



Who opts out and why?

Results from a national survey on
opting out of standardized tests

OREN PIZMONY-LEVY
NANCY GREEN SARAISKY

TEACHERS COLLEGE
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

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About the authors

Dr. Oren Pizmony-Levy is an Assistant Professor in the Department of International and Transcultural Studies at Teachers College, Columbia University. He holds a PhD in sociology and comparative and international education from Indiana University, Bloomington. His research and teaching focus on the intersection between education and social movements. His main line of research examines the emergences of international large-scale assessments and their consequences for public discourse and public opinion worldwide. He also conducts research on the work of youth and educational NGOs in the environmental movement and in the LGBTQ movement. Email: op2183@tc.columbia.edu

Dr. Nancy Green Saraisky is a Research Associate at Teachers College, Columbia University. She holds a PhD in Political Science and Comparative Education from Columbia University, where her studies were funded by the National Science Foundation. Her current work focuses on the politics of assessment, both domestically and internationally. She is also interested in the role of ideas in education policy; public opinion and elite preferences in policy formation; and the role of culture in educational success. She has previously held a variety of positions in philanthropy, government and journalism. Email: nlg2004@tc.columbia.edu

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Executive Summary

During the past few years the opt out movement, in which parents refuse to have their school-aged children take federally mandated educational assessments, has gained momentum. Yet many important questions about opting out remain unanswered: Who is actually opting out? What motivates parents who opt their children out of the tests? Are those who opt out trying to protect their children, or do they have broader political aims? These are some of the questions that we aim to address in this study.

Data for this study come from the National Survey on Opting Out, which was conducted from January 20, 2016 through March 31, 2016. We recruited respondents online, through links on the webpages and social media channels of opt out groups. The survey was administered electronically. **The sample consisted of a total of 1,641 respondents from 47 states.**

Some key findings are:

- ❖ **The opt out movement includes more than just parents who have opted their children out.** It also includes parents whose children are in public school but did not opt out; parents whose children are homeschooled and/or in private school; and individuals without children who are supporting the movement. About four-fifths of the respondents (81.5 percent) were parents or guardians of school-aged children. The vast majority of them (92.9 percent) indicated that their children attended public schools.
- ❖ **Approximately three-quarters of respondents who are parents or guardians of school-aged children (74.5 percent) have opted their children out of testing.** Nine out of ten (92.1 percent) respondents who are parents or guardians of school-aged children said they are likely to opt out in the future.
- ❖ **Parents refuse standardized tests even in states where opting out is not permitted or discouraged by policy makers.** The share of parents who opted out is lowest in states where opt out is prohibited (73.2 percent) and highest in states where refusal and opt out are permitted with constraints (85.7 percent). We find no significant differences in opting out between respondents residing in states where opt out is permitted and other respondents.

- ❖ **The typical opt out activist is a highly educated, white, married, politically liberal parent whose children attend public school and whose household median income is well above the national average.** The movement brings together Democrats (46.1 percent), Republicans (15.1 percent), Independents (33.3 percent), and supporters of other parties (5.5 percent).
- ❖ **Most participants have come to the opt out movement during the past 3-4 years,** with almost half (48.9 percent) joining during the past two years. Social media – Facebook, Twitter, etc. – play a key role in mobilizing participants, as do social networks. About two-fifths (38.8 percent) heard for the first time about the movement through social media. But patterns of mobilization vary according to geographic region, political ideology, and the profession of the participant.
- ❖ **The opt out movement is about more than just opposition to high-stakes testing.** Respondents gave many reasons as to why they participate. In particular, respondents feel that judging teacher performance by students' standardized test scores is unfair (36.9 percent). They also are protesting the narrowing of the curriculum, corporatization/privatization of education, and the implementation of the Common Core State Standards.
- ❖ **Motivations vary, depending on whether the respondent was a teacher or not.** Teachers (45.0 percent) say that they are opposed to tying teacher evaluation to student performance on standardized tests while non-teachers were more likely to mention opposition to 'teaching to the test' and to the Common Core.
- ❖ **Opt out activists are concerned with current educational reforms and efforts to improve public schools.** Compared to the general public, they are more critical of the use of different types of testing in education, especially high-stake tests. Also, opt out activists view increasing school funds as important idea for improving schools. While the general public rank this idea in the 4th place (out of five), opt out activists rank this idea in the 2nd place.

Introduction

Assessment has long been an inextricable part of schooling in the United States. Being able to evaluate whether students have understood and mastered assigned knowledge and skills is, after all, one of the core efforts of the modern educational project. But recently assessment is back in the headlines as a hot button issue in American education politics. As scholars have pointed out, the uses of achievement tests have changed dramatically during the past several decades, as assessments have moved from being predominantly low-stakes diagnostic tools of student learning to high-stakes exercises with significant consequences attached.¹ Lately, standardized assessments – that is, those tests that are uniform in their questions, administration and scoring – have made headlines as a source of consternation and complaint within the American public. Unhappy with federal legislation that mandates annual standardized assessments, increasing numbers of citizens have refused to have their children sit for the tests. These efforts have come to be known as the opt out movement.

Although reports surfaced in the early 2000s of students in select affluent communities boycotting standardized tests,² the data show a dramatic uptick in test refusal during the past 3-4 years. Though it is beyond the scope of this report to determine the causal factors behind the rise of the opt out movement, two contextual factors certainly created an environment ripe for protest. First, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and its aligned assessments were rolled out, and the federal government incentivized states to adopt the standards through its competitive Race to the Top grant program. Race to the Top also encouraged states to join one or more of the new assessment consortia that were developing CCSS-aligned assessments. Very quickly, 45 states and the District of Columbia had signed on to both the new standards and the new assessments. Second, many states and districts were imposing new consequences for teachers, principals and schools whose students were not demonstrating increased levels of achievement.³ In some states the CCSS-aligned assessments were introduced simultaneously to new teacher evaluation systems that required that student performance data from the new assessments be used to evaluate teacher performance and effect teacher pay. Some in the

¹ See, for example, Koretz, D. M. (2008). *Measuring up*. Harvard University Press.

² Zernike, K. (13 April, 2001). In high scoring Scarsdale, a revolt against state tests. *The New York Times*.

³ For an overview as well as a discussion of the withdrawal of states from the two testing consortia, see Jochim, A. & McGuinn, P. (2016). The Politics of the Common Core Assessments. *Education Next*, 16(4): XX-XX.

states expressed concerns about federal overreach – some called it “hijacking”⁴ – in getting states to adopt the standards.

Within this context of upheaval in the k-12 education system, media began reporting on an increasing backlash against annual standardized assessments. In 2012, reports surfaced that certain schools were boycotting the field testing of the new Core-aligned assessments. Some parents were said to be concerned about teachers spending class time teaching to the test; others were purportedly troubled about data gathering and privacy concerns. Former Secretary for Education Arne Duncan famously dismissed the backlash as “white suburban moms who — all of a sudden — their child isn’t as brilliant as they thought they were, and their school isn’t quite as good as they thought they were” in light of students’ plummeting scores on Core-aligned assessments.⁵

Other education officials followed suit. The Education Commissioner in New Jersey called the opt out movement “a suburban phenomenon that’s going to be counterproductive to helping disadvantaged kids.”⁶ Unions jumped into the fray, moving from supporting the CCSS to vehemently opposing the new assessments. Opponents were vociferous in their hostility in tying student performance on the assessments to teacher evaluations. Opponents were reported as saying that the new standardized tests were causing stress for students, eating up instructional time for teachers, and narrowing the curriculum. Supporters were saying that the assessments provided useful information about achievement gaps between poor and better-off students. The US Department of Education warned of potential sanctions,⁷ in decreased funding levels and increased monitoring, for those states that fell under a 95 percent participation threshold. In districts where leadership supported opting out, the numbers refusing tests climbed.⁸

Based on various media account, the opt out movement seem to be a combination of unusual political bedfellows. Those on the right were reported to be upset about a federal overreach into education, an

⁴ Banchemo, S. (3 Jun3 2010). States craft school goals – Education guidelines backed by governors’ group stirs debate on local control. The Wall Street Journal. A3.

⁵ Strauss, V. (16 November, 2013). The Answer Sheet blog. The Washington Post, online edition.

⁶ Brody, L. (23 February 2015). NJ battleground over tests – officials worry about students opting out as teachers union airs ads casting doubt on exams. The Wall Street Journal, A19.

⁷ Brody, L. (11 April 2015). NY teachers rebel over student tests – union robocall reminds members that students can opt out; chancellor finds move disturbing. The Wall Street Journal. A15.

⁸ Brody, L. (15 April 2015). NY testing is put to the test. The Wall Street Journal. A15.

arena that has historically been the purview of the states, while those on the left protested that the assessment regime was simply a business opportunity for the assessment companies and one more step on the road to privatization of the education system.

Though “soccer moms” were the demographic most often cited at the core of the opt out movement, the research on who was actually involved in the movement is limited and has relied on aggregated data as reported by districts and states for its analysis. For example, Chingos explores the social background of students who opt out and finds that opt out rates in New York are associated with socioeconomic status and test scores.⁹ He shows that relatively affluent districts tend to have higher opt out rates than those with larger populations of disadvantaged students. He also shows that, after taking socioeconomic status into account, lower performing districts had higher opt out rates between 2014 and 2015, suggesting that perhaps district administrators and/or parents were encouraging opting out to mask poor performance. In a meta-review of existing opt out studies, Bennett finds that opt out rates are highly variable across states, districts, and grades.¹⁰ In California the opt out rate in 2015 within all grades tested in English language arts and math was 3 percent, whereas in New York state the overall opt out rate was 20 percent. The review confirms that research to date has found that opting out is more likely among whites and economically advantaged families.

Past research

There is some research that has looked public perceptions of testing and the opt out movement. Here, the results are mixed. Results from the 2015 EdNext poll suggest that two-thirds of the public (67 percent) supports continuing the federal requirement of annual testing. Slightly more than one-fifth (21 percent) oppose this policy.¹¹ The percentages of supporters and opponents of annual assessment are both slightly higher in 2015 than they were in 2012, while the percentage of those taking a neutral position has declined. The EdNext poll reports low public support for opting out. Only one quarter (25 percent) of respondents likes the idea of letting parents decide whether their children are tested, while three-fifths (59 percent) oppose it. Results from the 2015 Phi Delta Kappa (PDK)/Gallup poll offer a different view.¹² In that survey, two-fifths (41 percent) of the public and close to half of public-school

⁹ <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2015/06/18-chalkboard-who-opts-out-chingos>

¹⁰ Bennett, R.E. (2016). Opt out: An examination of issues. ETS Research Report Series ISSN 2330-8516. doi:10.1002/ets2.12101

¹¹ <http://educationnext.org/2015-ednext-poll-school-reform-opt-out-common-core-unions/>

¹² http://pdkpoll2015.pdkintl.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/pdkpoll47_2015.pdf

parents (47 percent) said they support the right to opt out. Public support for opt out, however, varies by race. White respondents were more likely to support parents' right to opt out than Black respondents. PDK/Gallup found that close to one-third (31 percent) of public-school parents indicated they would excuse their child from taking one or more standardized tests.

Yet to our knowledge no one has asked the protesters themselves why they are opting out, or what they hope to accomplish in doing so. This study addresses this gap by going directly to those in the opt out movement and asks the following research questions:

- ❖ Who opts out?
- ❖ How do participants become involved and what do they do?
- ❖ Why do people participate?
- ❖ What do participants think about educational policy?

Conceptual framework

This study is informed by previous research on social movements, which speaks to the ways in which groups mobilize to pursue their shared interests. For the purpose of this study we define social movements as “collectivities acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional or organizational channels for the purpose of challenging or defending extant authority, whether it is institutionally or culturally based, in the group, organization, society, culture, or world order of which they are part”.¹³ This broad definition applies nicely to the case of opting out: parents across the country take part in collective action; national, state, and local opt out organizations provide information and coordination; and activists pursue their objectives mainly through non-institutional means and disruption of accustomed practices (e.g., standardized tests).

Research on social movements explores why social movements form, who participates in them and the facilitating conditions under which such movements operate. Scholarship shows that the ability of social movements to create change depends on three factors: (1) the ability to mobilize resources; (2) changes in political or institutional opportunity structures, and (3) how the demands of the movement are framed and communicated to potential participants. In this study, we focus mostly on resource

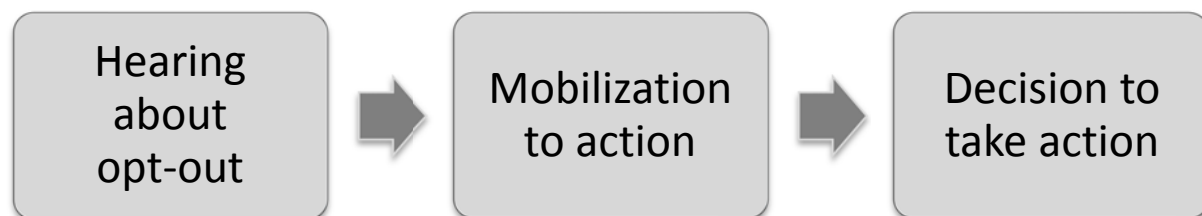
¹³ Snow, D. A., Soule, S. A., & Kriesi, H. (2004). Mapping the terrain (3-16). *The Blackwell companion to social movements*. John Wiley & Sons.

mobilization – particularly the social base of the movement and the role of networks and media in mobilizing individuals to take part in opt out activism.

