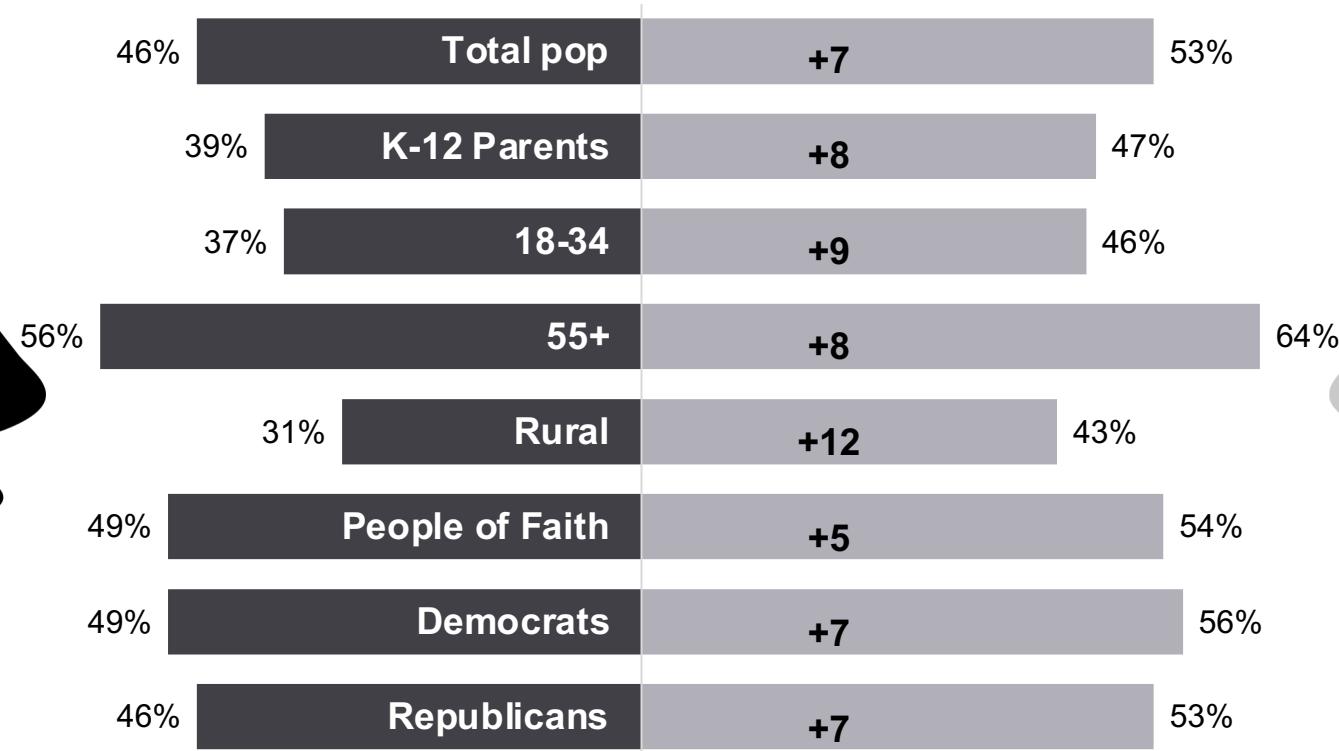


# Support for restoring a robust civics education increased post-survey.

## Support for Restoring Robust Civics Education

Pre-survey

Post-survey



BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=600)

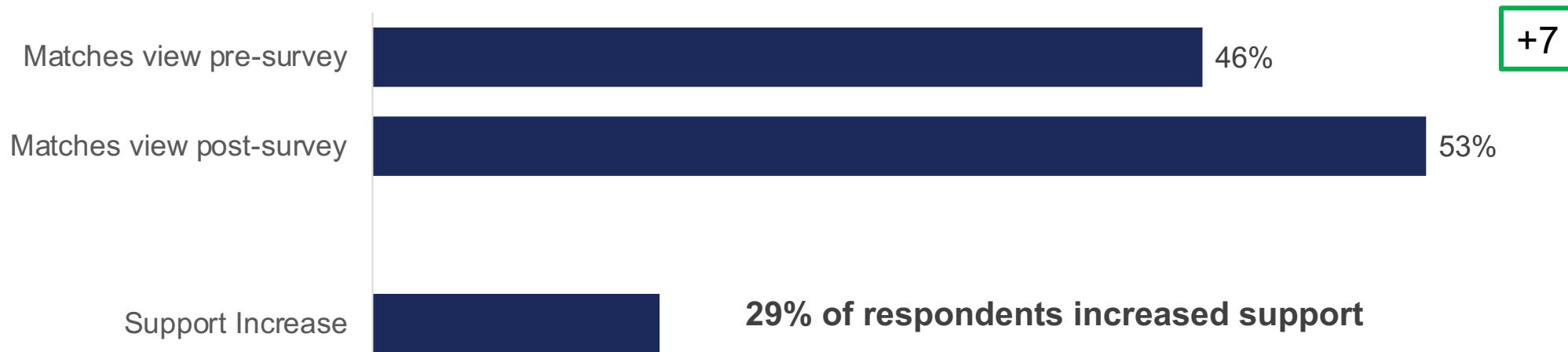
Q220/Q520. How well does the following statement match your personal view? We need to restore a robust civics education curriculum in our public schools.  
Showing % "Completely" or "Largely" matches my views.



# Support for restoring a robust civics education increased post-survey.

*We need to restore a robust civics education curriculum in our public schools.*

Change in Statement Support Post-Survey



**Top Segments that Increased Support Post-Survey:**

- 36% of those in a Transitional/Suburban Area
- 35% of those with income under \$50,000/year
- 33% of those Age 18-34
- 31% of Females
- 30% of Democrats

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=600)

Q220/Q520. [T2B] How well does the following statement match your personal view? We need to restore a robust civics education curriculum in our public schools.



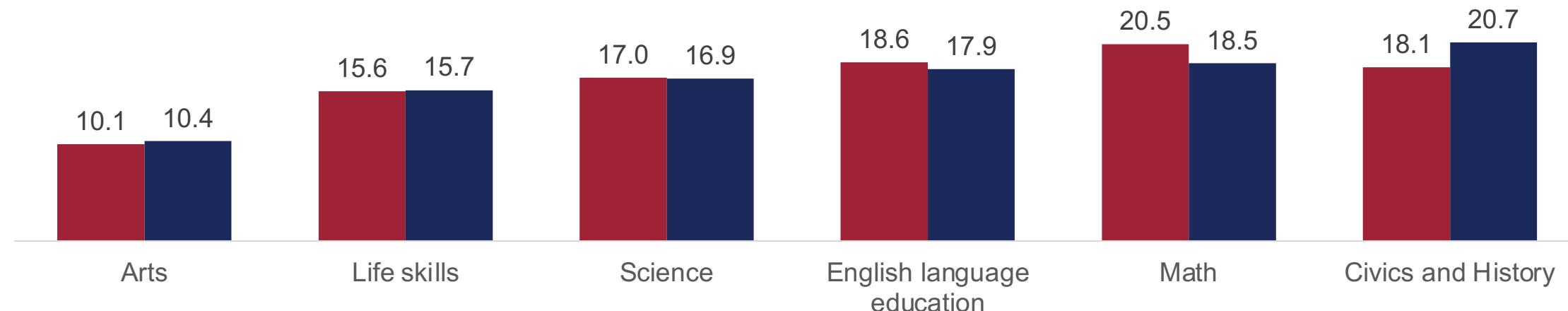
# Civics and History moved from being ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in importance pre-survey to top billing post-survey.

Relative Importance to a Students' Education

■ Pre-survey ■ Post-survey

Key Subgroup Pre/Post Change

Total	+0.3	+0.1	-0.1	-0.7	-2.0	+2.6
K-12 Parents	+0.1	+0.2	-0.1	-0.5	-1.5	+1.8
Past Parents	0	+0.2	0	-1.9	-1.9	+3.8
Females	0	+0.1	-0.3	-1.2	-2.6	+4.0
Gen Z	+1.0	+0.6	-0.5	-1.2	-3.6	+3.8
Non-white	+1.2	-0.6	-1.5	+0.6	-4.0	+4.3

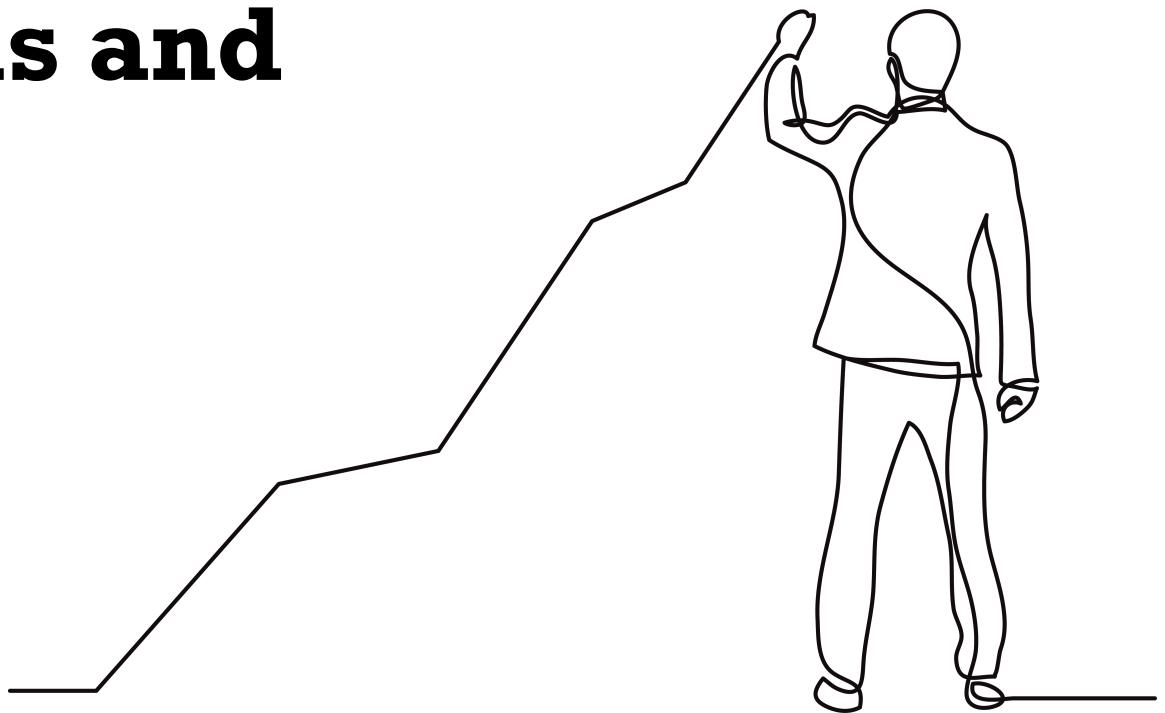


BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=600)

Q205 / Q515. Looking at the specific subjects that are covered in K-12 education, please allocate points to each to indicate how important you feel it is to a student's education and future life in our society.



