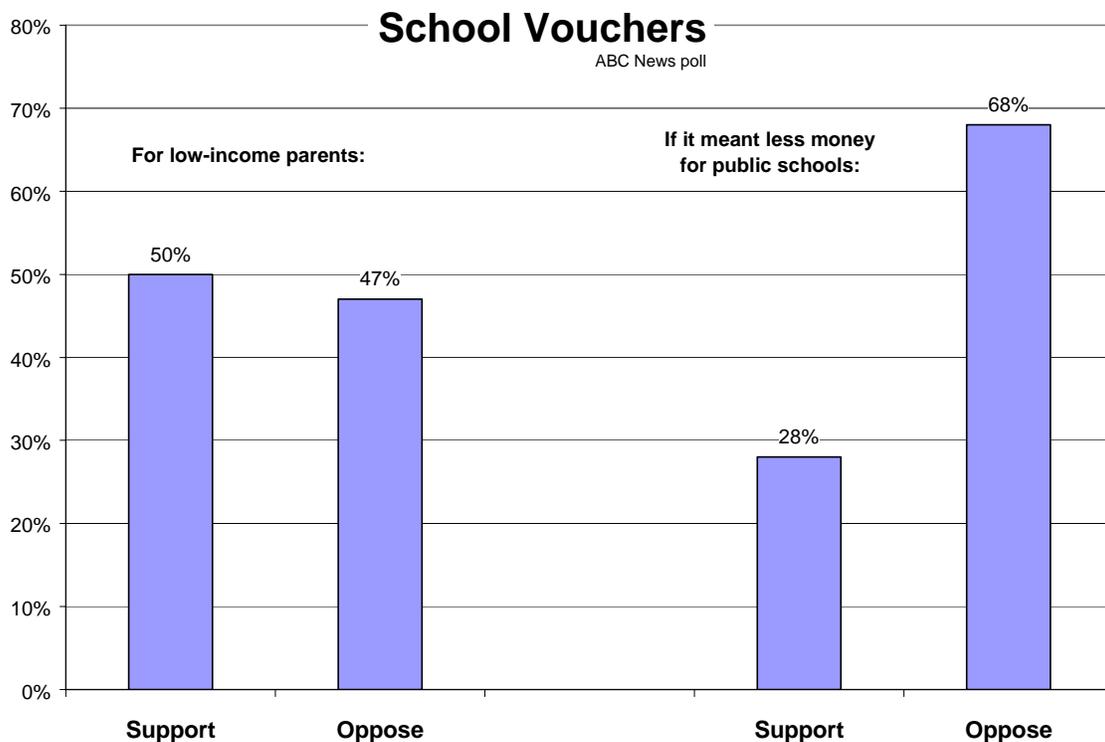


Support for School Vouchers Slides If They'd Cut Public School Funding

Americans divide evenly on whether to provide school vouchers for low-income families – but if it would cut funding for public schools, opposition soars.

In principle, 50 percent support helping low-income parents pay private or religious school tuition; 47 percent oppose it. But if vouchers cut public school funding, about four in 10 initial supporters switch camps, resulting in opposition by a broad 68-28 percent.



The U.S. Supreme Court on June 27 upheld a voucher program in Cleveland, saying it didn't violate church-state separation because recipients could choose religious or secular schools. George W. Bush hailed the ruling as a major step in improving education.

Critics have argued that voucher programs drain public schools of cash. Richard Decolibus, president of the Cleveland teachers' union, has said the city's schools have lost \$43 million to the voucher program over the past three years.

GROUPS – Support for vouchers peaks among parents with children age 17 or younger, with 60 percent in favor. But again, if a voucher program reduced money to the public schools, these parents oppose it by a 30-point margin, 63-33 percent.

Similarly, vouchers win 59 percent support among people in lower-income households and among younger adults (who are more likely to have children at home). But large majorities in both these groups, too, oppose vouchers if they'd cut public school funds.

Republicans support school vouchers by 54-43 percent; independents split 50-47 percent; and Democrats oppose them by a narrow 52-46 percent. But again, if vouchers would reduce public school funding, majorities in all three groups oppose them.

	School vouchers Support-Oppose	If they cut public school funds Support-Oppose
Children at home	60-37	33-63
Income <\$25,000	59-39	35-62
Under age 35	59-38	26-69
Republicans	54-43	36-60
Independents	50-47	25-71
Democrats	46-52	22-75

These results are similar to those in an October 2000 ABC News/Washington Post poll of registered voters. That survey didn't specify that vouchers would be limited to low-income families; it found a bit less initial support – 44 percent in favor, 55 percent opposed – with opposition rising to 70 percent if public schools would lose funding.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News poll was conducted by telephone July 10-14, 2002, among a random national sample of 1,017 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, Pa.

Analysis by Dalia Sussman.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet at:
<http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/PollVault/PollVault.html>

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Here are the full results:

23. Would you support or oppose having the government give parents in low-income families money to help pay for their children to attend a private or religious school instead of their local public school?

	Support	Oppose	No opinion
7/14/02	50	47	3

24. (IF SUPPORT) Would you support or oppose that if it meant less money for the public schools?

	Support	Oppose	No opinion
7/14/02	57	42	2

NET TABLE

	-----Oppose-----				
	Oppose NET	Oppose	Oppose, if less public school funding	Support, if less pubic school funding	No opin.
7/14/02	68	47	21	28	3

END