Exploring the social base of the opt out movement is important for at least two reasons. First, the sociodemographic characteristics of activists provide a window into the resources they bring to the movement. These resources are typically described as human, social, and cultural capital. For example, teachers bring professional educational expertise regarding the usefulness of assessments in schools. Second, the sociodemographic characteristics of activists can shed light on class interests that guide their participation. Such an analysis can also help reveal the extent to which the movement is representative of the general public.

In order to examine these issues in the context of the opt out movement, we follow the work of Klandermans on the dynamics of movement participation.¹⁴ Figure 1 outlines our approach to mobilization. The first step involves individuals hearing about opt out. We are interested in the timing and source of the first encounter with the movement. The second step concerns the structures and networks that recruit individuals for action. Given the background of the movement, we expect to find variation across different groups. The third step differentiates between motivations and modes of activism: opting out and/or other forms of civic participation.

Figure 1: Three steps toward participation in opt out



¹⁴ Klandermans, B. (1984). Mobilization and participation: Social-psychological expansions of resource mobilization theory. *American Sociological Review*, 49(5): 583-600.

Klandermans, B. (2004). The demand and supply of participation: Social-psychological correlates of participation in social movements (360-379). *The Blackwell companion to social movements*. John Wiley & Sons.

Methodology

The results presented here are based on a survey of adults (age 18 years and older) administered from January 20, 2016 through March 31, 2016. The survey was administered electronically via Qualtrics survey software. The research study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Teachers College, Columbia University (protocol #16-089). Respondents were presented with detailed study information sheet that was followed by a consent form. The final survey was available in both English and Spanish. The study received no funding from public or private sources.

Because there is limited research on the opt out movement, we drew on a range of sources to inform the survey, including scholarly research, media coverage, materials and artifacts produced by individuals and organizations affiliated with the movement, and consultations with key informants. Some items were taken directly from existing public opinion surveys (PDK/Gallup and EdNext) that had previously asked respondents about standardized assessment and/or opting out. The final survey probed three broad areas. The first section gathered data on participant engagement with the opt out movement: their sources of information, reasons for participation, and modes of activism (opting out and/or other forms of civic participation). The second section focused on attitudes toward education policy reform, and the use of testing and assessment in education. The third section gathered data on socio-demographic information (e.g., sex, race/ethnicity, age, education, and place of residence), political views, partisan identification, and organizational membership and affiliations. A copy of the full survey can be found in Appendix 1.

Similar to previous research on social movement activism, a nonprobability sample of individuals affiliated with the opt out movement was obtained through opt out groups and their social media platforms. To minimize sampling bias, a list of national, state and local groups that maintain social media channels was constructed from web-based queries. After receiving permission from the various group administrators, surveys were shared electronically through the groups and their social media platforms. This included posting links to the survey on Facebook and Twitter. In addition, surveys were shared with colleagues and other individuals who are active in the movement. To expand the reach of the survey, messages/posts about the survey included hashtags such as #optout and #optout2016. The national organization United Opt Out helped distribute the survey to state and local chapters. Links to the survey were also sent to other organizations with a request to post the link on organizational websites.

The study has several limitations. First, data collection was conducted exclusively online. Therefore individuals without access to the Internet were less likely to have the opportunity to participate in the survey. As with previous research on the digital divide in the United States, it is reasonable to assume that individuals residing in rural locations (especially in the South and Southwest) and/or individuals with lower levels of education and income may be under-represented in the sample. Second, because data collection was facilitated through opt out groups that have an online presence, groups without an online presence were less likely to have the opportunity to participate in the survey. Third, the study is based on self-reported behavior (e.g., opting out), which is subject to response bias.

Nevertheless, we believe the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge about the opt out movement by directly surveying individuals involved in the movement. The total number of respondents was 2,140. After accounting for non-response, the analytical sample size is 1,641 respondents. In addition to presenting aggregate descriptive statistics for different outcome variables, we also present predicted probabilities for different groups (e.g., region and political views). Predicted probabilities are calculated from multivariate analysis (e.g., logistic and multinomial logistic regression) with the following control variables: sex, race/ethnicity, age, household income, education, employment status, political ideology, and region. Analysis was done in Stata 14.

Who Opts Out?

Table 1 presents a demographic overview of the whole sample. The majority of the respondents were women (85.4 percent); slightly more than one-tenth (11.5 percent) were men, and the rest self-identified as “other” gender (3.1 percent). The average age was 35 years (standard deviation = 7.9). The vast majority of the sample (91.8 percent) was white, with the second largest racial/ethnic group being Latino/Latina (4.9 percent). A small minority (4.2 percent) identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Most respondents (86.1 percent) were married or living with a partner. Less than one-tenth (8.3 percent) was divorced or separated, and the rest of the sample was never married or was widowed (4.5 percent and 1.0 percent, respectively). Also, about four-fifths of the respondents (81.5 percent) were parents or guardians of school age children.

Table 1 – About Here

Overall, the sample consisted of mostly respondents with a high socioeconomic status, as reflected in common indicators of education, labor force participation, and household income. Respondents reported having high levels of formal education: Almost all respondents had post-secondary education (97.8 percent). Three-fifths of the sample (59.7 percent) held a graduate degree, one fourth (25.4 percent) held a baccalaureate degree, and approximately one-eighth (12.7 percent) held an associate’s degree or some years of college.

Four-fifths of the sample (80.5 percent) worked for pay, working an average of 43.2 hours/per week (standard deviation = 14.1). About half of the respondents (45.0 percent) work as teachers or educators, with majority of them being parents or guardians of school-aged children (71.1 percent). Additionally, about one-sixth of respondents (16.0 percent) reported that they have teachers or educators in their close circle of friends. Taken together, these measures suggest that approximately two-thirds of respondents (64.8 percent) have had direct contact with the teaching profession.

The median household income in the survey was \$125,000, much higher than the median household income for the United States which, according to the American Community Survey, was \$53,657 in 2014, the latest data available.

Politically, half of the sample (50.6 percent) identified as liberal, about one-third (31.5 percent) identified as middle of the road, and less than one-fifth (17.9 percent) as conservative. Similar patterns

emerged when we examined partisan identification. Close to half of the sample (46.1 percent) identified as Democrats, one-seventh (15.1 percent) identified as Republicans, one-third (33.3 percent) identified as Independents, and the rest (5.5 percent) were affiliated with other parties (e.g., the Green Party, Libertarian Party).¹⁵ Almost all respondents voted in the 2012 presidential elections (94.6 percent).

About one-third of the sample (31.4 percent) indicated it has no religious affiliation. Among the affiliated respondents, we identified four relatively large groups: Catholics (25.4 percent), Protestants (17.4 percent), other Christians (13.5 percent), and Jews (7.9 percent). The sample also included respondents who identified as Buddhist, Mormon, Muslim, Unitarian Universalist, and Spiritual (each representing less than one percent). About one-fifth (17.5 percent) of respondents indicated they were living in a multilingual household, with the common languages being Spanish and French.

About four-fifths of the respondents (81.5 percent) were parents or guardians of school-aged children. When we asked those parents what kinds of schools their school-aged children attended, the vast majority of them (92.9 percent) indicated that their children attended public schools. Two-thirds of those respondents (65.8 percent) said their children have attended only public schools.

Interestingly, almost one-fifth of respondents (19.5 percent) did not have school-aged children. Thus the opt out movement consists of a broader range of activists than just parents who opt their children out of tests. The movement includes parents, parents who do not opt out, and parents whose children are not in the public school system, as well as non-parents.

Respondents came from 47 states (all except: Alaska, Iowa, Wyoming, and Washington D.C.). As reflected in Table 2, two-thirds of the sample (66.9 percent) resided in six states: New York (34.7 percent), Florida (10.4 percent), New Jersey (8.2 percent), Oregon (5.5 percent), Washington (4.7 percent), and California (3.5 percent).¹⁶

Table 2 – About Here

¹⁵ In the analysis to follow we use political ideology when examining differences between groups. In additional analysis (not reported) we also use party identification. Overall, the patterns are very similar.

¹⁶ Of these six states, New York, Oregon, Washington and California were identified by the Department of Education as having had lower-than-required participation rates on state exams.

In addition to state of residence, respondents were asked about their zip code. Respondents reported on 1,046 unique codes, with one-quarter of the sample residing in 43 different codes (each included at least four respondents). Using information from the 2010 Census, we classified zip codes to three groups: urbanized areas (50,000 or more people), urban clusters (at least 2,500 and less than 50,000 people), and rural areas.¹⁷ Most respondents (87.4 percent) live in urban clusters. An additional ten percent live in urbanized areas and a small fraction live in rural areas (2.6 percent).

In order to examine geographical variation within the movement, we clustered states into four regions: Northeast, South, West and Midwest. As shown in Figure 2, half of the sample (49.5 percent) resided in the Northeast, and one-fifth of the sample (20.1 percent) resided in the South.¹⁸ The large representation of the Northeast region in the sample may be a reflection of the previous anti-testing activity in the early 2000s.

Figure 2 – About Here

State policies about opting out vary. A recent report by the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) categorizes states into four groups based on their opt out policies: (1) opt out is prohibited (34 states and Washington D.C.), (2) opt out is permitted completely (2 states), (3) refusal is permitted or opt out is permitted with constraints (10 states), and (4) opt out policy is left to local districts.¹⁹ Using NASBE's classification, the majority of the respondents (76.8 percent) reside in states where opt out is prohibited. This group includes, for example, respondents from New York and New Jersey where all students are expected to take state tests and absences from tests are managed in accordance with existing attendance policies. One in six respondents (16.3 percent) resides in states where refusal is permitted or opt out is permitted with constraints. The rest reside in states where opt out is permitted (5.7 percent) or in states without state-level policy (1.2 percent).

¹⁷ <https://www.census.gov/geo/reference/ua/urban-rural-2010.html>

¹⁸ The share of respondents who are parents varies across regions. In the Northeast and the South, 85.7 percent and 82.6 percent (respectively) of the sample indicated that they are parents. In the Midwest and West, 78.8 percent and 73.0 percent (respectively) of the sample indicated that they are parents.

¹⁹ http://www.nasbe.org/wp-content/uploads/Lorenzo_Opt_outs-by-State.pdf

How do participants become involved and what do they do?

When and how do participants become involved?

Although there are accounts showing that the opt out activism began in the early-2000s, most respondents reported that they have heard about the movement during the past four years. As shown in Figure 3, half of the sample (48.9 percent) became aware of opting out during the past two years, and approximately two-fifths of the sample (39.8 percent) heard about the movement in the past 3-4 years.

Figure 3 – About Here

When people first heard about opting out varies by region, education, and political views. Overall, the patterns suggest that the movement emerged in the Northeast and the West, among highly educated and liberal individuals:

- ❖ Compared to their peers in other parts of the country, respondents in the South have heard about the movement most recently (see Figure 4). About two-thirds of respondents in the South (64.5 percent) reported hearing about the movement during the past two years, while slightly more than two-fifths of respondents in the Northeast (42.8 percent) heard about the movement during this period.
- ❖ Respondents with higher education (bachelor’s and graduate degrees) heard about the movement earlier than their counterparts with less education (see Figure 5).
- ❖ Respondents holding liberal views were more likely to have known about the movement longer (five years ago or earlier) compared to respondents holding conservative or middle of the road views (see Figure 6).

Figures 4, 5, 6 – About Here

Mobilization through networks

Social movements mobilize participants through various means. To identify these channels, respondents were asked how they first heard about opting out. As shown in Figure 7, two-fifths of the sample (38.8 percent) first heard from social media (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.). One-fourth (24.6 percent) first heard from teachers or other education professionals. Two other common sources include personal networks: friends, neighbors, and relatives (12.8 percent) and other parents (8.7 percent). Traditional media played a more limited role in spreading the opt out message; 4.6 percent first heard about opting out from television, radio, and newspapers (national media = 3.0 percent; local media = 1.6 percent). Respondents who wrote in answers in the “other” category (5.2 percent) indicated that their

professional backgrounds and experience as teachers led them to opt out. As one respondent wrote: “I am a teacher, I see the horrible truth associated with testing.” Another wrote: “I am a teacher and knew I had parental rights regarding my children's education.”

Figure 7 – About Here

Next, respondents were asked which sources provided information that made them want to know more about the movement and/or to participate in activities. The response to this question echoes the patterns above (see Figure 8).²⁰ A large majority of the sample (69.8 percent) were mobilized by social media. The other main source of mobilization was social networks. About half of the sample (49.6 percent) was mobilized by teachers or other education professionals, and slightly less than one-third (31.1 percent) said they were mobilized by friends, neighbors and relatives. About one-quarter of the sample (24.6 percent) were mobilized by other parents at their child’s school (24.6 percent), and one fifth of the sample (20.7 percent) were mobilized by public figure or organization. While traditional media seem to have a limited role in spreading the message about the movement, it plays a larger role in mobilization, as one-quarter of the sample (24.2 percent) said that they were mobilized by traditional media.