# **State of Utah Schools and Curriculum**



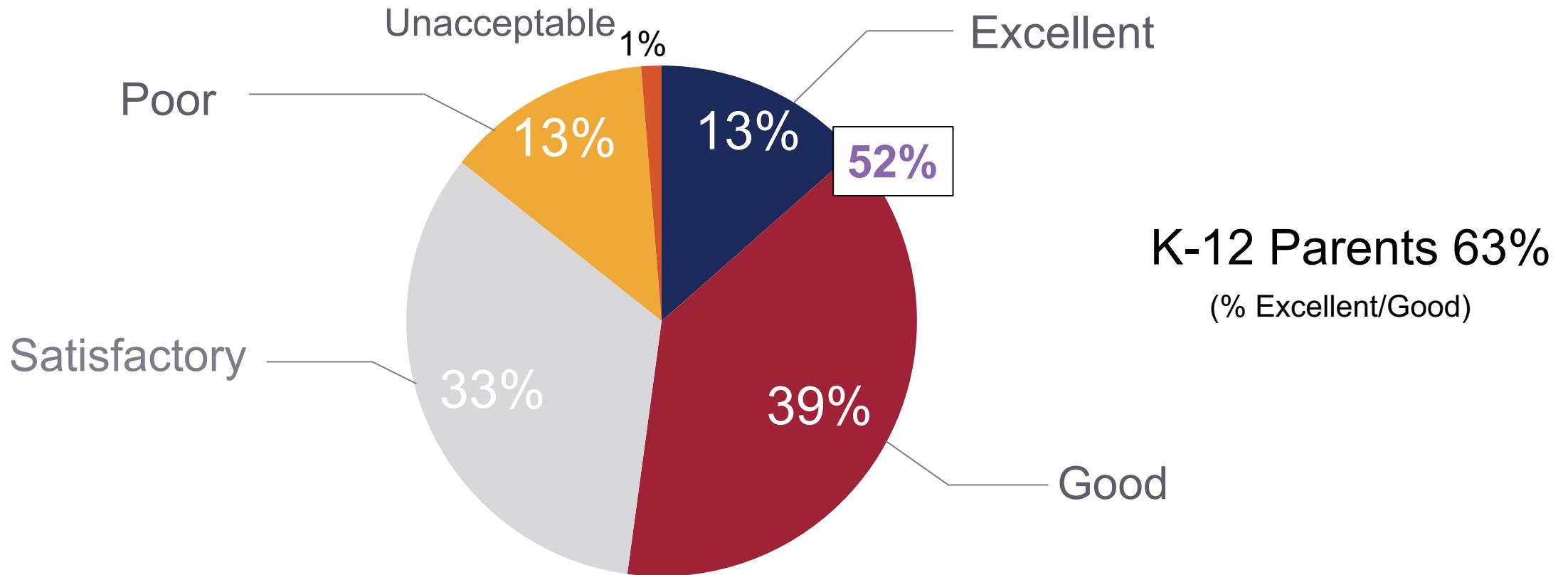
# State of Utah Schools and Curriculum Summary

- Half of Utahns, and nearly two-third of parents, give Utah schools high marks.
  - Just one-in-five say schools are poor.
- The people in Utah are generally satisfied with schools, including the teachers, curriculum and adaptations during COVID.
  - Parents are more positive than the public generally.
- While Civics is seen as a subject of key importance, Utahns say schools' performance on teaching it is below average.
  - Parents are slightly more positive on the performance of schools teaching Civics but still believe teaching of the subject is inferior to that of math, science and English.
  - It feels as though Civics is treated as an important subject, but not one of the most important subjects.



# About Half of Utahns rate schools Excellent/Good.

Perception of Utah Schools



BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=600)

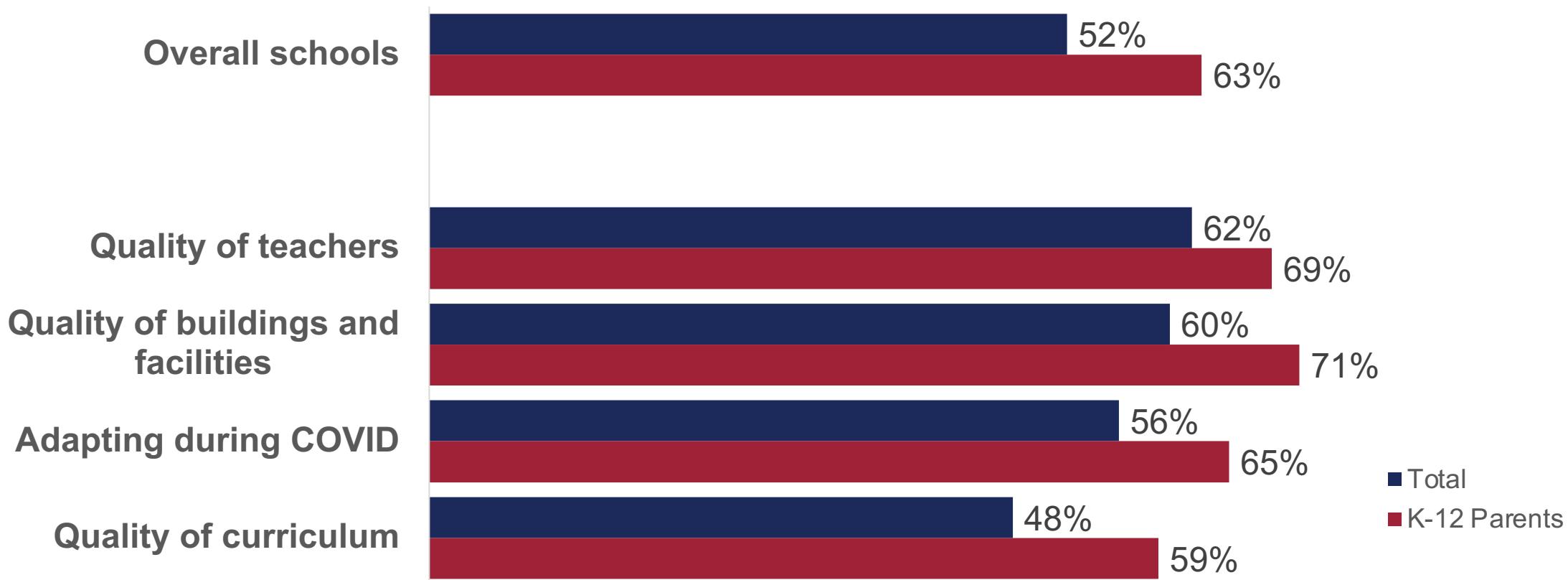
Q200. Thinking about the schools your child(ren) / the children in the state of Utah attend, which of the following best describe how you would rate our schools?



# **Quality of the teachers and facilities are rated high. Quality of the curriculum is pulling down the overall rating.**

Attitudes About K-12 Education in Utah

(% Excellent/Good)



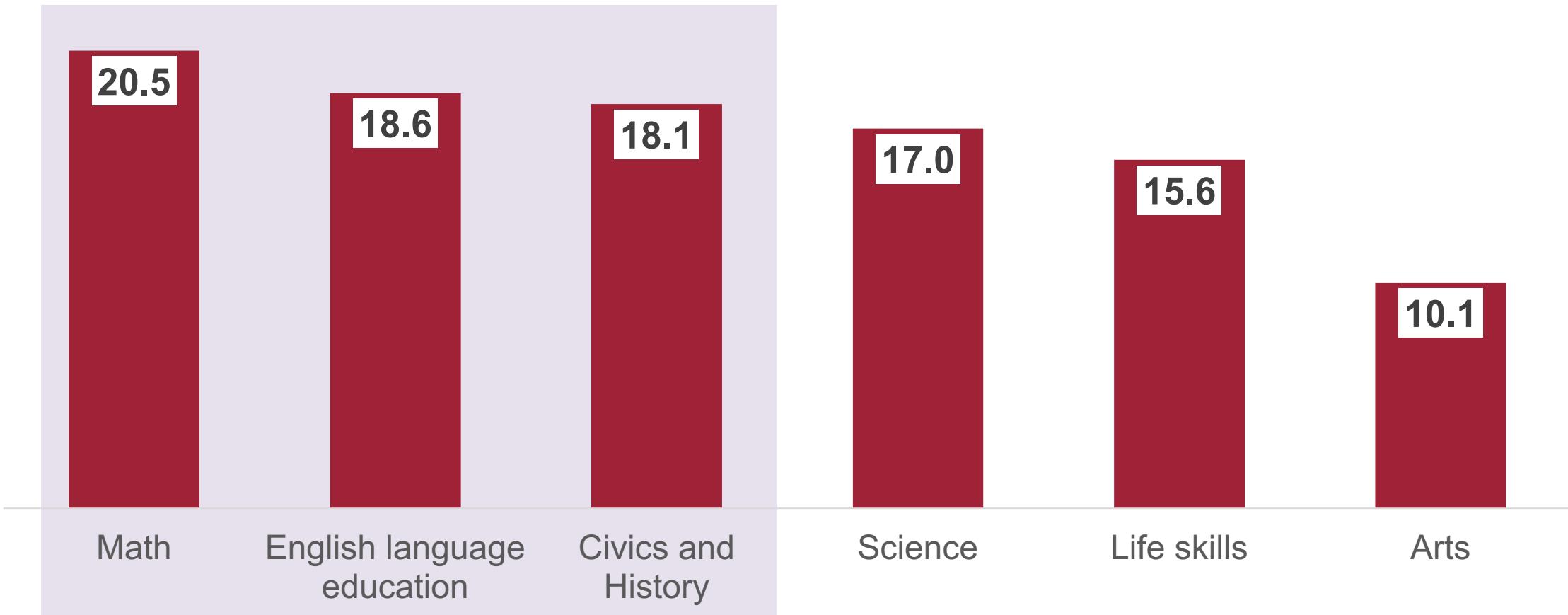
BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=600)

Q201. Using the same scale, please rate each of the following parts of K-12 education in the state:



# **Math, English and Civics are the top 3 priorities.**

Relative Importance to a Student's Education and Future Life in Society  
(If you had 100 points...give more points to those your feel are the most important)



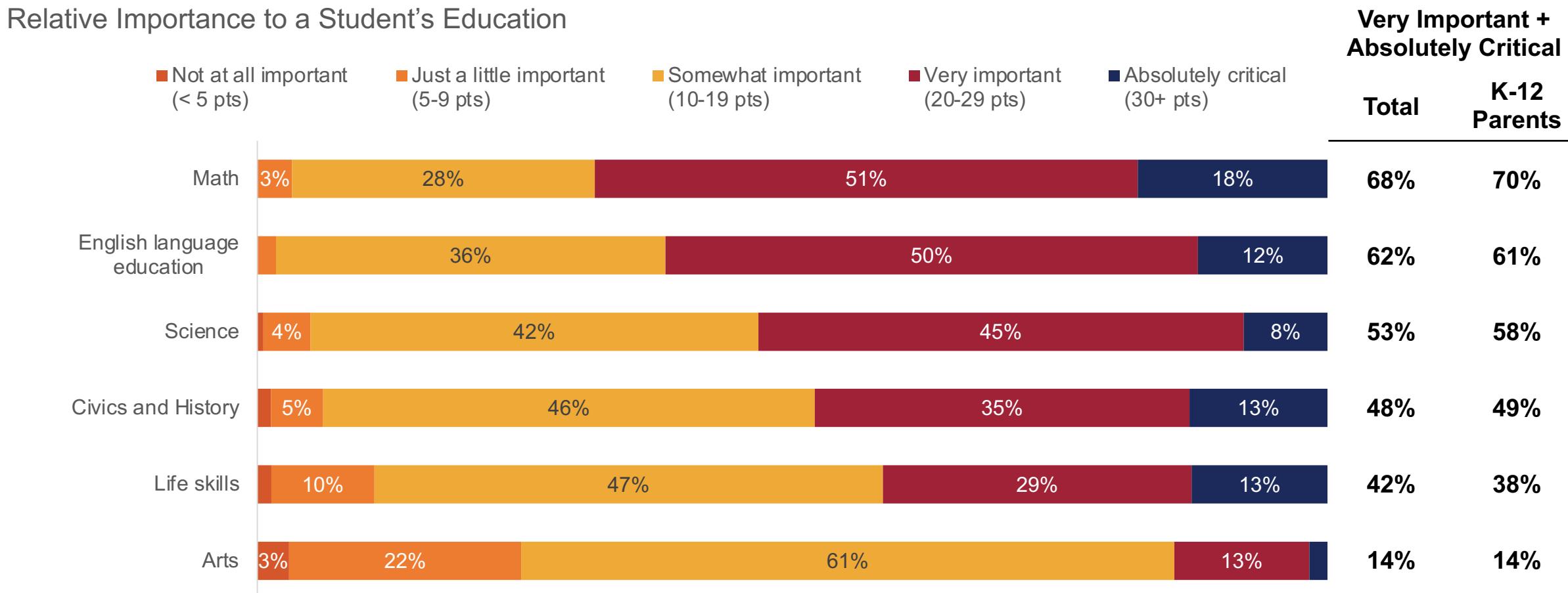
BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=600)

Q205. Looking at the specific subjects that are covered in K-12 education, please allocate points to each to indicate how important you feel it is to a student's education and future life in our society.