Figure 8 – About Here

The role of different mobilization sources varies by region, political ideology, and belonging/proximity to the teaching profession:

- ❖ Respondents in the South are more likely to be mobilized by social media (see Figure 8). Respondents in the Midwest and West are more likely to be mobilized by teachers and other education professionals. Respondents in the Northeast are more likely to be mobilized by social networks, including friends, neighbors or relatives, and other parents at their child’s school.
- ❖ Both liberals and conservatives are more likely to be mobilized by social media and social networks (see Figure 9). Additionally, liberals are more likely to be mobilized by teachers and other education professionals, and by public figures or organizations.
- ❖ Teachers are more likely to be mobilized by their professional community (i.e., teachers and other education professionals; see Figure 10). Other respondents, who are not teachers, are more likely to be mobilized by their social networks and other parents at their child’s school.

Mobilization through social movement organizations

²⁰ In this question respondents were asked to “mark all that apply,” so sums may exceed 100 percent.

Social-movements organizations (SMOs) are crucial in the mobilization of participants. In order to examine which SMOs are important and how they might be connected to each other, respondents were asked whether they were ever contacted by an organization to participate in any opt out related activities. Respondents who answered positively were then asked to write in all the names of organizations that contacted them for any opt out related activities.

One third of the sample (33.4 percent) indicated they were contacted by at least one organization and respondents identified 237 different organizations or types of organizations in their responses. The list included eight types of organizations: general opt out groups (generic/national, state, and local), groups affiliated with the Badass Teachers (generic/national and state), public education-related groups (e.g., New York State Allies for Public Education, Save Our Schools), other parent groups (e.g., Parent-Teacher Association), teacher unions, testing-related groups (e.g., More than a Score), and Common-Core-related groups (United to Stop Common Core), and other civic organizations (e.g., League of Women Voters and ACLU).

Figure 12 presents a social network of organizations involved in the opt out movement. Each node represents an organization that contacted individuals to participate in any opt out related activities. The color of the node denotes the type of organization. Two organizations are connected with a line in this network if they contacted the same individual to participate in any opt out related activities. The labels of the nodes are scaled in size to the number of contacts they have with activists; larger labels reflect more contacts. The figure is drawn using NetDraw in Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) layout with node repulsion and equal edge length bias.²¹ This approach put two nodes closer together if they are more similar (in terms of their connections to other nodes). The distances between nodes and the direction (or location) are interpretable.

Examination of Figure 12 reveals the four most active organizations: United Opt Out (and the unspecified label “opt out”), Badass Teachers Association (BATs), New York Alliance for Public Education, and Long Island Opt Out.²² The centrality of organizations based in New York State is a reflection of our sample composition (one-third of all respondents are from New York State). The core of the network includes opt out related groups, BATs, and public education-related groups (including parents’ groups).

²¹ Borgatti, S. P., Everett, M. G., & Freeman, L. C. (2002). UCINET for Windows: Software for social network analysis.

²² Badass Teachers Association: <http://www.badassteacher.org>;

New York Alliance for Public Education: <http://www.nysape.org>

Other groups – such as teachers’ unions, testing-related groups, and Common Core-related groups – are more likely to appear in the periphery of the network. This network suggests that the core of the opt out movement consists of activists and organizations concerned with public education and the teaching profession.

Figure 12 – About Here

Figure 13 presents a social network of organizations that contacted two or more individuals to participate in any opt out related activities. The thick line between United Opt Out and BATs suggests that these organizations often mobilize the same individuals. Among the highly active organizations, we find only two Common Core-related groups (Stop Common Core NYS and Washington State Against Common Core).

Figure 13 – About Here

What do activists do?

Perhaps the most obvious question in the survey asked parent respondents whether or not they had opted their children out of any assessments. Three quarters of parents of school age children (74.5 percent) reported opting their children out of standardized testing. Two-thirds of parents of school age children (63.3 percent) opted out all of their children, and approximately one-tenth (11.2 percent) opted out some of their children.

As shown in Figure 14, slightly more than two-thirds (71.2 percent) first opted out in the past two years, and approximately one fourth of the sample (24.4percent) first opted out in the past 3-4 years. Further, about half of the sample (46.9 percent) opted out from standardized testing at the same time they first heard about the opt out movement.

Figure 14 – About Here

We also find that opting out is associated with geographic region and policy context:

- ❖ While half of the respondents (52.0 percent) in the South opted out, about three-quarters of the respondents in other regions opted out (Northeast – 83.0 percent, West – 81.0 percent, Midwest – 73.0 percent).
- ❖ The share of parents who opted out is lower in states where opt out is prohibited (73.2 percent) than in states where refusal and opt out are permitted with constraints (85.7 percent).

Nevertheless, these patterns suggest that state law is not enough to dissuade parents from opting out. We find no significant differences in opting out between respondents residing in states where opt out is permitted and other respondents.

Respondents reported on other forms of activism that connected them to the movement while stopping short of actually opting out. When respondents were asked to indicate what actions they have taken relating to opting out, almost all respondents (97.6 percent) had participated in at least one activity, and half of the sample reported participating in six or more activities. As illustrated in Figure 15, the four most common forms of civic participation were related to disseminating the message of the movement and trying to recruit other participants: respondents reported posting information on social media (85.3 percent), discussing with other parents in school (81.6 percent), joining web-based distribution lists (73.6 percent), and convincing others to get involved (72.3 percent). Other activities included signing a petition (69.4 percent), contacting a politician or other elected official (66.0 percent), and attending a demonstration or protest (35.5 percent).

Figure 15 – About Here

Future activity

To assess the potential of the opt out movement in AY 2015/2016 and in the coming years, respondents were asked how likely it is that they will opt out their children in the future. The vast majority of the sample said they would be very likely (82.8 percent) or likely (9.3 percent) to opt out in the future. Importantly, about three-quarters of parents who did not opt out in the past (74.5 percent) said that they are likely to opt out in the future (very likely – 45.5 percent and likely – 29.0 percent).

Possible quotes for sidebar:

- “My child is in in second grade -- too young to opt out. But we will opt out next year”
(Mother, New Jersey)
- “He is only two years old. As soon as he is old enough for school, my wife and I will be opting him out of ALL standardized testing. He will never take a standardized test. NEVER!”
(Father, California)

Why do people participate?

A central question in social movement research is why do people participate? To address this question in the context of the opt out movement, respondents were asked to choose up-to five reasons for their participation (out of 16 options including “other,” see Figure 16). Respondents were then asked to choose the main two reasons for their participation (see Figure 17). The top six reasons for participation were: “I oppose using students’ performance on standardized tests to evaluate teachers” (36.9 percent), “standardized tests force teachers to teach to the test” (33.8 percent), “I oppose the growing role of corporations in schools” (30.4 percent), “standardized tests take away too much instructional time” (26.5 percent), “I oppose the Common Core State Standards” (25.8 percent) and “I oppose the privatization of schools” (16.0 percent). Most of these motivations/reasons reflect a progressive critique of the negative consequences of standardized testing on schools and the role of the private sector in public education.

[Figures 16 and 17 – About Here](#)

Respondents who wrote in additional reasons most often cited one of three concerns. First, respondents questioned the fairness of tests for students with special needs, for example: “[I participate in order] to raise awareness about students with disabilities/learning differences. These tests are totally unfair to children with learning differences”. Second, respondents pointed to issues of student privacy, for example: “Transparency in what data is collected, who has the info, how will they use it?” Third, respondents questioned the validity and usefulness of the tests: “There is absolutely no proof that any of these tests have any validity whatsoever and should not be used until any correlations are shown between grade level learning and understanding and these tests.”

There were significant differences in motivation for participation across political ideology, as presented in Figure 18A:

- ❖ Liberals and middle of the road respondents were more likely to mention: “I oppose using students’ performance on standardized tests to evaluate teachers” and “I oppose the growing role of corporations in schools” (36 percent and 33 percent)
- ❖ Conservatives were more likely to mention: “I oppose the Common Core State Standards” and “I oppose the growing role of the federal government” (45 percent and 22 percent).

[Figure 18A – About Here](#)

There were similar significant differences in motivation for participation across party lines, as presented in Figure 18B:

- ❖ Democrats and Independents were more likely to mention: “I oppose using students’ performance on standardized tests to evaluate teachers” (38.8 percent and 35.9 percent) and “I oppose the growing role of corporations in schools” (30.8 percent and 29.6 percent)
- ❖ Republicans and Independents were more likely to mention: “I oppose the Common Core State Standards” (35.8 percent and 26.2 percent); Republicans and respondents supporting other parties were more likely to mention: “I oppose the growing role of the federal government” (16.8 percent and 18.3 percent).

Figure 18B – About Here

In addition, there were significant differences in motivations and reasons for participation between teachers and non-teachers, as presented in Figure 19:

- ❖ Teachers were more likely to mention “I oppose using students’ performance on standardized tests to evaluate teachers”, “I oppose the growing role of corporations in schools”, and “I oppose the privatization of schools”.
- ❖ Non-teachers were more likely to mention “standardized tests force teachers to teach for the test”, “standardized tests take away too much instructional time”, and “I oppose the Common Core of State Standards”.

Figure 19 – About Here

Possible quotes for sidebar:

- “As an educator, I see the end result of increased testing in primary education over the last decade and am appalled at the resulting damage test-centered education has done. There is also a great degree of concern over data gathering conducted via testing....” (Teacher response)
- “As a protest move to show that I do not like the amount of time devoted to test prep.” (Non-teacher response)
- “As a scientist myself, I did not have confidence in the reliability and validity of the measures...” (Non-teacher response)

What do participants think about US education policy?

While political participation in the United States is generally considered to be in short supply, opt out activists are self-identified as participants in civic and political life. We were interested to see whether opt out activists had views on education policy that were similar to, or different from, member of the general public. In order to do so, we included several items about views on education policy in the opt out survey that were taken from previously fielded polls of the general population. In this section, all comparisons of opt out activists to the general public are made using polling results from previous PDK/Gallup polls.²³

Evaluation of schools

Compared to the general public in the United States, opt out activists have a more positive view of schools in their own community (see Figure 20). More than two thirds of opt out activists (68 percent) gave their schools a grade of either A or B (25 percent and 43 percent), while about half of Americans (51 percent) gave schools a grade of either A or B (13 percent and 38 percent, respectively). There two possible explanations for this pattern. First, the quality of public schools in the United States is closely linked to local property taxes. With the majority of the respondents being middle and upper-middle class families, it is possible that they have access to good public schools and thus their positive evaluation. Second, the high evaluation of school might be seen as a rejection of the current narrative of “failing public schools” that is used to justify educational reforms in the past three decades.

[Figure 20 – About Here](#)

Support for different types of testing

As expected, opt out activists are more critical of the use of different types of testing in education than the general public in the United States (see Figure 21). Nevertheless, even among opt out activists there is considerable support for some kind of tests and evaluation. More than three-quarters of respondents support tests that are used to award high school students college credit, such as AP exams, and tests that are used to determine whether a child has mastered a certain body of curricular content (76 percent and 74 percent, respectively). However, there are lower rates of support for other types of

²³ The PDK/Gallup poll is an annual public opinion survey of American adults conducted using telephone and web-based survey methods to collect data. Participants are drawn from the Gallup Panel, a proprietary, probability-based longitudinal panel of U.S. adults. Data are weighted to match national demographics of gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education, and region.

tests, including college entrance tests (51 percent), tests that determine if the student should be promoted from one grade to the next (30 percent).

Figure 21 – About Here

How can schools be improved?

The general public in the United States and opt out activists agree that the quality of teachers matters most for public education (see Figure 22). This approach is endorsed by a vast majority of the general public (95 percent), whereas a slightly lower percentage (82 percent) of opt out activists endorse this approach. With respect to the use of educational standards to improve education, 67 percent of the general public supports the use of standards, while 53 percent of opt out activists support the use of standards. Compared to the general public in the United States, opt out activists view school finance/budget as a more important idea for improving public education (66 percent and 45 percent support, respectively). Importantly, both groups reject standardized testing as a policy solution for improving schools (only 19 percent of the general public and 6 percent of opt out activists support this idea).

Figure 22 – About Here

How should schools evaluate students' academic progress?

The opt out movement challenges a taken-for-granted practice of evaluating students' learning: standardized tests. Thus, we asked them which other approaches they think could provide accurate picture of a student's academic progress (see Figure 23). A majority of respondents (90.0 percent) support using examples of students' work, and approximately four-fifths (78.0 percent) support using written observations by teachers (78.0 percent). Slightly more than half (55.0 percent) say that grades awarded by teachers could provide accurate picture of a student's academic progress.

Figure 23 – About Here

The role of the government: Federal, State, Local

Respondents were asked to indicate which unit of the government – federal, state, local school board – should have the greatest influence on five education issues in k-12 public schools. Opt out activists and general public hold similar views with respect to paying for the k-12 public education system (see Figure 24A). However, they hold different views with respect to four other issues; in all of them opt out activists assign less responsibility to the federal government and more responsibility to state and local

authorities. The gap between opt out activists and the general public are profound in two cases: holding schools accountable for what students learn (see Figure 24C) and determining the right amount of testing (see Figure 24D). Two-thirds of opt out activists (67 percent) say that the local school board should be responsible for holding schools accountable, but only one-third of the general public (33 percent) agrees with this direction. Similarly, four-fifths of opt out activists (80 percent) say that the local school board should be responsible for determining the right amount of testing, but only one-third of the general public (33 percent) agrees with this direction.

Figure 24 – About Here

Two interesting patterns emerge when we examine views toward the role of the government across political ideology:

- ❖ Liberals and middle of the road respondents in the opt out movement are more likely than conservatives to view the federal government responsible to the following three issues:
 - Paying for the k-12 public education system;
 - Deciding what is taught in the school;
 - Setting educational standards for what students should know.
- ❖ There is no significant difference between liberals, conservatives, and middle of the road respondents in the locus of responsibility of the following issues:
 - Holding schools accountable for what students learn;
 - Determining the right amount of testing.

Perceptions of the impact of the opt out movement

Finally, we asked the opt out activists if they thought their actions were having a policy impact. A majority of respondents view the opt out movement as having an impact on both federal and state assessment policy (see Figure 25). Respondents in the Northeast are more likely to view the opt out movement as having an impact, especially on state assessment policy. This positive sentiment about the efficacy of the movement is more common among respondents who opted out and respondents who are not parents.

Figure 25 – About Here

Conclusion

While the opt out movement has generated intense media interest over the past several years, the identity of the activists, their goals and motivations are not well understood. In order to address this gap, we designed and implemented a national survey on opting out of standardized tests. The findings from the survey suggest that the movement is perhaps more complex than previously understood. In this last section, we briefly recap and discuss some of the results and raise questions for further research.

Who opts out? The movement is comprised of more than just parents who opt out, it also includes parents who did not opt out and individuals who are not parents. Almost one-fifth of respondents were not parents. Coupled with those respondents who are parents but whose children do not attend public schools and those parents whose children are too young to be tested, we see that the opt out movement is about much more than simply opting out of testing. Respondents are not simply concerned with their children not scoring well on the tests – only 4.9 percent of respondents were concerned about test performance.

The social base of the movement, however, is narrow. The vast majority of survey respondents are white, middle class, highly educated parents who have children in the public school system. These participants have the resources to devote time and energy to activism. The demographics results echo the dominant narrative in the news media as well as those of previous public opinion surveys, in which non-white respondents are more supportive of the use of standardized tests.²⁴ These results beg the question of whether non-white respondents are adequately represented in the sample or whether the sample reflects a cleavage along racial lines. Indeed, leading civil rights organizations have come out strongly in support of standardized assessments as critical to measuring disparities in student performance and as a tool of accountability, especially for schools that serve low income students and students of color.

Teachers and educators, but necessarily teachers' unions, play a central role in the movement, comprising 45.0 percent of respondents. On the one hand, this suggests that the claims of the protesters are heavily rooted in the professional expertise of teachers and educators, which should legitimize the

²⁴ PDK/Gallup 2014 and 2015

stances of the movement. On the other hand, teachers themselves are opposed to new models of evaluation that are based on students' performance on standardized tests (models that have been criticized by various academic groups). Thus, their participation in the movement could be seen as a response to the growing pressure of accountability.

As a lower-status, highly feminized profession, teacher expertise is often disregarded in the policy making process. Indeed, when respondents wrote in additional comments on the survey, they often used language about getting teachers and educators to the policymaking table. For example, a respondent from California wrote: "I believe there is some role for state and federal government to guide and monitor student learning, but it is currently being done very, very badly. I think experts in the field of education, and not politicians, should be responsible for shaping policy".

How do activists become involved and what do they do? Social media is the main channel through which activists learn about the opt out movement and become mobilize for action. This channel is especially important for those who have limited connections to teachers and educators and to those who reside in areas where the protest is still small (e.g., the South). The central role of social media is a clear strength, but given the digital divide in the United States over reliance on social media might limit the possibilities for recruitment.

Why do activists participate? That the movement is about more than opposition to testing is borne out in the survey results in other ways, where respondents expressed their opposition to a whole range of education policies and approaches. The opt out movement is not only a forum to give voice to concerns about the role of standardized assessment in American education. The "opt out movement" is also a proxy for the larger conflicts around the direction of education policy. Indeed, a large share of the sample said they take part in the movement because they oppose the growing role of corporations in schools and because they oppose the CCSS.²⁵

What do activists think about educational policy? Respondents call for less reliance on standardized tests in schools. They are not supportive of high-stake tests in K-12 schools, but are supportive of college related tests (i.e., tests uses to award high school students college credit and college entrance tests).

²⁵ This echoes the findings and language of a terrific report by the Consortium on Policy Research in Education (CPRE) on the backlash against the Common Core. See www.hashtagcommoncore.com.

Large majority of respondents endorse alternative modes of evaluation – examples of students’ work and written observations by teachers – as providing an accurate picture of students’ academic progress. Beyond specific policy, opt out activists view the government (state and federal) as responsible for paying for K-12 public education and for setting educational standards, and the local school board as responsible for deciding about the curriculum, holding school accountable, and determining the right amount of testing.

Survey respondents believe that they are having an impact through their opt out activism, and most of them say that they are impacting policy. Indeed, both the Democratic and Republican party platforms for the 2016 presidential election include language about standardized testing. The Democratic platform was revised to include language that supports the parental right to opt out of standardized testing, while the Republican platform praises those states that reject “excessive testing and “teaching to the test.”²⁶ The two largest teachers’ unions also oppose high stakes testing. And even when states’ opt out policies prohibit opting out, protesters are going ahead and refusing anyway. While none of these translates into specific policy change, taken together they suggest that at the very least the opt out movement is reshaping the public discourse about the role of standardized testing in public schools.

This study offers a first glimpse into the perspective of opt out activists. Given the possible effect of the opt out movement on current reform movement, more research is needed on this topic. Future research could develop in at least three directions. First, scholars could use in-depth interviews with leaders and activists in order to better understand the decision making process of parents-activists when they consider opting their children from standardized tests. Interviews with activists who are racial and ethnic minorities could shed light on the lack of diversity within the movement and the drivers/barriers that shape the demographic composition of the movement. Second, scholars across different states and localities could collaborate in order to extend data collection using quantitative surveys. This approach will not only increase sample size and coverage, it will also allow for comparison across states where educational policies and issues vary (including policies toward parental right to opt out).

²⁶ Democratic platform: <https://www.demconvention.com/platform/>
Republican platform: <https://www.gop.com/the-2016-republican-party-platform/>

Table 1: Sample description, by parental status

	Total (n=1,647)	Non- Parents (n=293)	Parents (n=1,354)
Parent (yes)	81.5	-	-
Gender *			
Man	11.5	14.9	10.7
Woman	85.4	83.4	85.8
Other / Refused	3.1	1.7	3.5
Number of children		-	2.04 (.87)
Age *	35.00 (7.87)	42.50 (10.10)	33.39 (6.25)
Race/ethnicity			
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.1	2.0	0.9
Asian	1.3	1.7	1.3
Black/African American	1.9	.7	2.2
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin *	4.9	2.7	5.3
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.1	.3	.
White/Caucasian *	91.8	94.9	91.2
Other	2.8	1.3	3.1
Sexual orientation			
Heterosexual	87.8	85.2	88.4
LGBT	4.2	6.7	3.6
Refused	8.0	8.1	7.9
Marital status *			
Married / living with a partner	86.1	67.9	90.0
Widowed	1.0	2.4	.7
Divorced or separated	8.3	14.1	7.1
Never married	4.5	15.5	2.2
Religion			
Catholic	25.4	23.5	25.9
Protestant	17.4	21.1	16.6
Other Christian	13.5	6.5	15.0
Jewish	7.9	6.8	8.2
Unitarian	1.3	2.0	1.1
Other religion	1.2	1.4	1.1
Buddhism	0.5	1.0	0.4
Mormon	0.5	0.7	0.5

	Total	Non-Parents	Parents
Christian Orthodox	0.3	0.3	0.3
Moslem/Islam	0.2	0.0	0.2
Nondenominational	0.1	0.3	0.1
I have no religious affiliation	31.4	35.7	30.4
Spiritual	0.3	0.7	0.2
Religiosity *	2.09 (.99)	1.98 (.99)	2.13 (1.00)
Education *			
High school and less	2.2	1.0	2.4
Associate degree / some college	12.7	1.4	15.2
Bachelor's degree	25.4	16.6	27.2
Graduate degree	59.7	81.0	55.2
Work for pay (yes)	80.5	87.4	79.0
Average hours per week	49.62 (13.57)	41.70 (13.85)	43.25 (14.14)
Work in education field (yes) *	45.0	68.6	39.7
Income *			
Below \$50,000	8.2	12.6	7.2
Between \$50,000 and \$74,999	15.4	22.7	13.8
Between \$75,000 and \$99,000	20.8	21.7	20.6
Between \$100,000 and \$149,999	28.4	25.9	28.9
More than 150	27.3	17.1	29.5
Political ideology *			
Liberal (1-3)	50.6	73.4	45.8
Middle of the road (4)	31.5	19.6	34.0
Conservative (5-7)	17.9	7.0	20.2
Political party *			
Democrat	46.1	57.2	43.8
Republican	15.1	6.5	16.9
Independent	33.3	33.3	33.4
Other parties	5.5	3.0	5.9
Voted in 2012 Presidential elections (yes)	94.6	95.6	94.4

Note: * Difference between parents and non-parents is statistically significant ($p < .05$). For categorical variables (e.g., gender) we used chi-square test, and for continuous variables (e.g., age) we used independent t test.

Table 2: Respondents by states

State	Number	Percent	State	Number	Percent
Alabama	6	0.4%	Nebraska	2	0.1%
Alaska			Nevada	5	0.3%
Arizona	4	0.2%	New Hampshire	2	0.1%
Arkansas	1	0.1%	New Jersey	140	8.3%
California	59	3.5%	New Mexico	21	1.2%
Colorado	34	2.0%	New York	588	34.7%
Connecticut	28	1.7%	North Carolina	14	0.8%
Delaware	5	0.3%	North Dakota	6	0.4%
Florida	176	10.4%	Ohio	50	2.9%
Georgia	33	1.9%	Oklahoma	9	0.5%
Hawaii	8	0.5%	Oregon	93	5.5%
Idaho	2	0.1%	Pennsylvania	40	2.4%
Illinois	25	1.5%	Rhode Island	8	0.5%
Indiana	47	2.8%	South Carolina	3	0.2%
Iowa			South Dakota	1	0.1%
Kansas	4	0.2%	Tennessee	15	0.9%
Kentucky	10	0.6%	Texas	13	0.8%
Louisiana	9	0.5%	Utah	5	0.3%
Maine	12	0.7%	Vermont	2	0.1%
Maryland	7	0.4%	Virginia	38	2.2%
Massachusetts	18	1.1%	Washington	79	4.7%
Michigan	31	1.8%	West Virginia	2	0.1%
Minnesota	21	1.2%	Wisconsin	15	0.9%
Mississippi	1	0.1%	Wyoming		
Missouri	2	0.1%	District of Columbia		
Montana	2	0.1%			

Figure 2: Respondents by geographic region

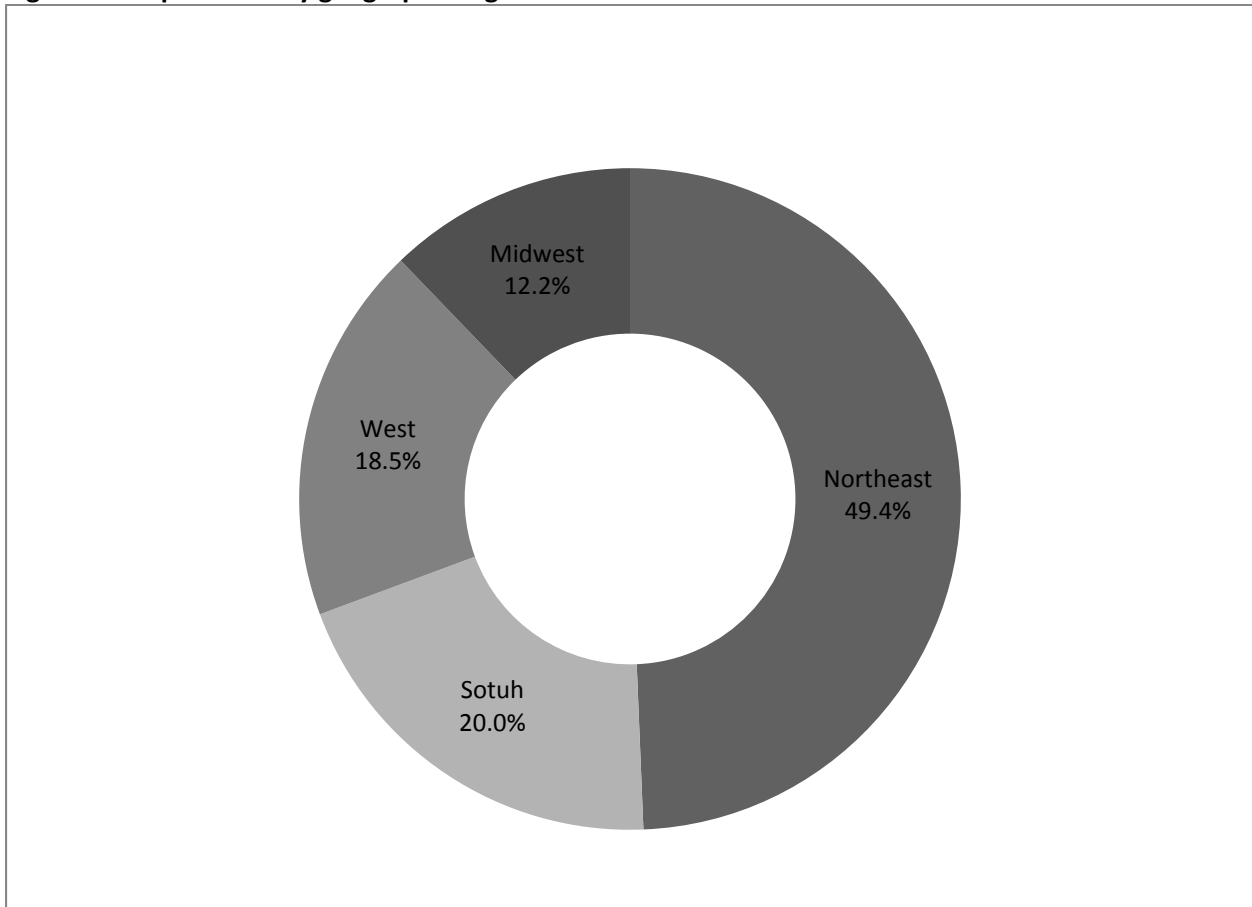


Figure 3: When did you first hear about opting out? (Q7)