# About half view Civics and History as *very important* or *absolutely critical*.

Relative Importance to a Student's Education

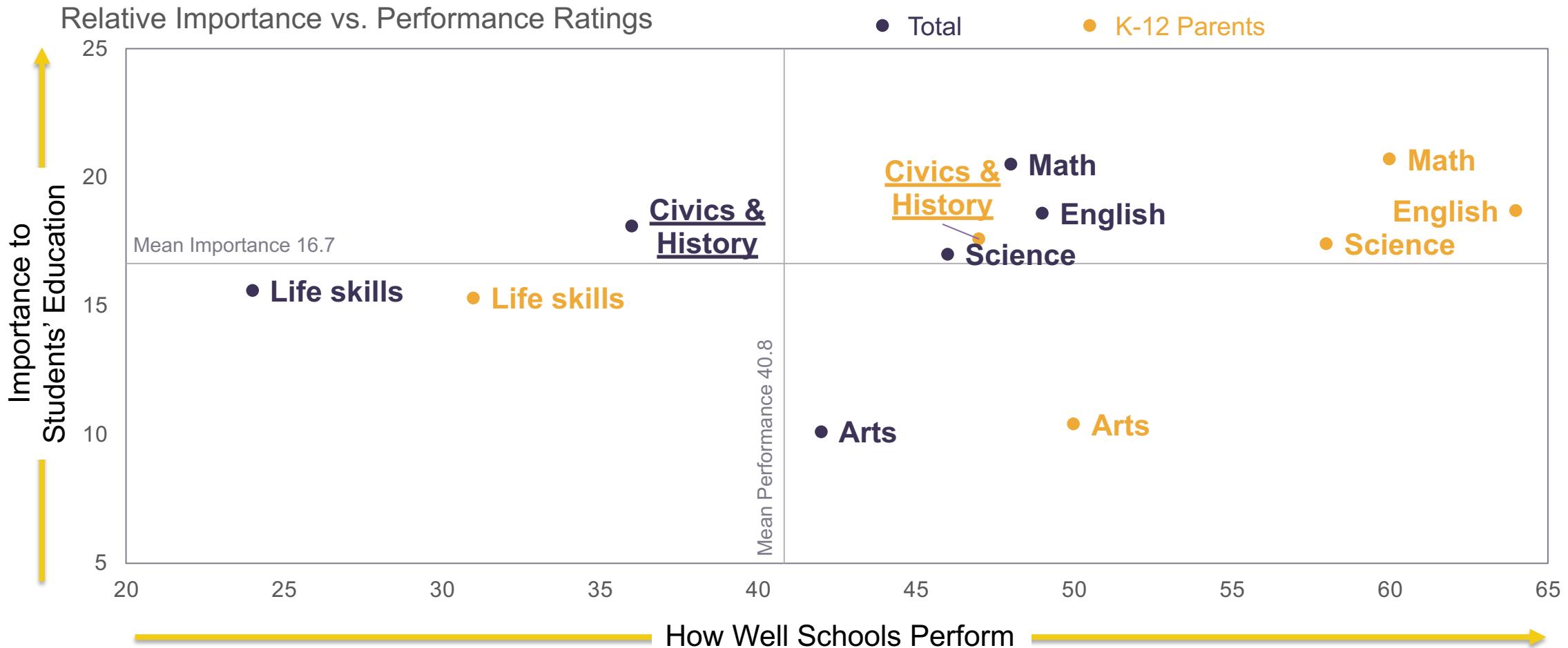


BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=600)

Q205. Looking at the specific subjects that are covered in K-12 education, please allocate points (totaling 100) to each to indicate how important you feel it is to a student's education and future life in our society. "Average" point allocation per subject is 16.67 points – ranges crafted based on that average.



# Civics is rated lower than Math and English on how well it is being taught.



BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=600)

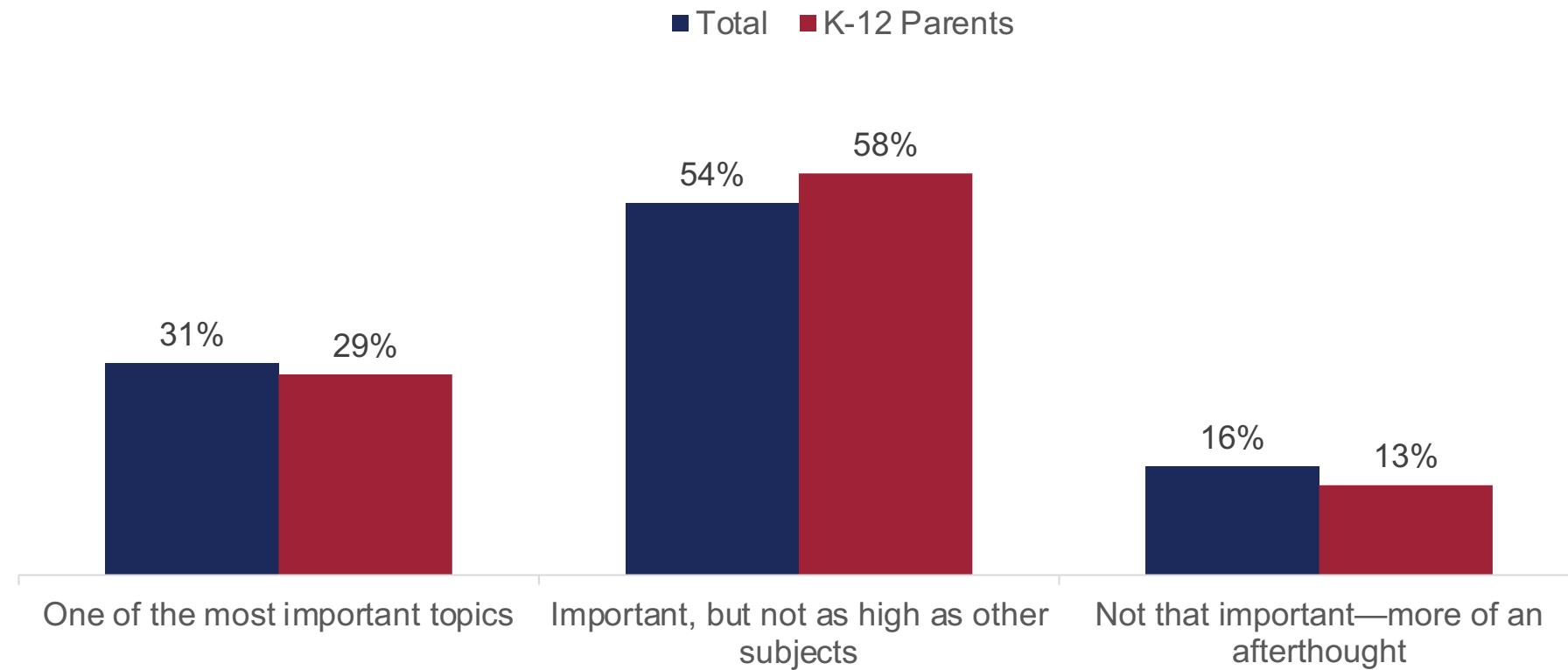
Q205. [MEANS] Looking at the specific subjects that are covered in K-12 education, please allocate points to each to indicate how important you feel it is to a student's education and future life in our society.

Pg. 20 Q206. [T2B] Now, based on what you've seen, heard, or personally experienced with Utah's public schools today, please rate how well you believe students are being taught the following subjects.



# Most believe schools do not place as high a priority on Civics as they do other subjects.

The Role and Importance Schools Place on Civics

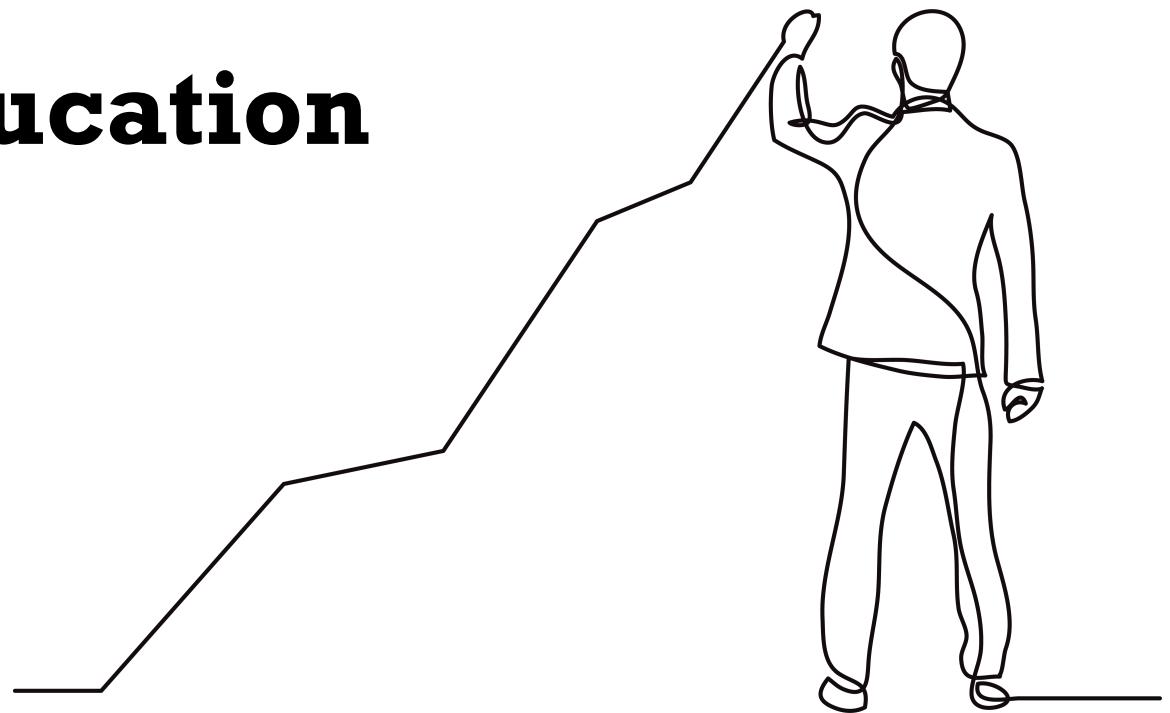


BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=600)

Q221. Which of the following do you believe best describes the role and importance schools place on civics education today?



# Framing Civics Education



# Framing Civics Education Summary

- Concerns around Civics education center on needing more and better education in this area.
  - Utahns also want to see Civics lessons that are more relevant to students and help develop lifelong skills.
- Giving students an understanding of laws and individual rights should be the key focus of Civics education followed by responsibilities and expectations of citizens, tolerance for other, historical context of government and the powers and limits of government.
  - Activism comes at the very bottom of the list of things that are important to cover in Civics Education.



# **Concerns about quality of Civics and History Education...**

Many different reasons:

- Need more / Done better (general comments)

*“It’s the lack of. There could be a lot more done to teach civics and history in public schools.”*

*“In my experience this topic is usually put on the back burner in public schools”*

***“I think civics education is lackluster and incomplete.”***

BASE: RATED CIVICS AND HISTORY < 5 - EXCELLENT (n=600)

Q207. You rated Civics and History as [INSERT RESPONSE FROM Q206] when you could have given it a higher rating. What are you seeing or hearing that concerns you about the quality of Civics and History education in public schools? What do you wish they would do more of or change?



# **Concerns about quality of Civics and History Education...**

Many different reasons:

- Need more / Done better (general comments)
- Needs to made more personally relevant to students
- Need to teach the truth whether good or bad / Don't whitewash

*“Tell my children the whole story, not just partial truth. Columbus, for example, did way more good than bad.”*

*“Don’t try to change the facts. Teach the bad as well as the good.”*

BASE: RATED CIVICS AND HISTORY < 5 - EXCELLENT (n=600)

Q207. You rated Civics and History as [INSERT RESPONSE FROM Q206] when you could have given it a higher rating. What are you seeing or hearing that concerns you about the quality of Civics and History education in public schools? What do you wish they would do more of or change?