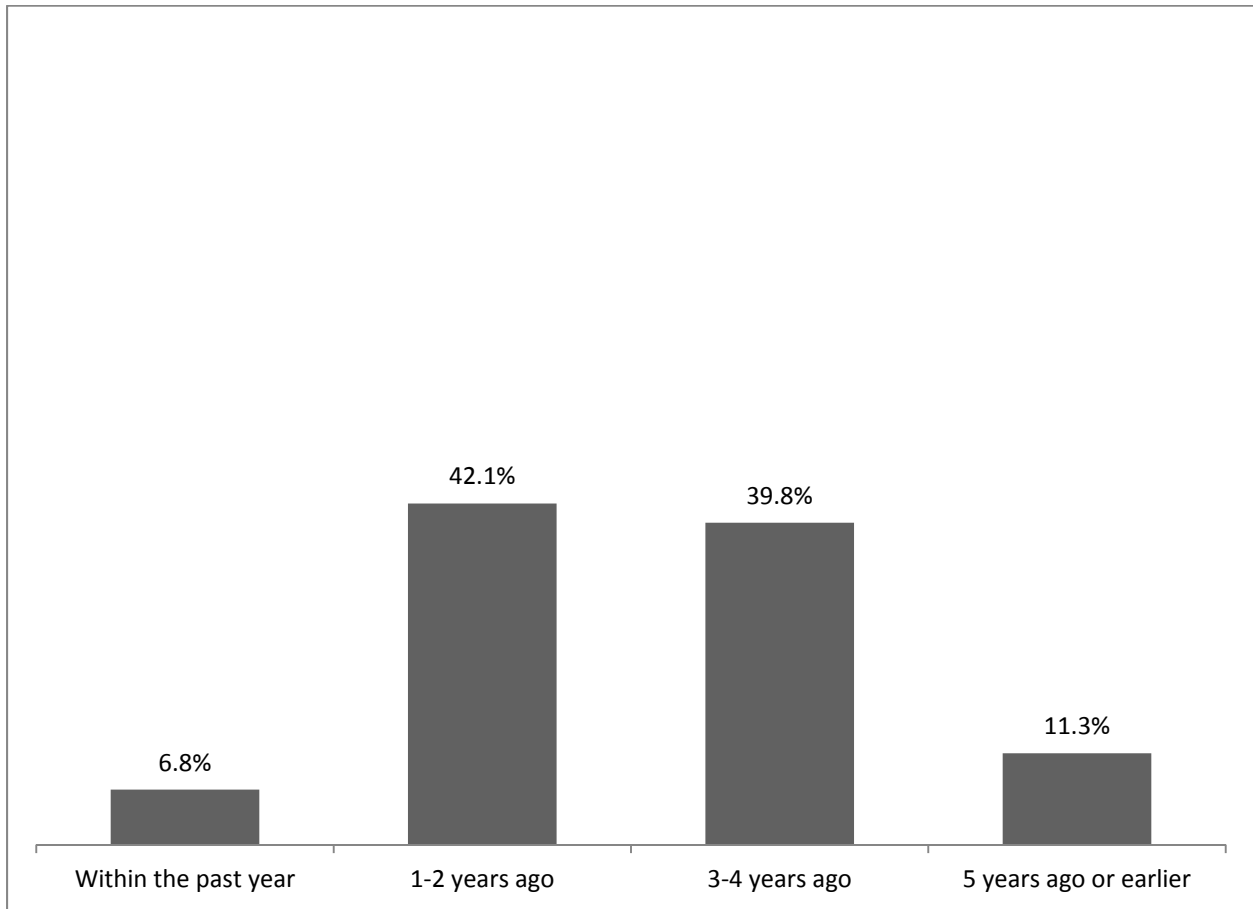


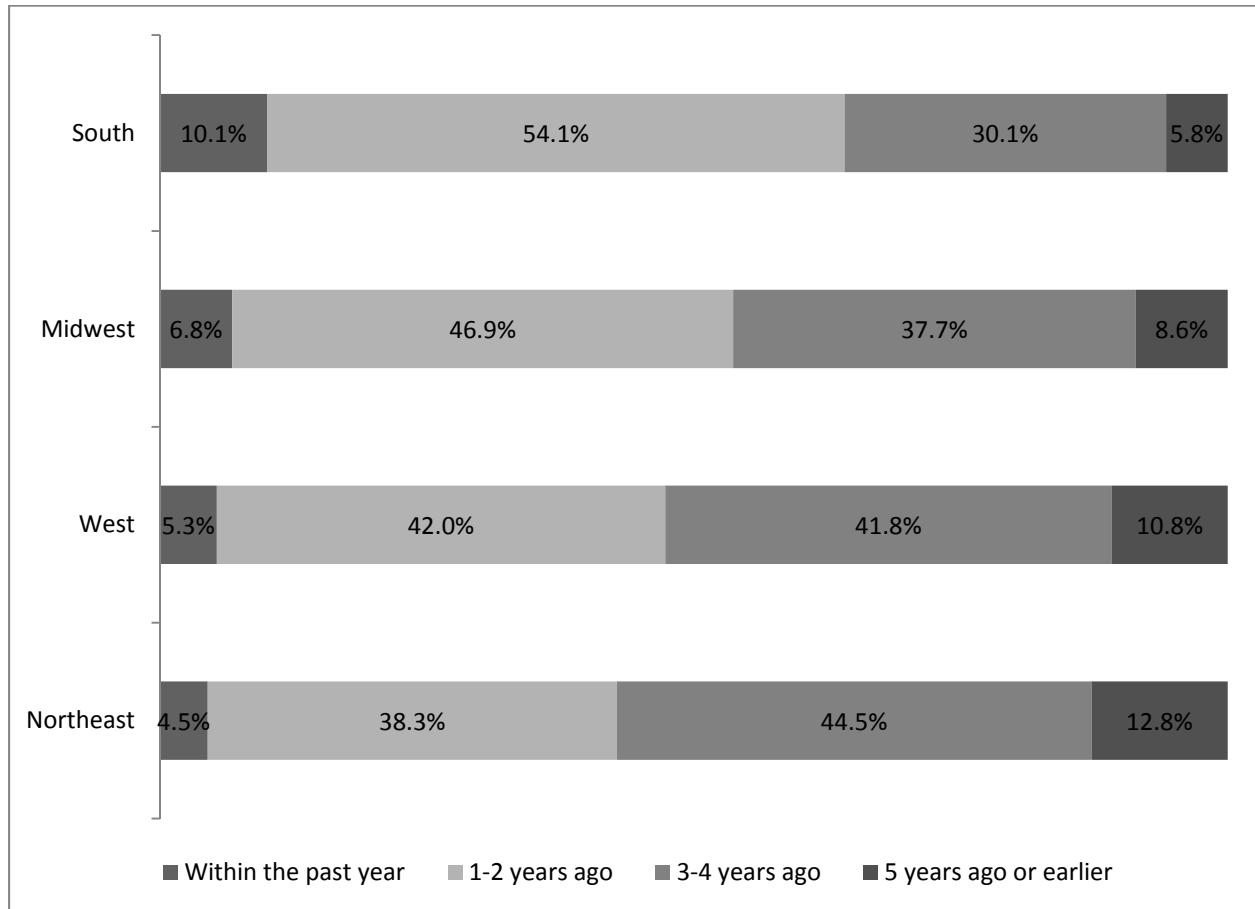
Figure 4: When did you first hear about opting out? By region (Q7)

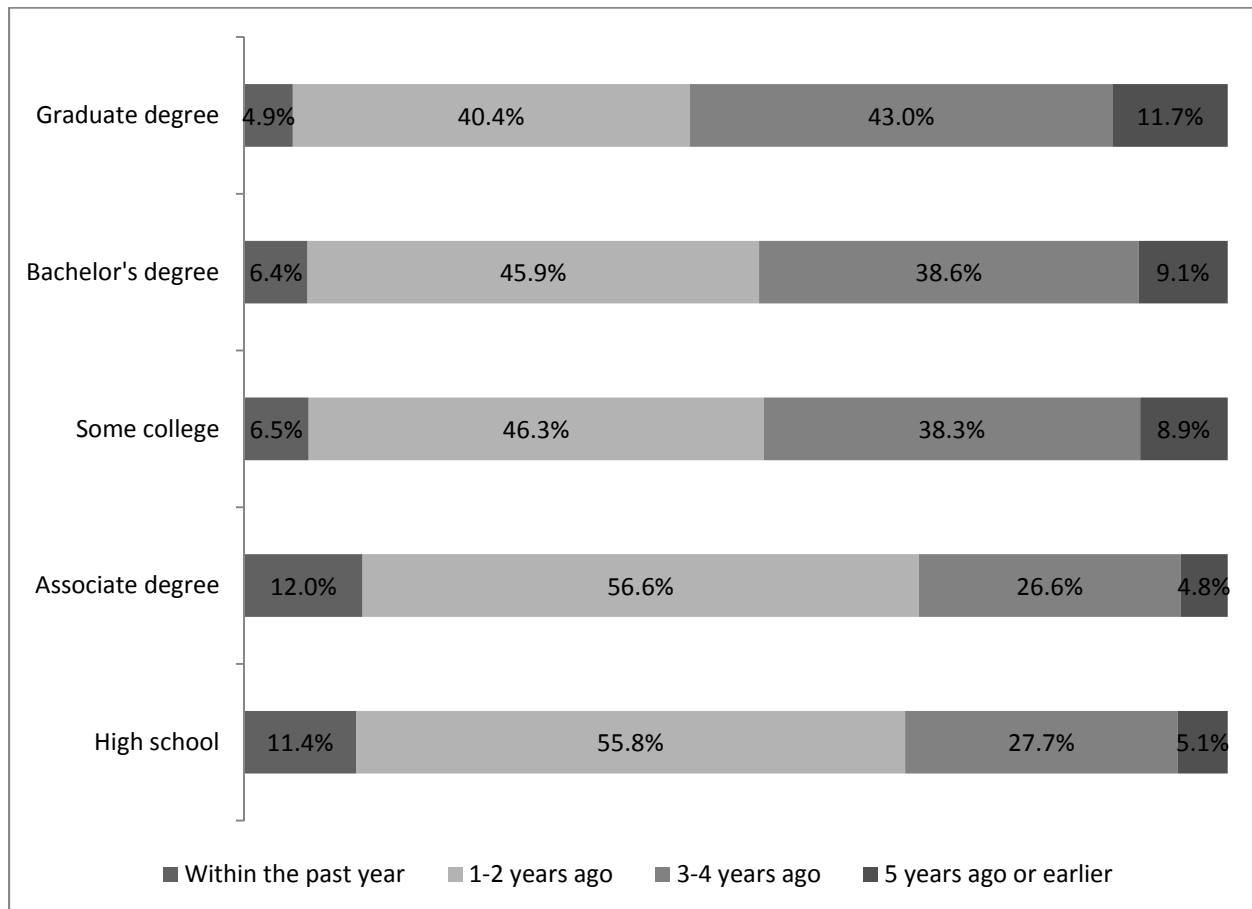
Figure 5: When did you first hear about opting out? By education (Q7)

Figure 6: When did you first hear about opting out? By political ideology (Q7)