# Concerns about quality of Civics and History Education...

Many different reasons:

- Need more / Done better (general comments)
- Needs to made more personally relevant to students
- Need to teach the truth whether good or bad / Don't whitewash
- More about how government/constitution works
- Too politically correct/revisionist
- Biased (religious, liberal, conservative, teachers)
- Learn lessons from history (so as not to repeat...)
- Learn more personal responsibilities as citizen
- More diversity/cultures needed
- Outdated
- Smaller classes

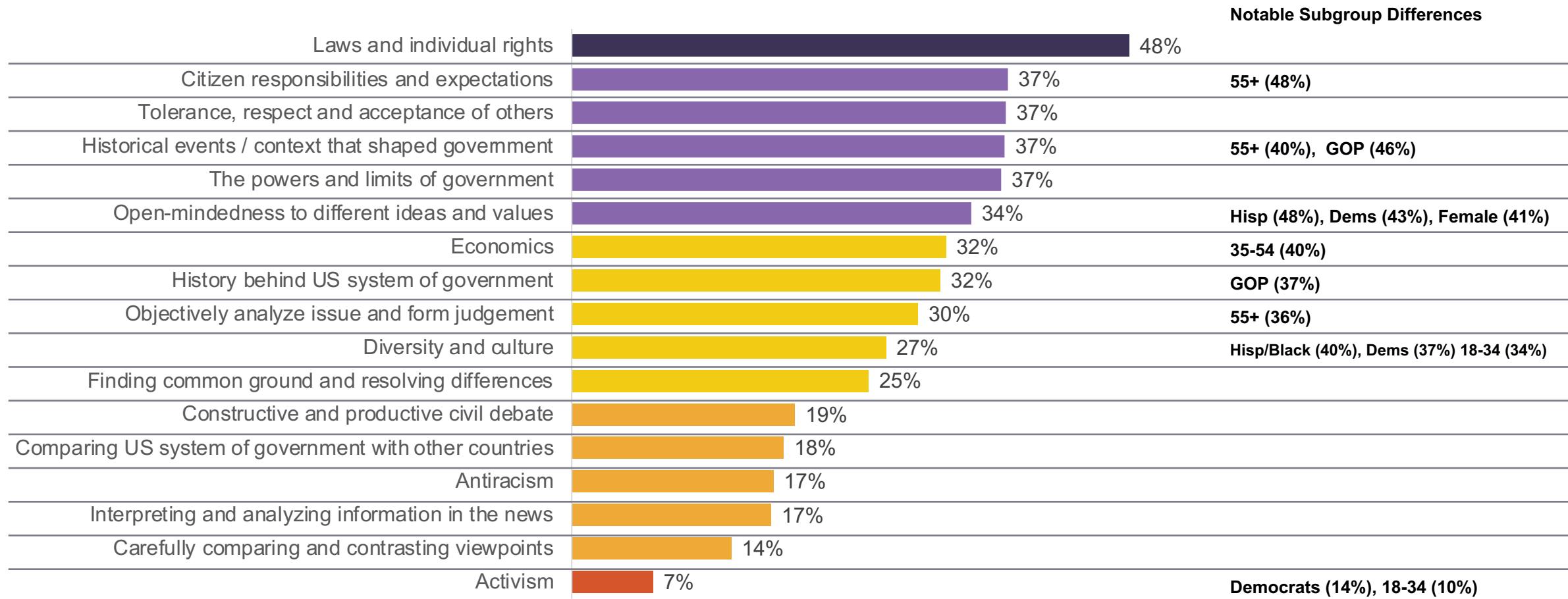
BASE: RATED CIVICS AND HISTORY < 5 - EXCELLENT (n=600)

Q207. You rated Civics and History as [INSERT RESPONSE FROM Q206] when you could have given it a higher rating. What are you seeing or hearing that concerns you about the quality of Civics and History education in public schools? What do you wish they would do more of or change?



# Laws and individual rights should be the focus of civics education, not activism.

## Most Important Topics for Civics to Cover



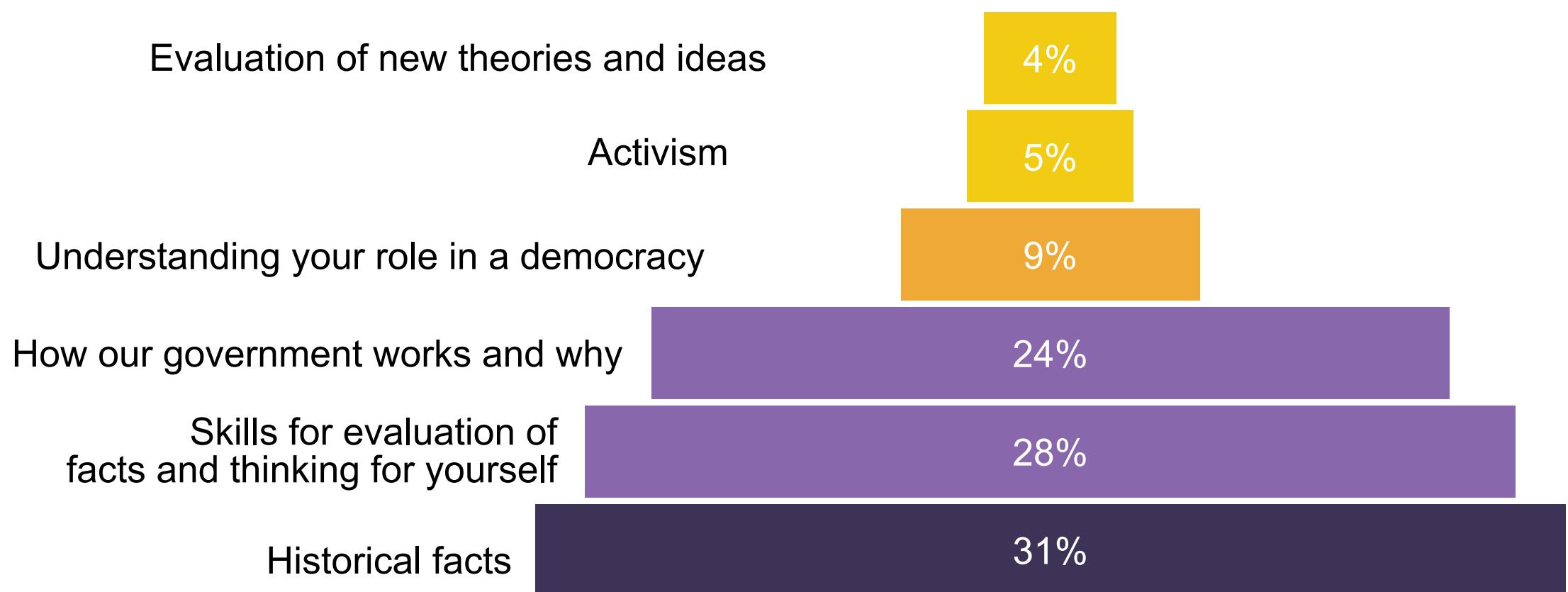
BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=600)

Q300. Civics education can include many topics. Which of the following do you feel are most important for civics education to cover? Please choose up to 5 options.



# Sequence priority of Civics curriculum

(% Ranked 1<sup>st</sup>)

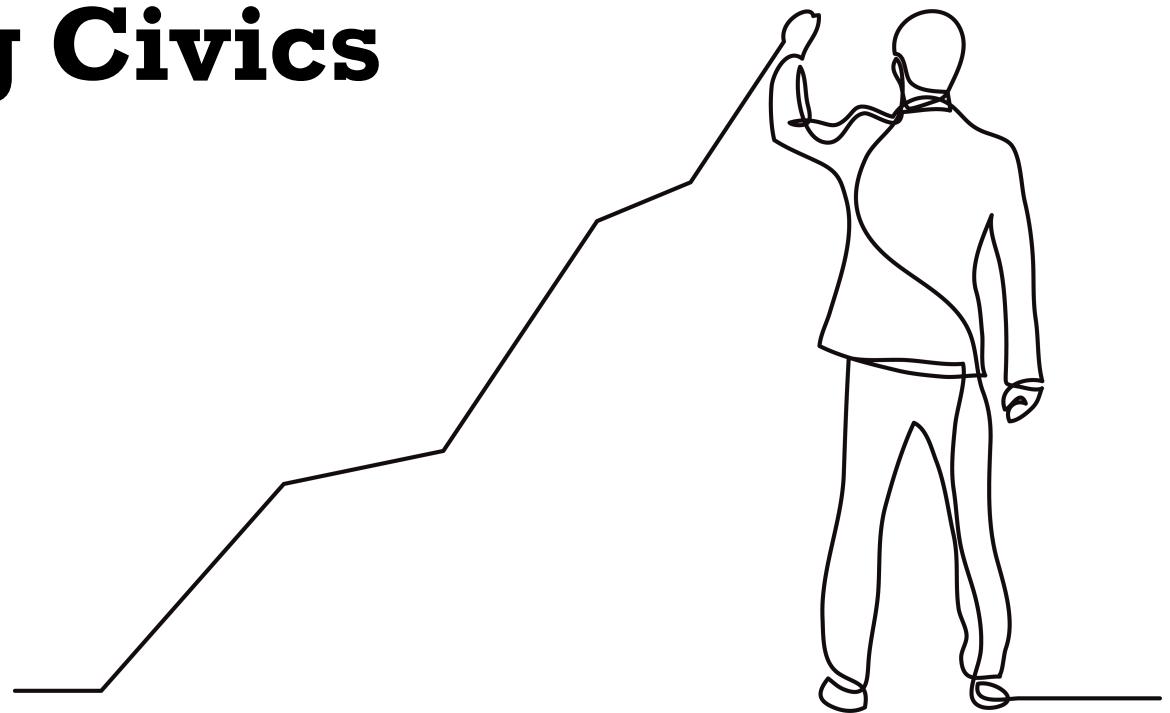


BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=600)

Q310. Many subjects taught in school have a sequence or an order in which they are taught to build higher level skills on foundational skills. Please put the following broad topics in the order you think is best to effectively teach a complete and accurate civics curriculum.



# **Outcomes of Strong Civics Education**



# **Outcomes of a Strong Civics Education**

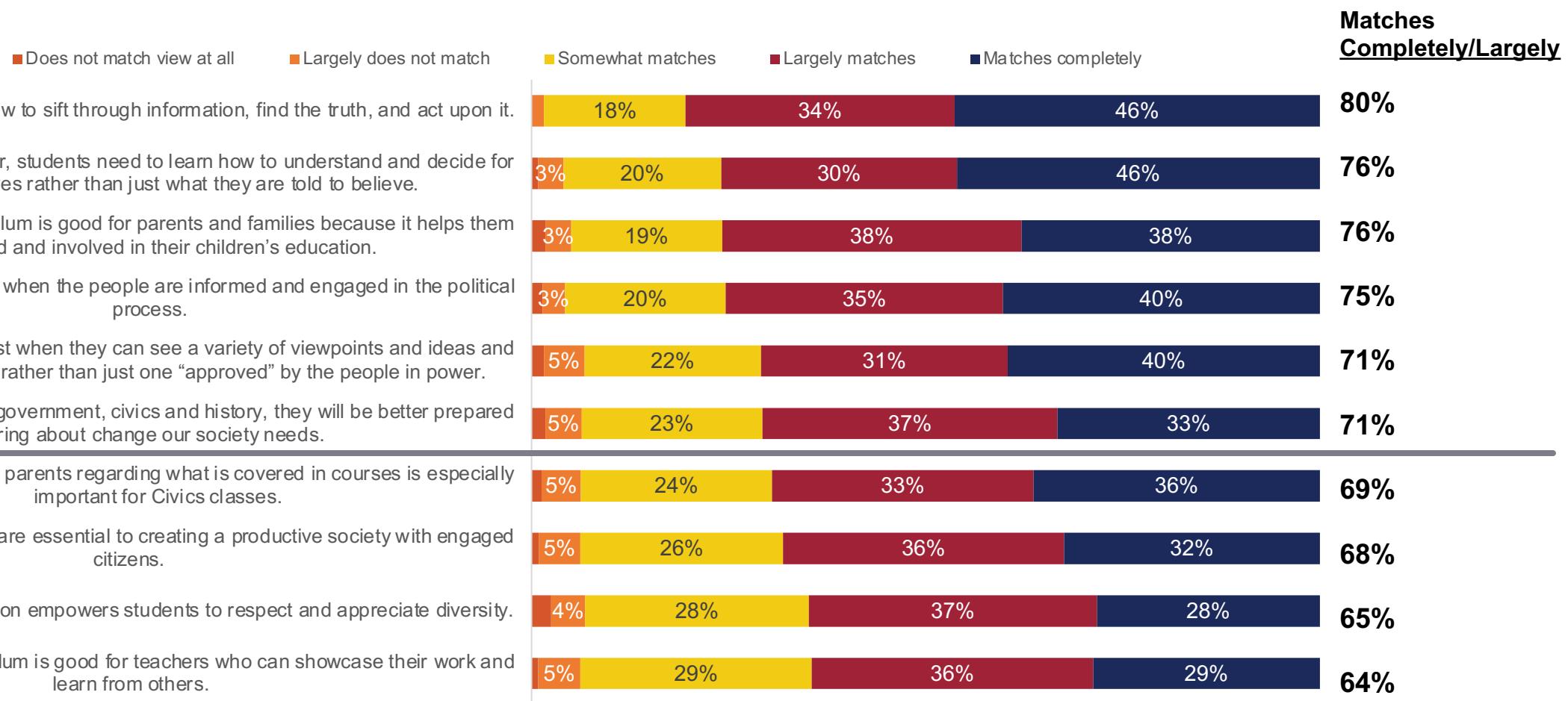
## **Summary**

- By following the noted priorities within Civics education, Utahns believe that students will have the ability to sift through information to find the truth and learn to think for themselves.
  - These outcomes are seen as more likely to occur if teachers are given flexibility in how they teach but not in what they teach. Over half want state guidelines on Civics curriculum provided to teachers.
- Over four-in-ten believe that the lack of a strong Civics education has led to civil unrest, fueling misperceptions on how democracy, and specifically our democratic system works.