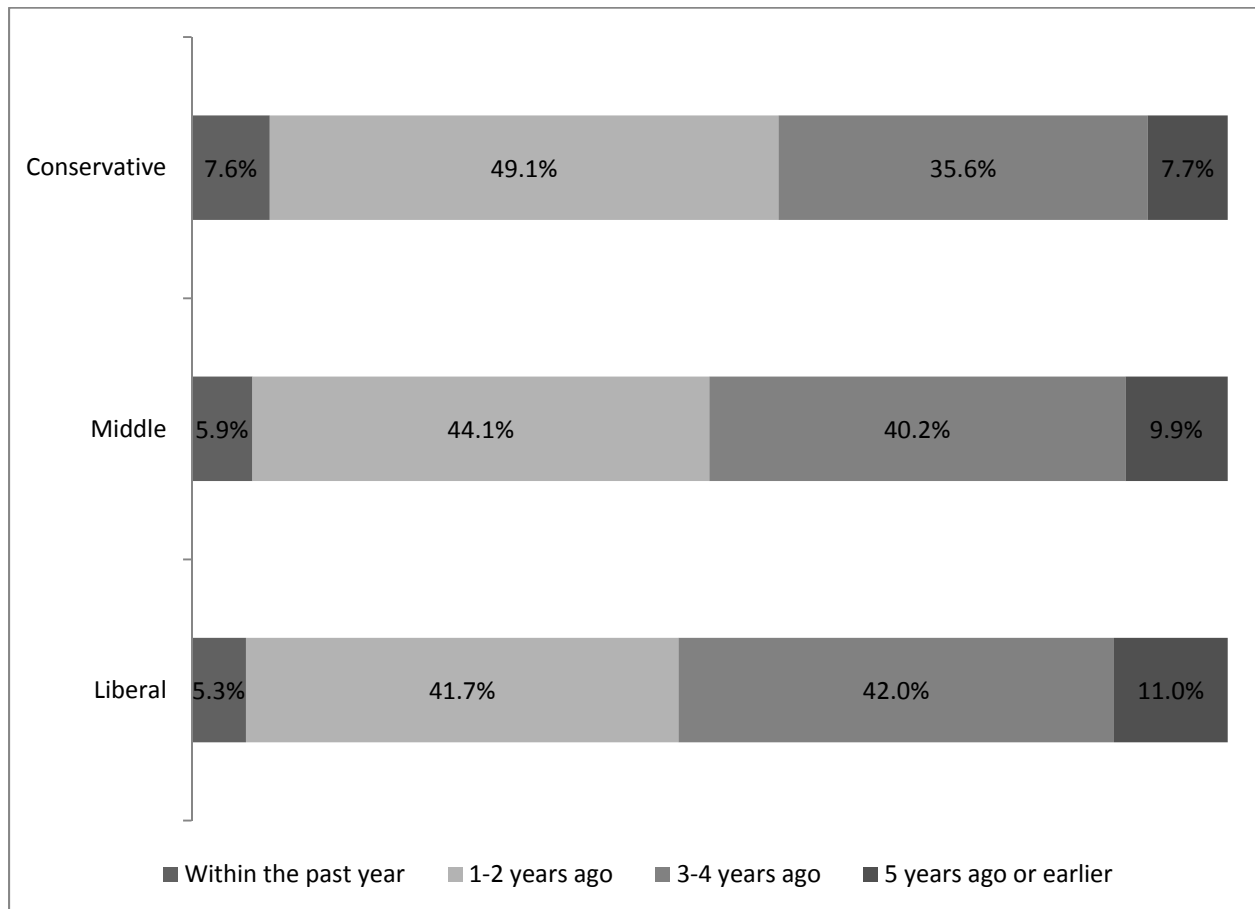


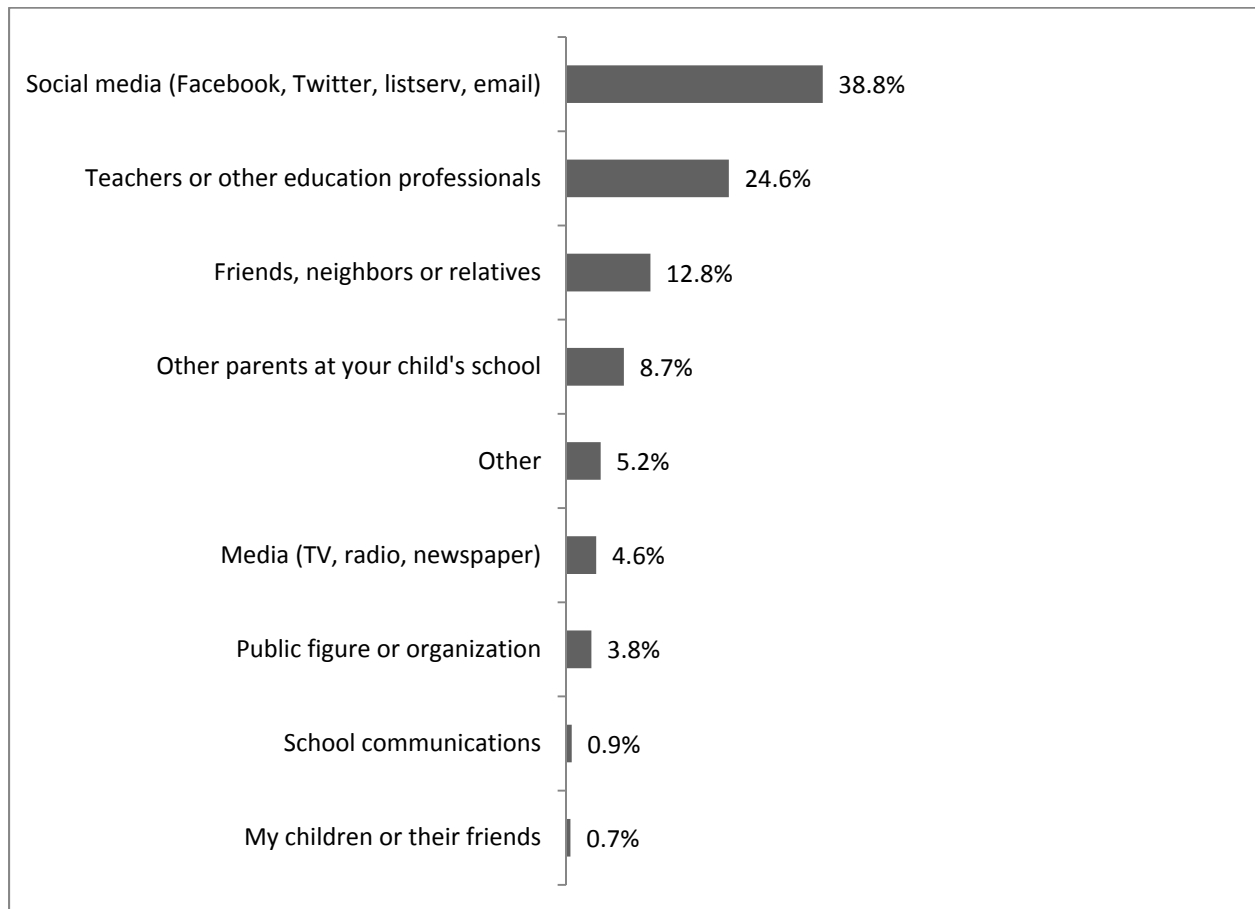
Figure 7: How did you first hear about opting out? (Q1)

Figure 8: Which of the following sources provided information that made you want to know more about and/or participate in activities relating to opting out? (Mark all that apply; Q5)

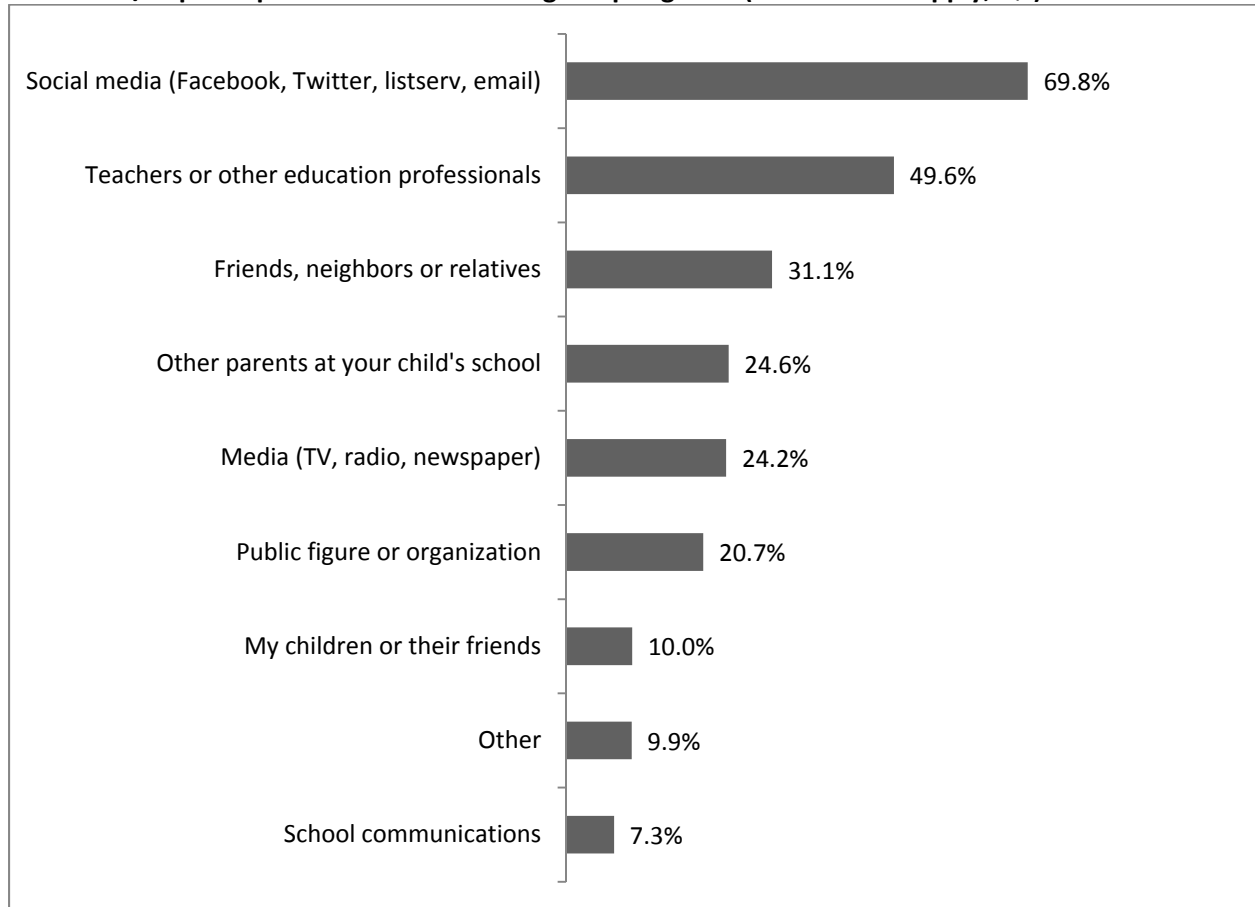


Figure 9: Which of the following sources provided information that made you want to know more about and/or participate in activities relating to opting out? By region (Q5)

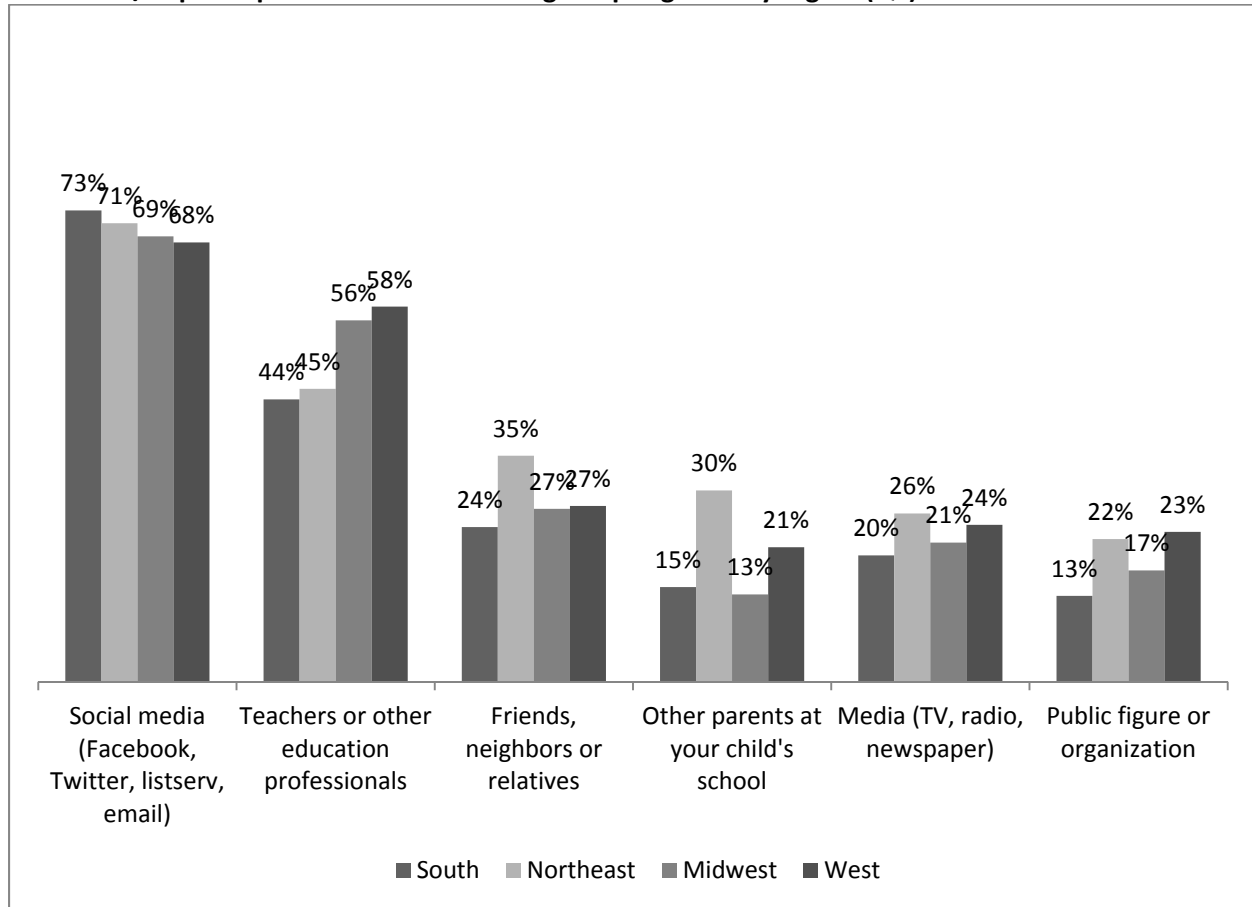


Figure 10: Which of the following sources provided information that made you want to know more about and/or participate in activities relating to opting out? By political ideology (Q5)