# The top priorities for civics education include teaching students to sift through information and decide for themselves what to believe.

## Top 10 Views



BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=600)

Q500. How well does each of the following statements match your personal view?

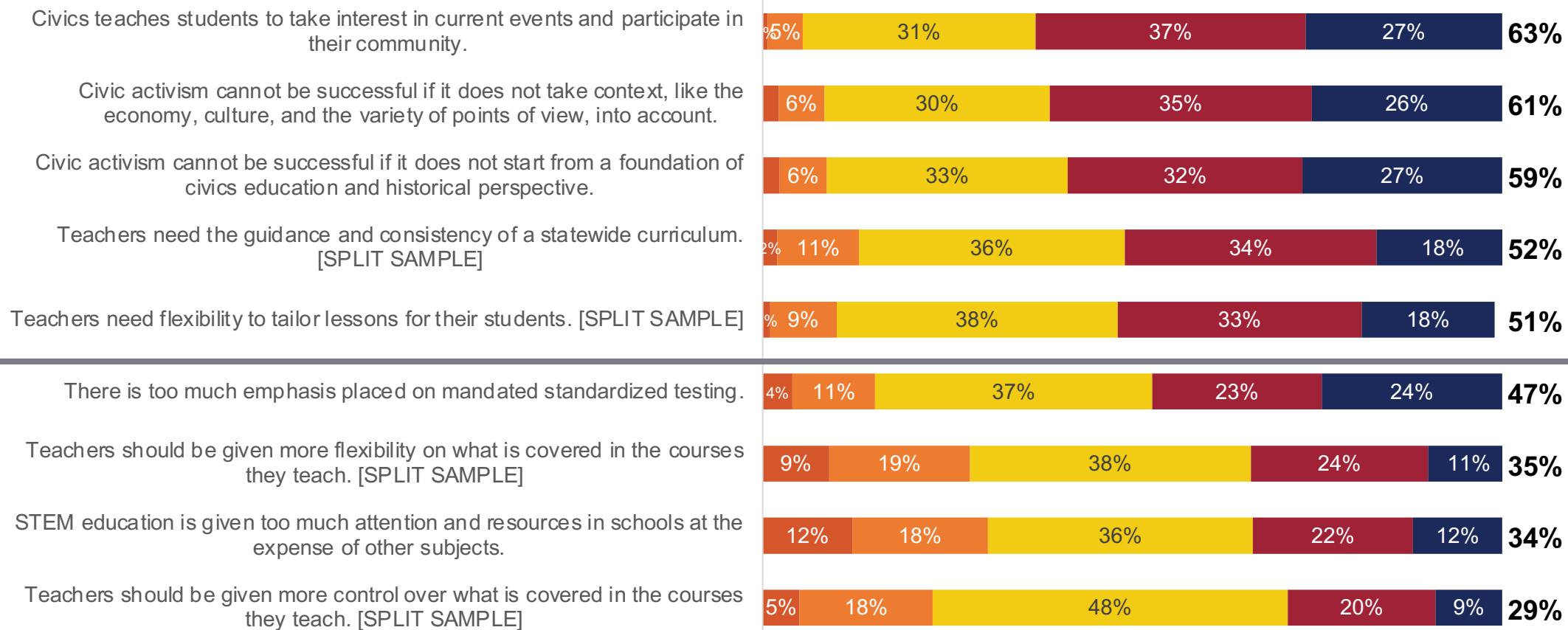


# Support is lower for giving teachers more control or flexibility on what is covered.

## Bottom 9 Views

■ Does not match view at all   ■ Largely does not match   ■ Somewhat matches   ■ Largely matches   ■ Matches completely

**Matches Completely/Largely**

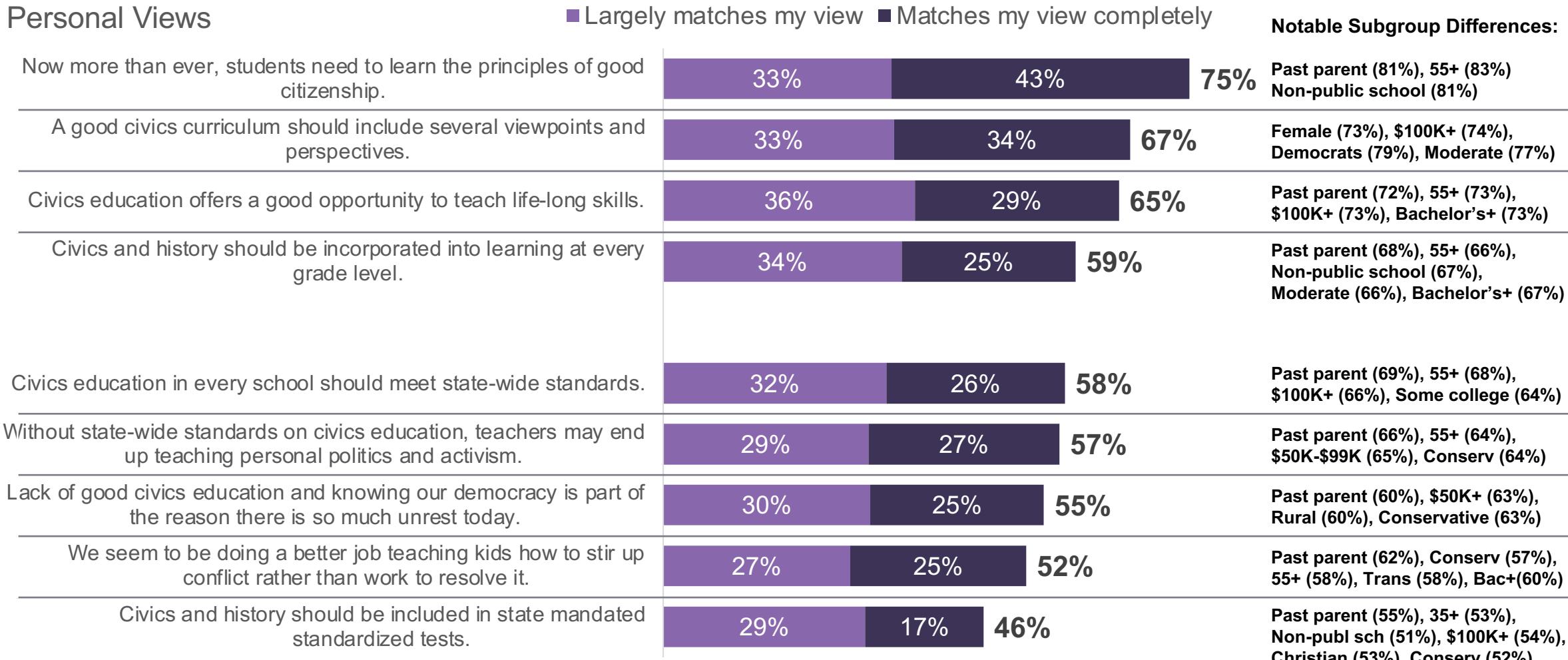


BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=600)

Q500. How well does each of the following statements match your personal view?



# The vast majority feel that students need to learn the principles of good citizenship now more than ever.



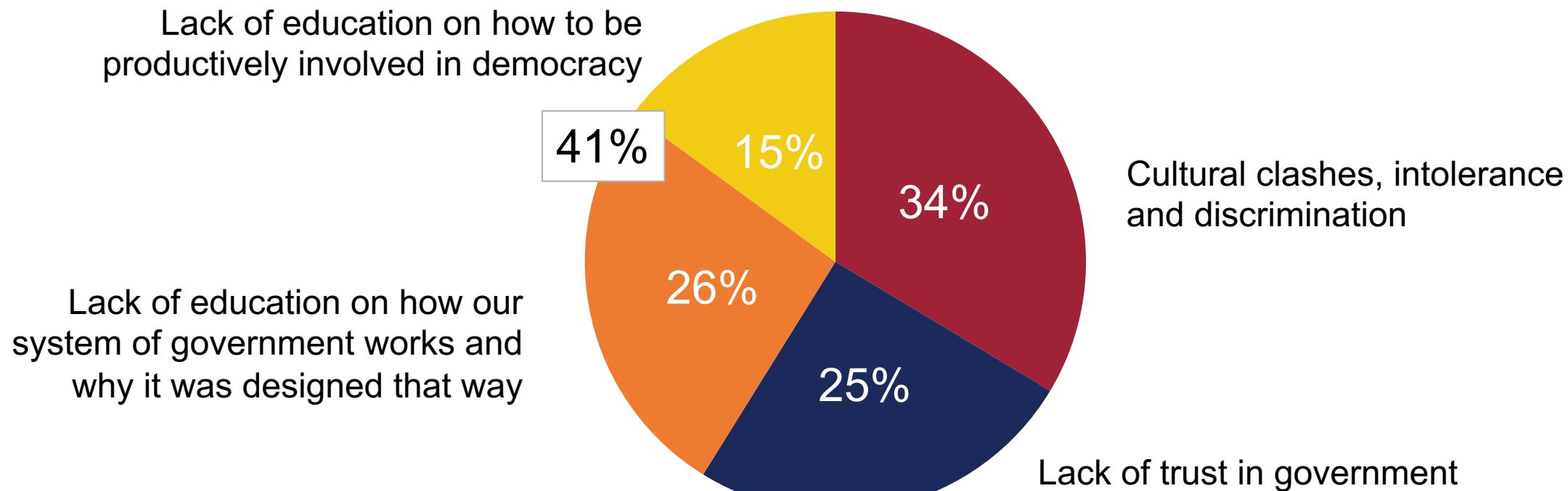
BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=600)

Q320. How well does each of the following statements match your personal view?



# Four in ten believe the unrest is driven by lack of education on how government works and how to be involved.

## Biggest Cause of Civil and Political Unrest

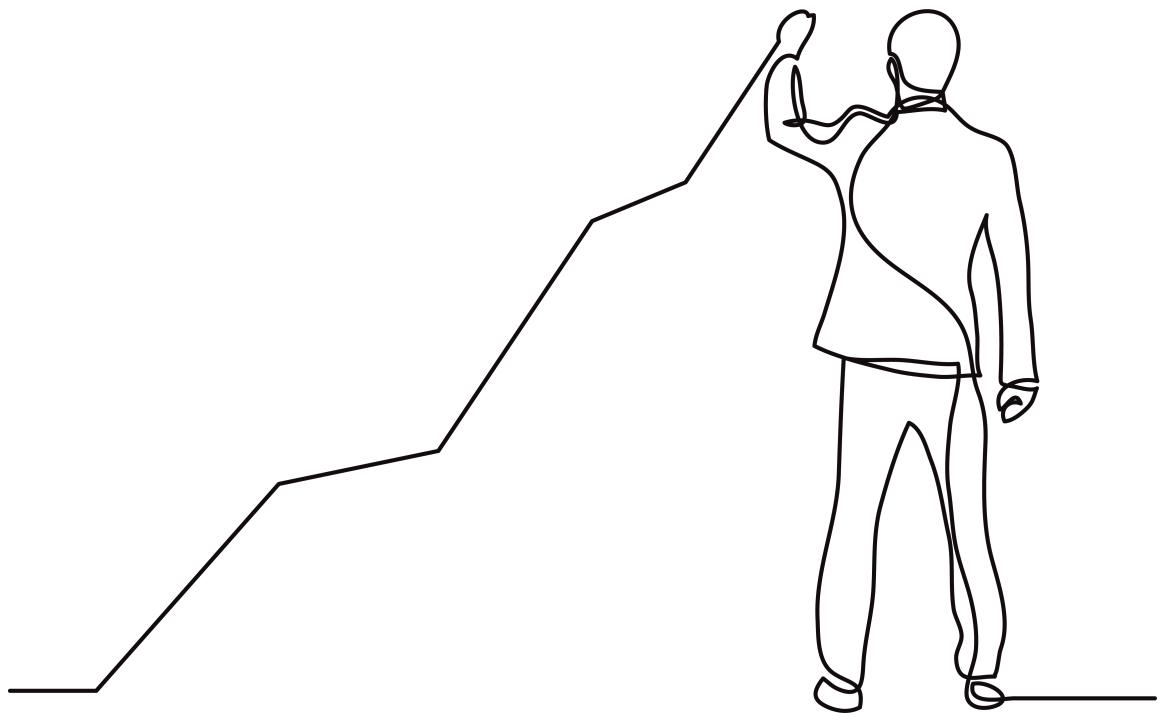


BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=600)

Q335. [RANK 1 = STRONGEST CAUSE] Please rank the following according to how strongly you feel they are causing civil and political unrest in our society, with 1 being the strongest cause and 4 being the weakest cause.



# **Reforming Civics Education**



# Reforming Civics Education Summary

- As we look to reform Civics education, testing has a role but is seen as less critical than transparency for parents with students in the educational system.
  - In terms of evaluation of skills, Utahns prefer participations in capstone activities or programs to standardized testing or individual work portfolios.
- Majorities support a variety of reforms including requiring a full year of Civics in high school and establishing a formal curriculum for grades K-6.



# **Standardized Testing Important.**

# **Transparency to General Public Very Important.**

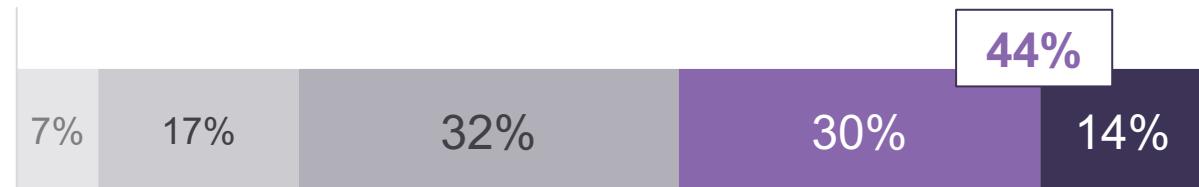
# **Transparency to Parents Critical.**

Importance to K-12 Education

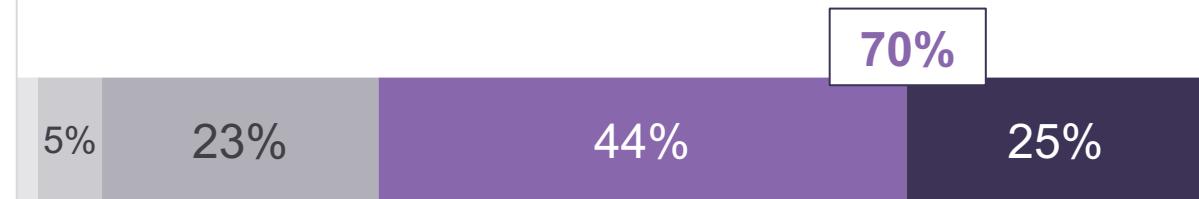
Parents and general public find these equally important.

■ Not at all important ■ Just a little important ■ Somewhat important ■ Very important ■ Absolutely critical

Having state-wide standardized testing in place



Providing transparency to the general public regarding what is being covered in courses



Providing transparency to parents regarding what is being covered in courses



BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=600)

Q215. Please rate how important you feel each of the following are when it comes to K-12 education.



# Most support each of these steps to revise the civics curriculum in Utah.

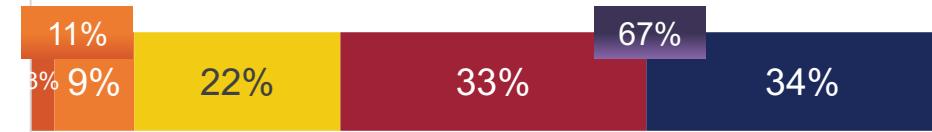
## Revised Civics Curriculum Support and Opposition

■ Completely oppose   ■ Somewhat oppose   ■ Neither support nor oppose   ■ Somewhat support   ■ Completely support

Offering action civics projects like assignments that have students engage in real-life political proceedings



Requiring a full year of a civics course in high school, where currently only one semester is required



Creating civics education standards for grades K-6, where there currently are no statewide standards



Curating and rating existing online civics curriculum for parents and teachers



**Somewhat + Completely Support**  
**Notable Subgroup Differences**

Past parents 77%  
55+ 74%

Democrats 77%  
Liberal 76%

Some college 75%

Past parents 73%  
Democrats 78%

Past parents 69%  
Females 68%  
55+ 69%  
\$50K+ 72%

Past parents 67%  
55+ 69%  
Some college 64%  
\$100K+ 63%

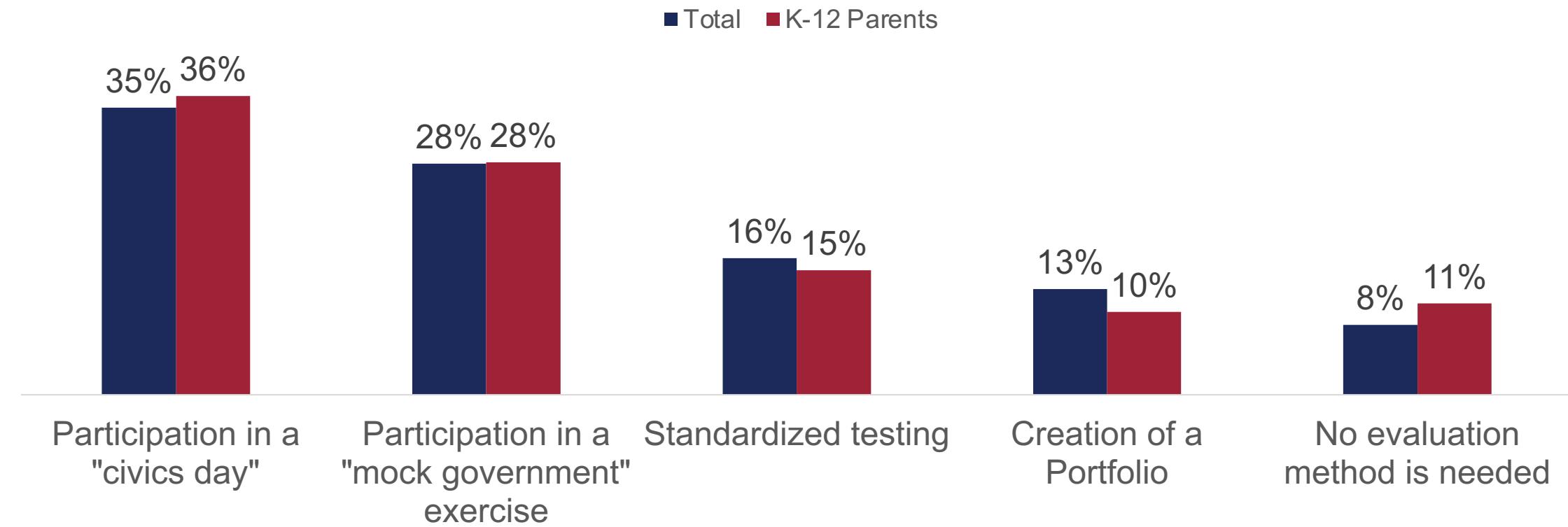
BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=600)

Q400. You will now see a list of possible pieces of a revised civics curriculum in Utah. Indicate how much you support or oppose each one.



# Participation in a “civics day” and “mock government” exercises are strongly favored over standardized testing.

Preferred Method of Ensuring Students Meet Standards

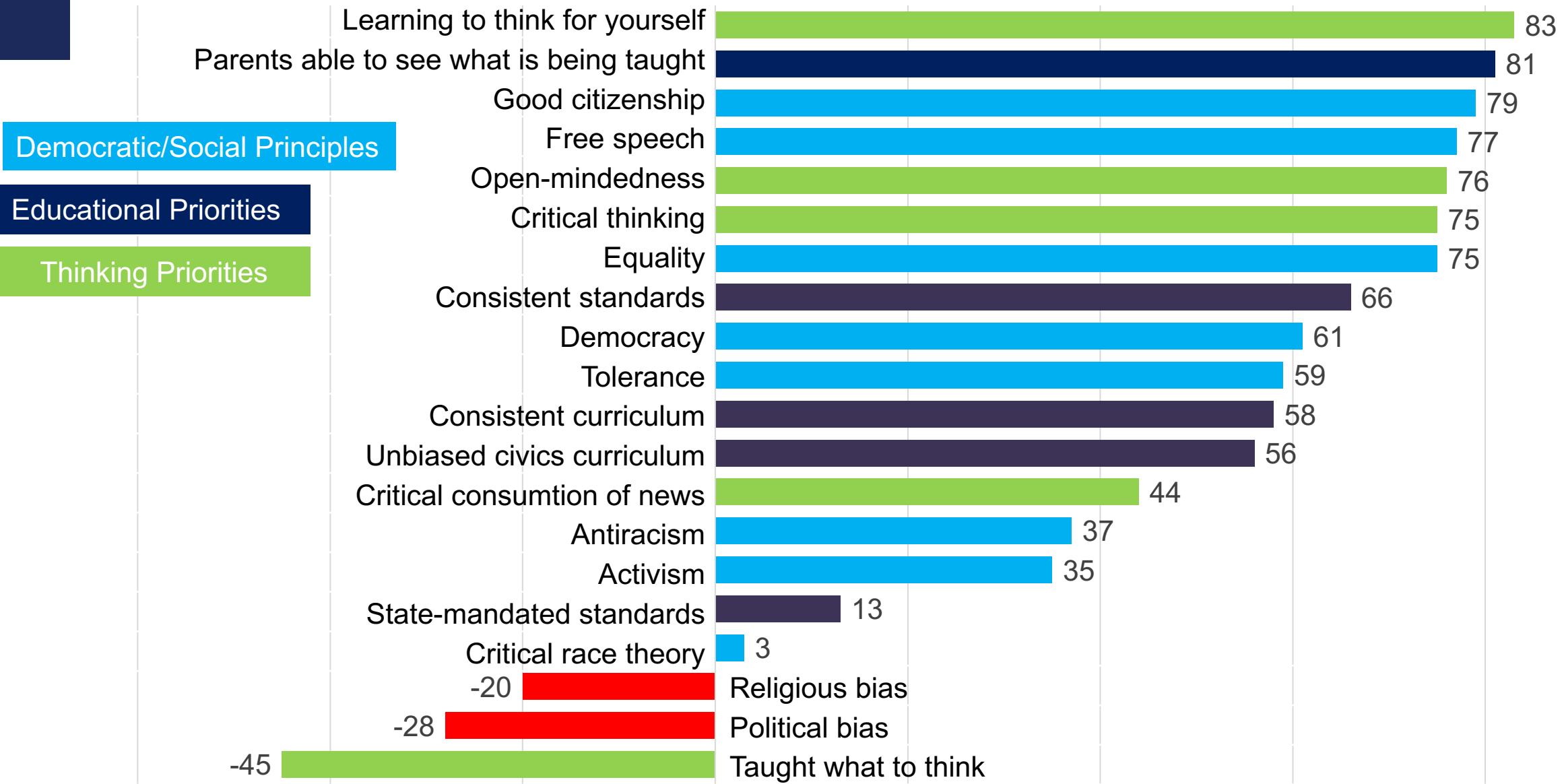


BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=600)