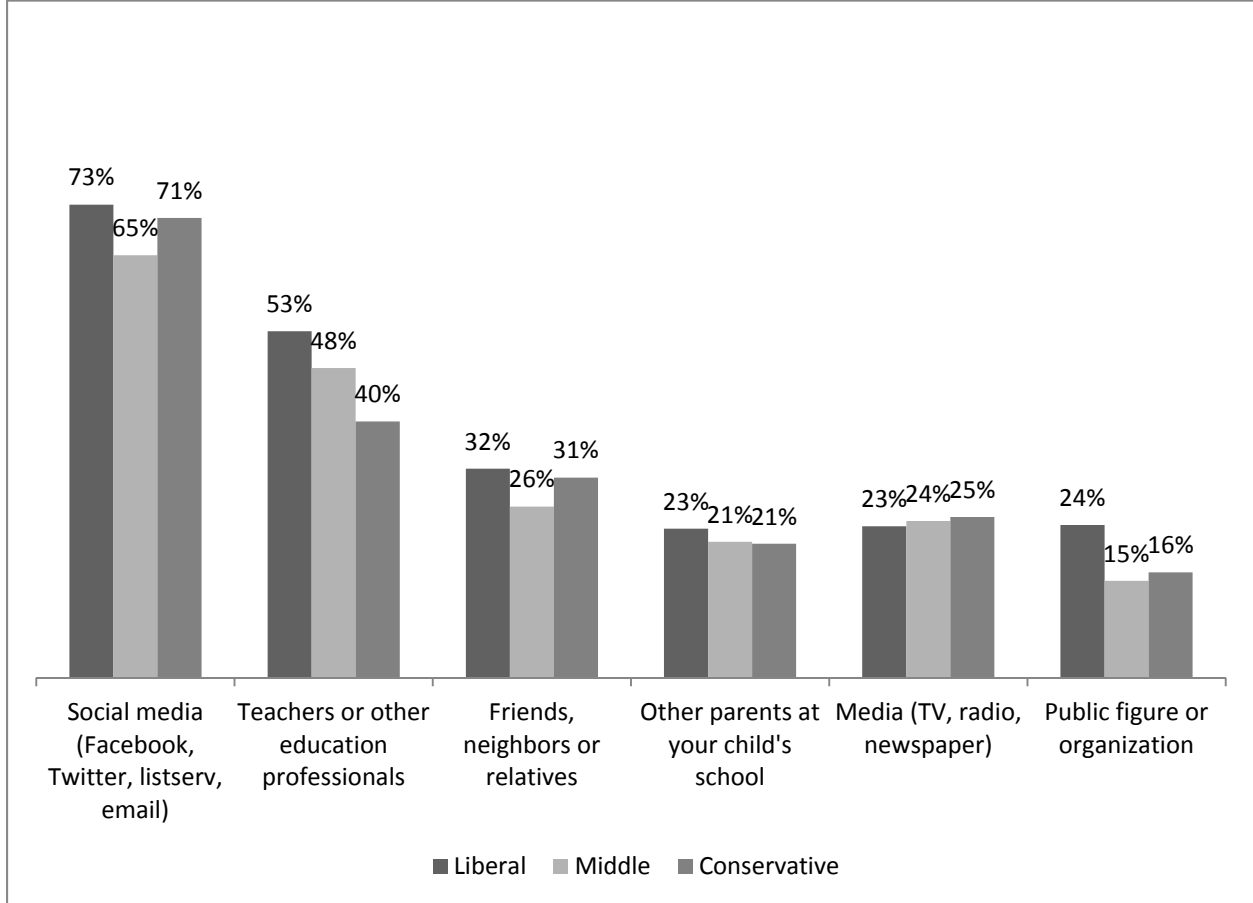


Figure 11: Which of the following sources provided information that made you want to know more about and/or participate in activities relating to opting out? By teachers vs. non-teachers (Q5)

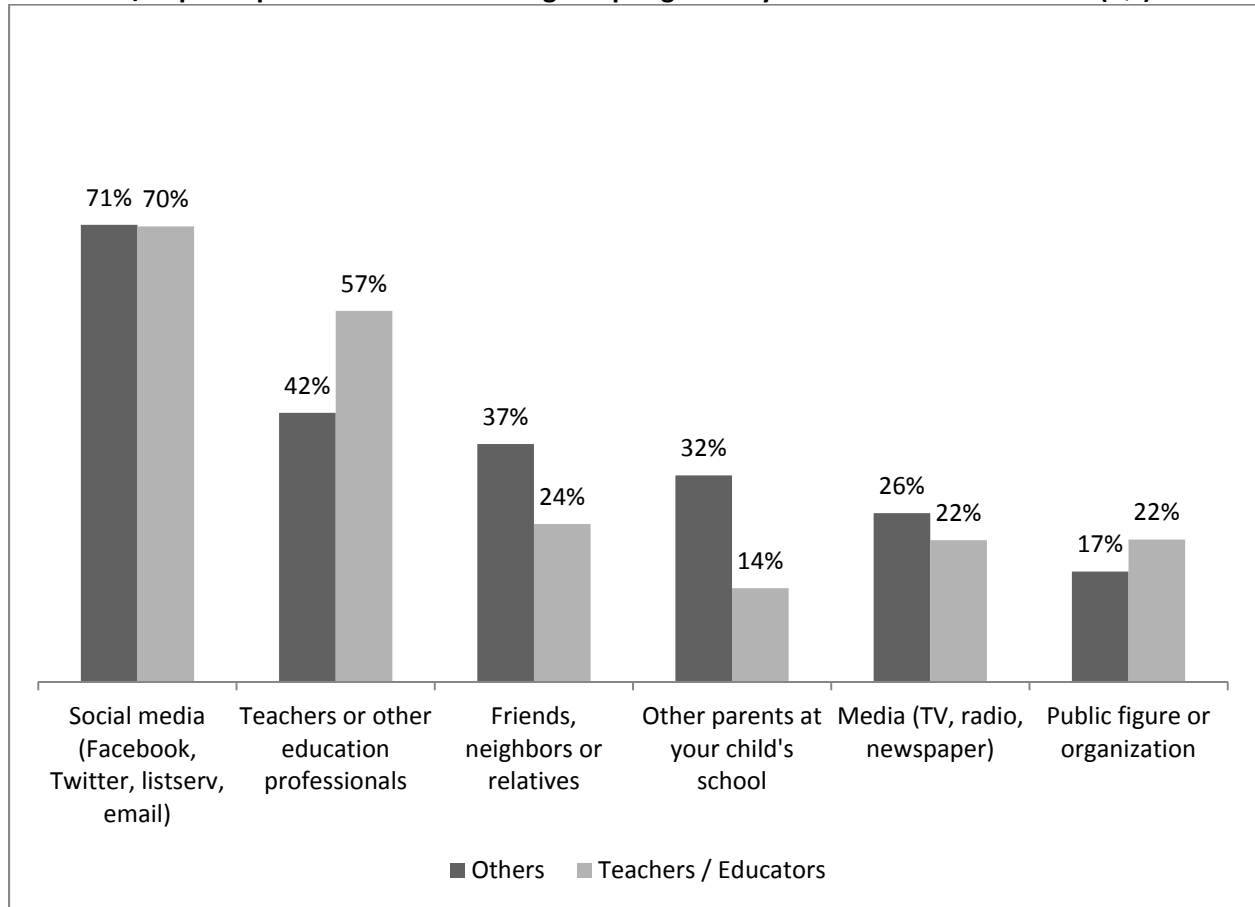
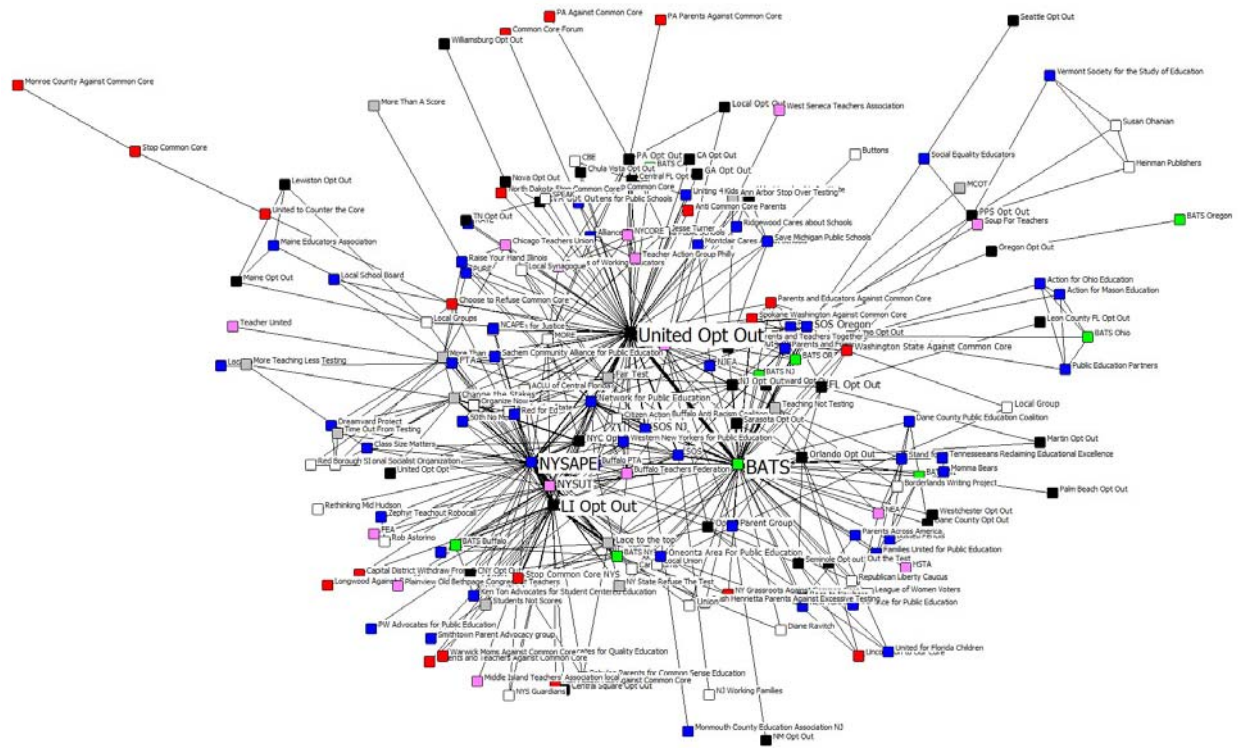


Figure 12: Network of organizations in the opt out movement (Q19)



Legend:

Black = Opt Out groups (national, state, and local)

Green = Badass Teachers / BATS (national, state, and local)

Blue = Public education related groups (e.g., Save Our Schools) and parents' groups (e.g., PTA)

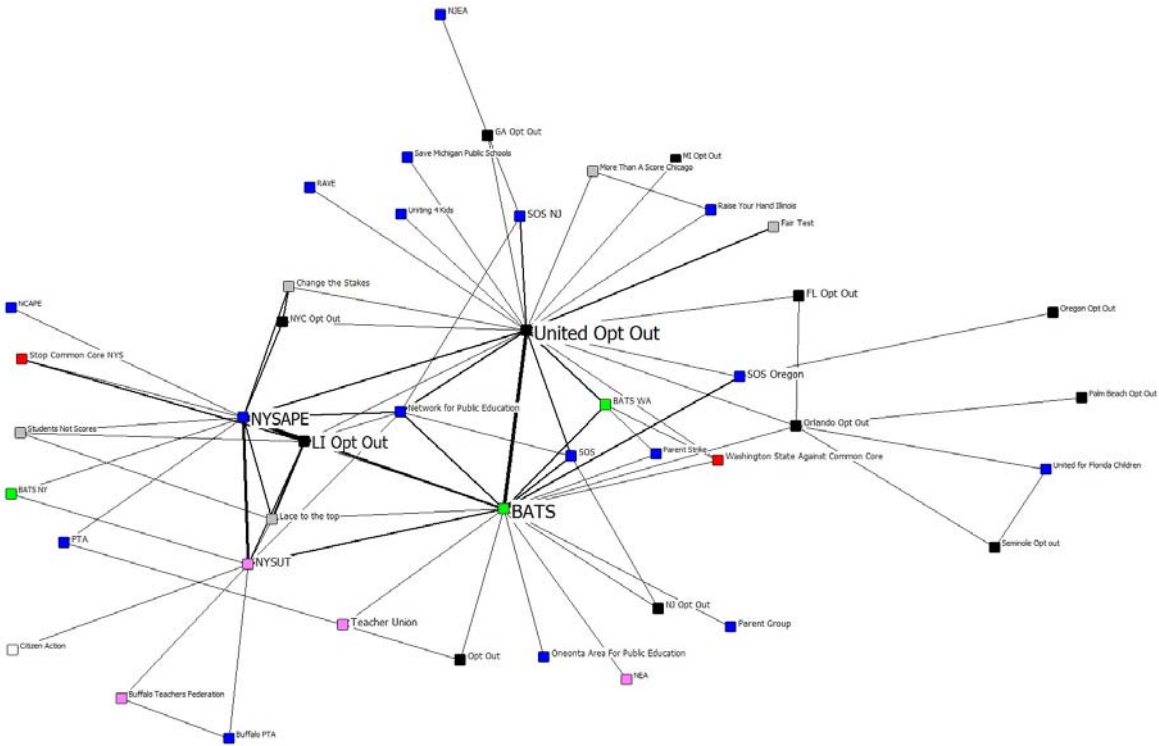
Grey = Testing related groups (e.g., More than a Score)