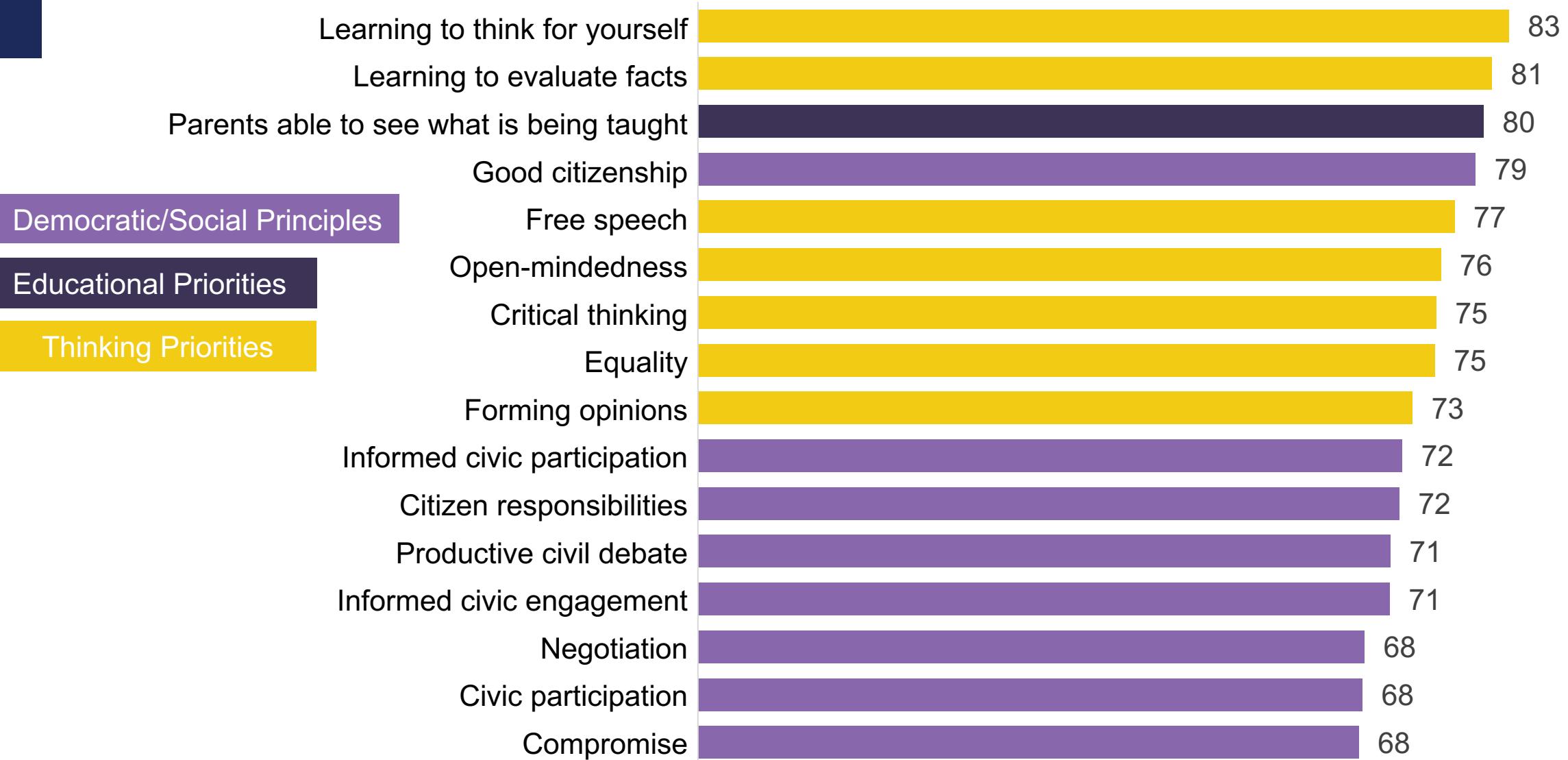
Q490. If Utah did adopt a statewide standard for civics, which of the following would be your preferred method of ensuring students meet the standards set?



# Concept Perceptual Equity



# Concept Perceptual Equity: Top 16

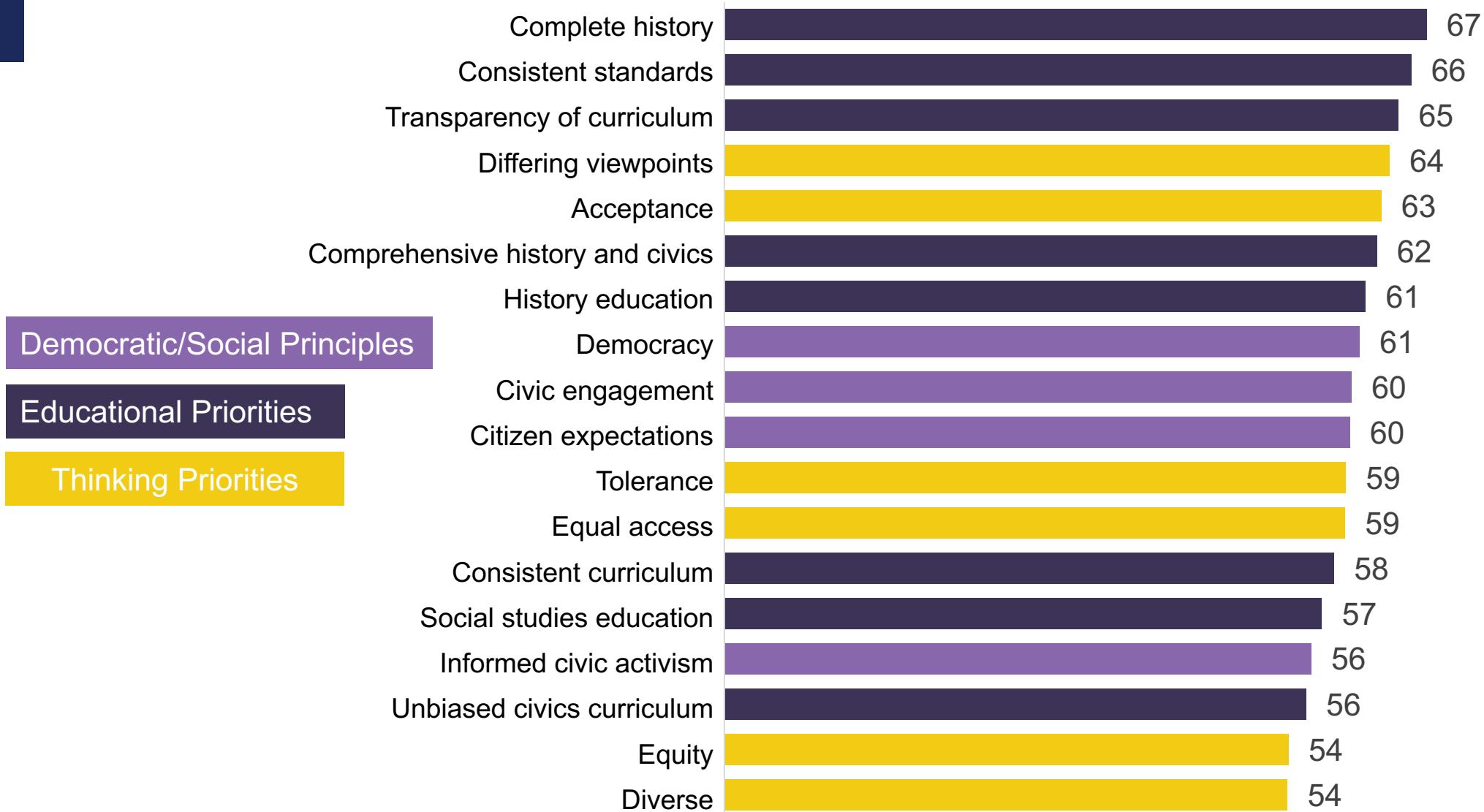


BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS SHOWN RANDOM 25 ITEMS (n=from 200 to 301)

Q505. There are many different words and phrases used when talking about civics education. For each of the following words or phrases, please indicate if you have a positive, negative, or neutral feeling.



# Concept Perceptual Equity: Middle 18

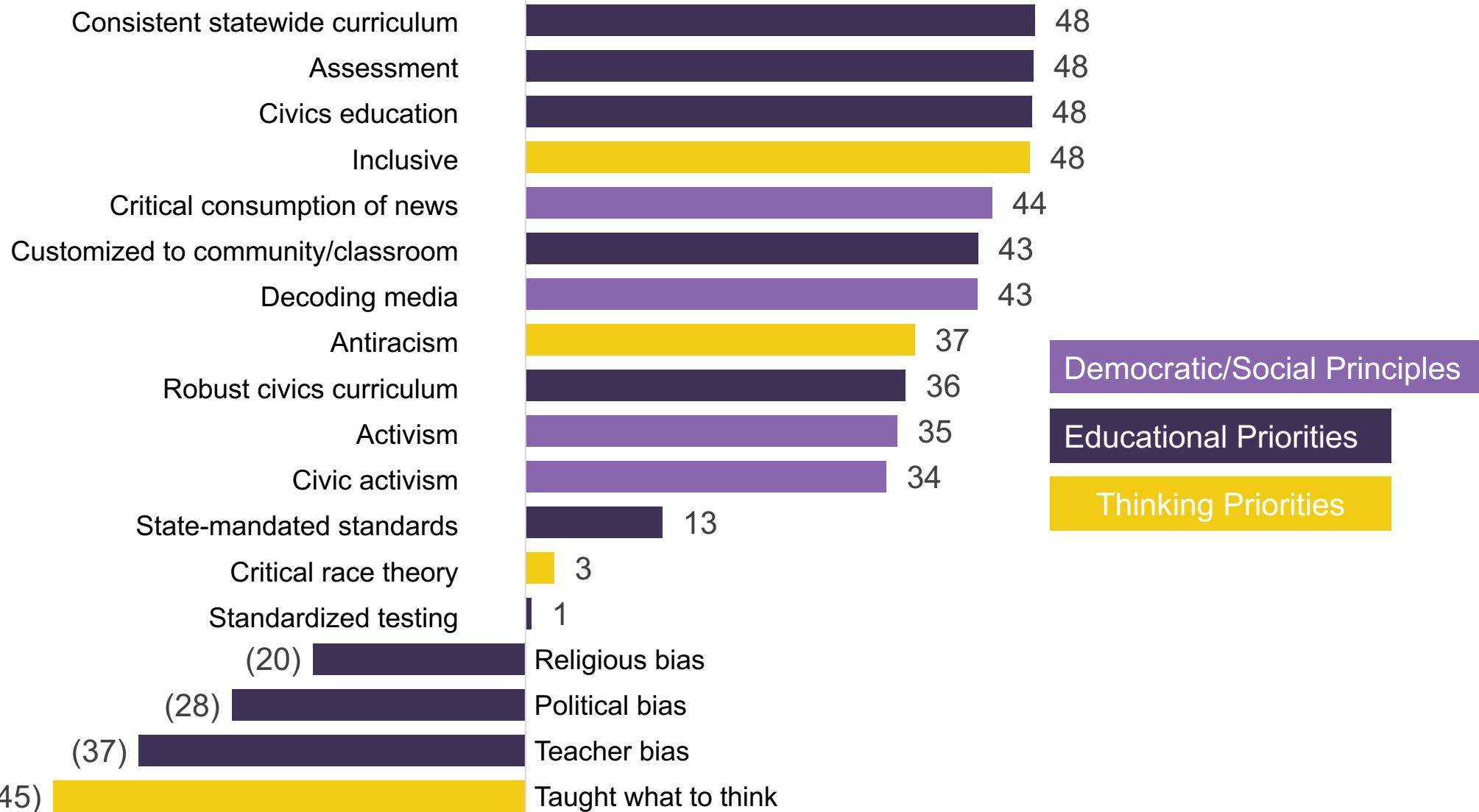


BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS SHOWN RANDOM 25 ITEMS (n=from 200 to 301)

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# Concept Perceptual Equity: Bottom 18

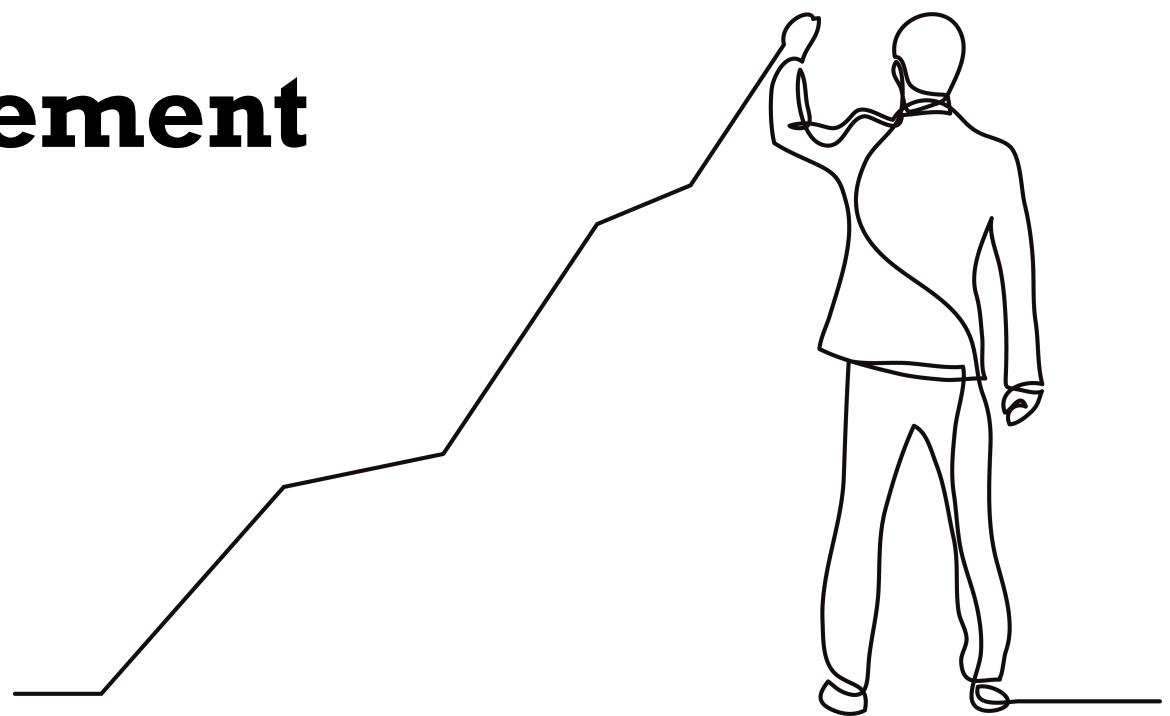


BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS SHOWN RANDOM 25 ITEMS (n=from 200 to 301)

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# **Community Involvement**



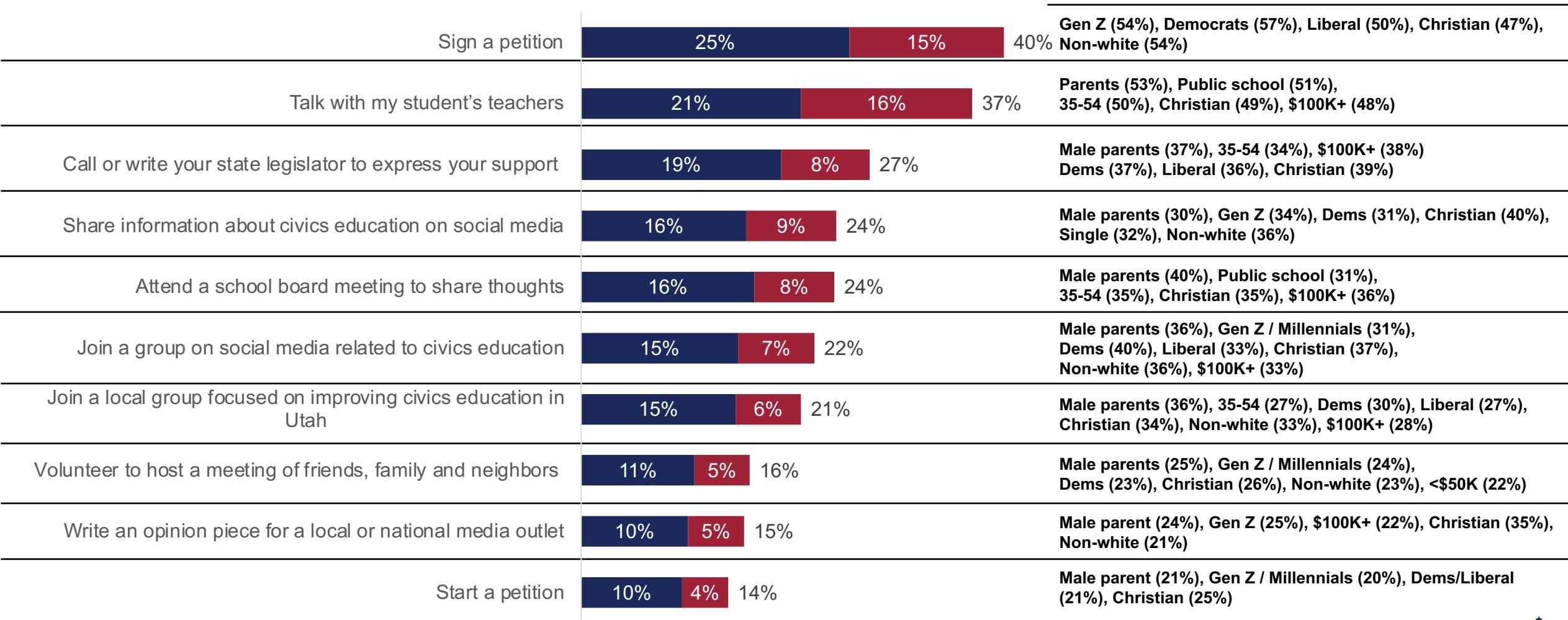
# Community Involvement Summary

- Although most Utahns support reforms and a change in the focus of Civics education, fewer than half are likely to take action.
  - Four-in-ten would sign a petition.
  - One-quarter would contact their representatives.
  - Parents, particularly men, are more likely to get involved in change.
- Half of parents are very/extremely likely to look up a specific curriculum being taught at the local school.



# Although many are likely to sign a petition, few will actually start one.

Likelihood to Take Action on Civics Education ■ I probably will ■ I definitely will



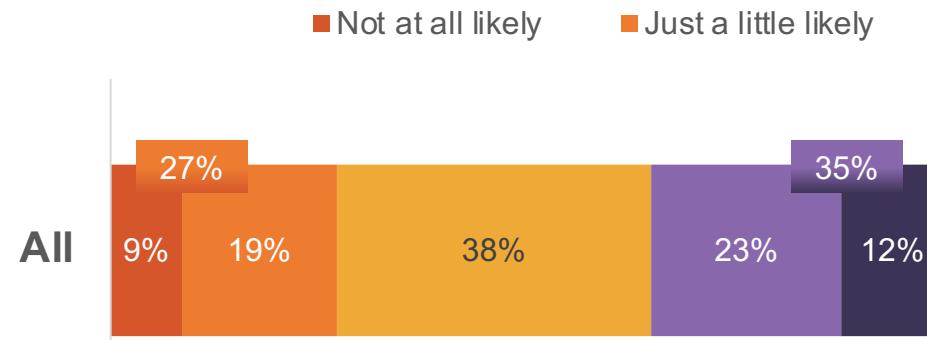
BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=600)

Q510. In the next 12 months, how likely are you to take each of the following actions with regards to improving civics education in Utah K-12 public schools?

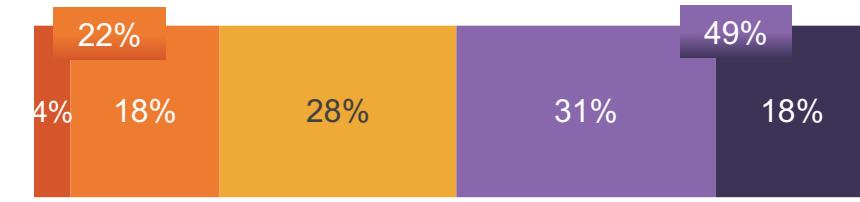
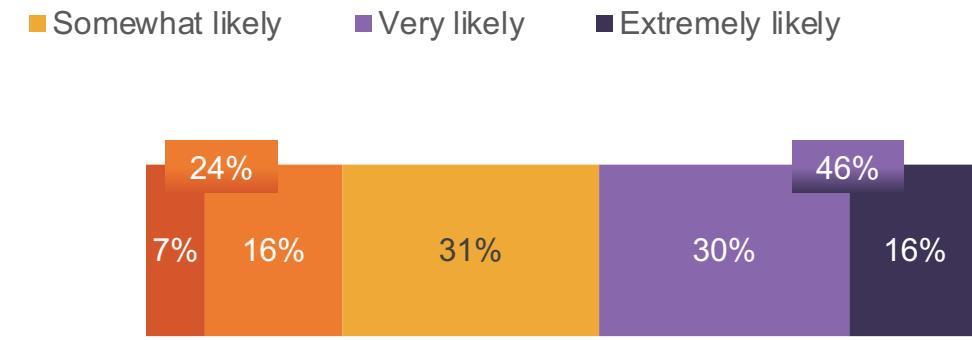


# Nearly half say they would be very likely to use a website to look up a curriculum being taught in a local school.

Read up on different curricula available for Utah teachers.



Look up a specific curriculum being taught in a local school.

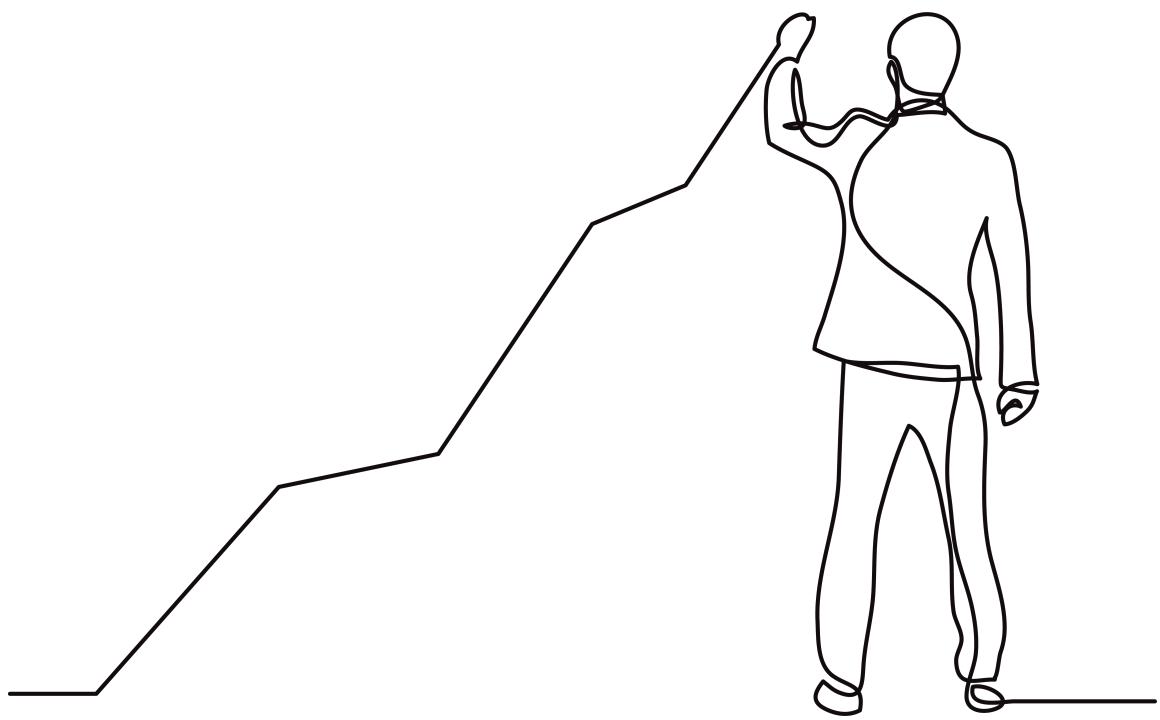


BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=600)

Q315. If there were a website available that reviews and compares different civics education curriculum, how likely would you be to use it for each of the following?



# Appendix



# Demographic Data

		<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>
Gender	Male	50%	Education	HS or less	22%	Religious Family
	Female	50%		Some College	35%	Mormon
Age	18-34	37%		Bachelor's+	41%	Christian – Not Mormon
	35-54	34%		Prefer not to answer	2%	Other
	55+	29%	Income	Less than \$50K	41%	Unaffiliated/Not Religious
Region	Urban	75%		\$50K to Less than \$100K	36%	Prefer not to answer
	Transitional	18%		\$100K or More	18%	
	Rural	7%		Prefer not to answer	5%	
Ethnicity	White	78%	Employment	Employed full-time	40%	Political Party
	Hispanic	14%		Employed part-time	15%	Strong Republican
	Black	2%		Retired	16%	Not-so-strong Republican
	Asian	3%		Unemployed	9%	Strong Democrat
	Other	4%		Student	5%	Not-so-strong Democrat
Children in HH	No Children	43%		Stay-at-home parent	11%	Independent, Lean Dem
	1-4 Children	53%		Other	4%	Independent, Lean GOP
	5+ Children	4%	Marital Status	Married/Living with partner	66%	Independent, No Lean
Parents	Current K-12 Parent	50%		Single, never married	20%	Other
	Past K-12 Parent	23%		Divorced/Separated/Widowed	14%	Not Sure/Decline
	Non-Parent	26%				