Purple = Teachers' Unions (including unspecified unions)

Red = Common core related groups (e.g., United to Stop Common Core)

White = other groups

Figure 13: Network of highly active organizations in the opt out movement (Q19)



Legend:

- Black** = Opt Out groups (national, state, and local)
- Green** = Badass Teachers / BATS (national, state, and local)
- Blue** = Public education related groups (e.g., Save Our Schools) and parents' groups (e.g., PTA)
- Grey** = Testing related groups (e.g., More than a Score)
- Purple** = Teachers' Unions (including unspecified unions)
- Red** = Common core related groups (e.g., United to Stop Common Core)
- White** = other groups

Figure 14: When did you first opt out from standardized testing? (Q9)

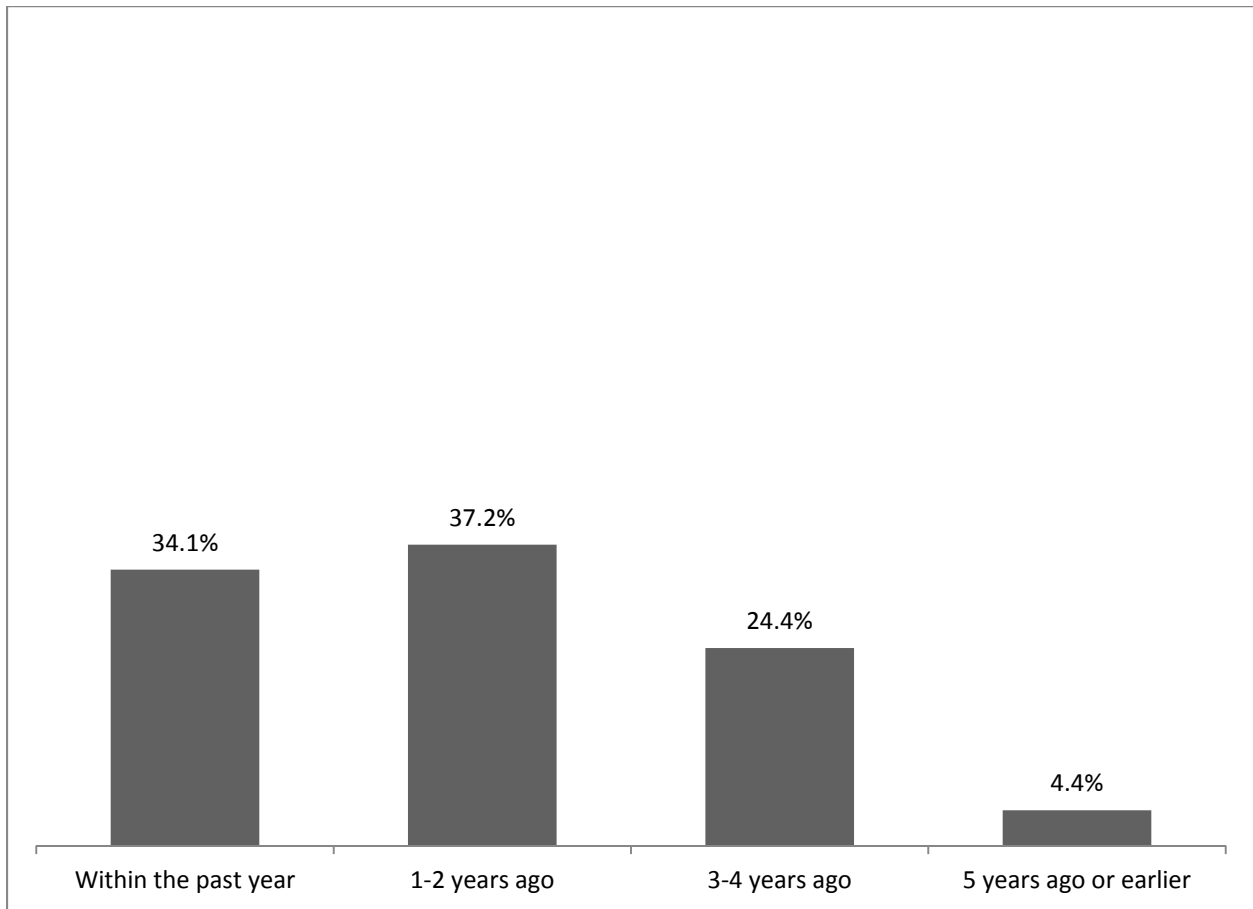


Figure 15: Have you ever taken any of the following actions relating to opting out? (Mark all that apply; Q12)

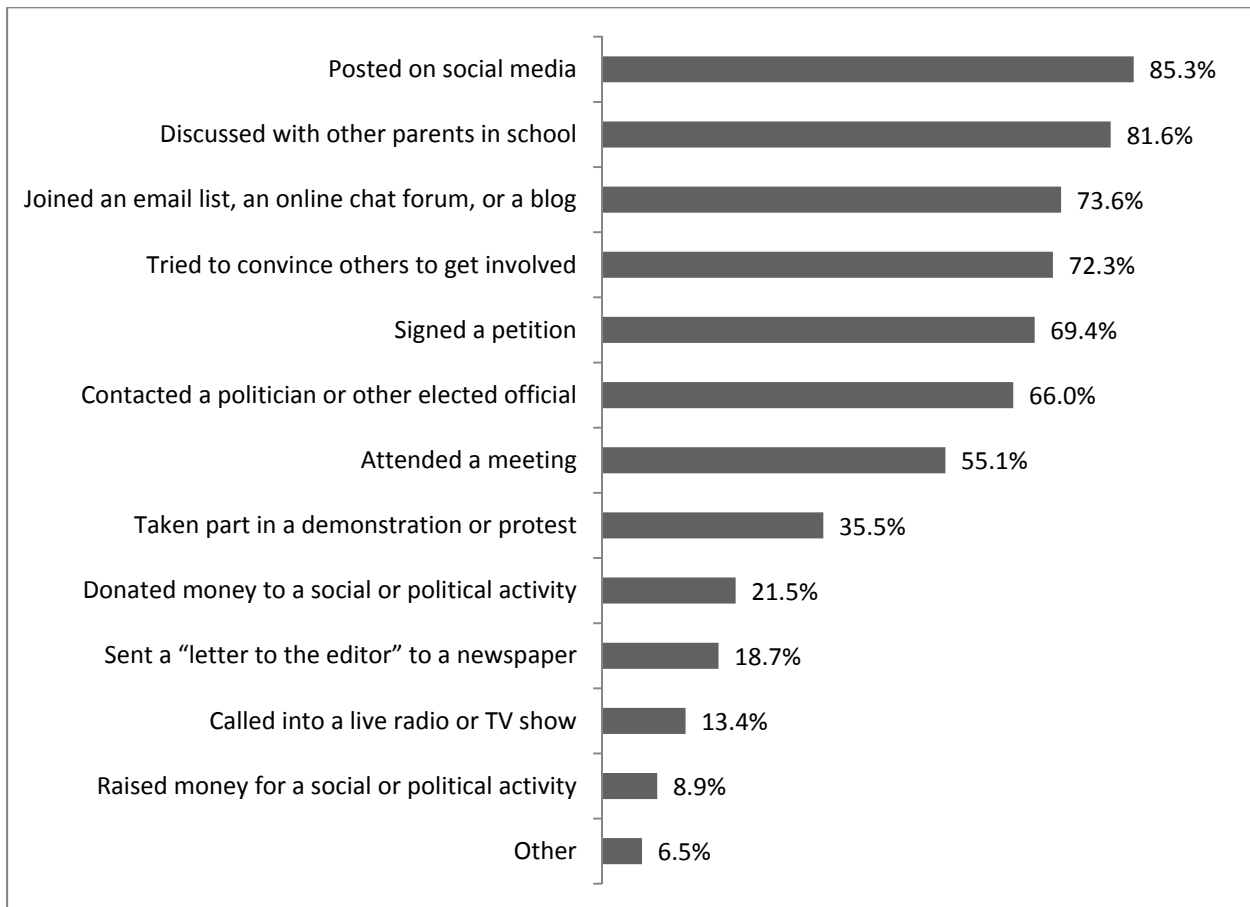


Figure 16: Reasons for participating in activities related to opting out (Mark up to five reasons; Q23)

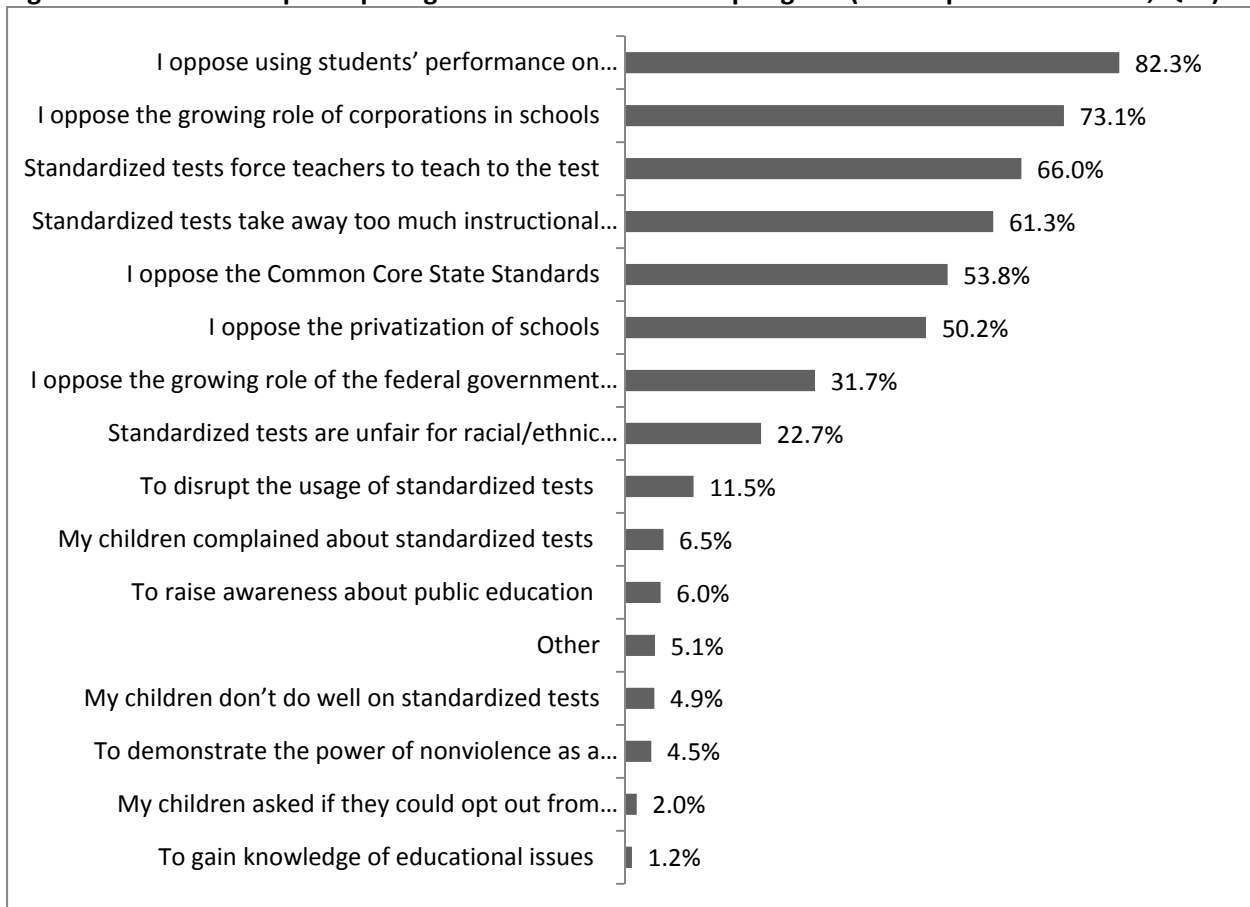


Figure 17: Reasons for participating in activities related to opting out (Mark top two reasons; Q24)

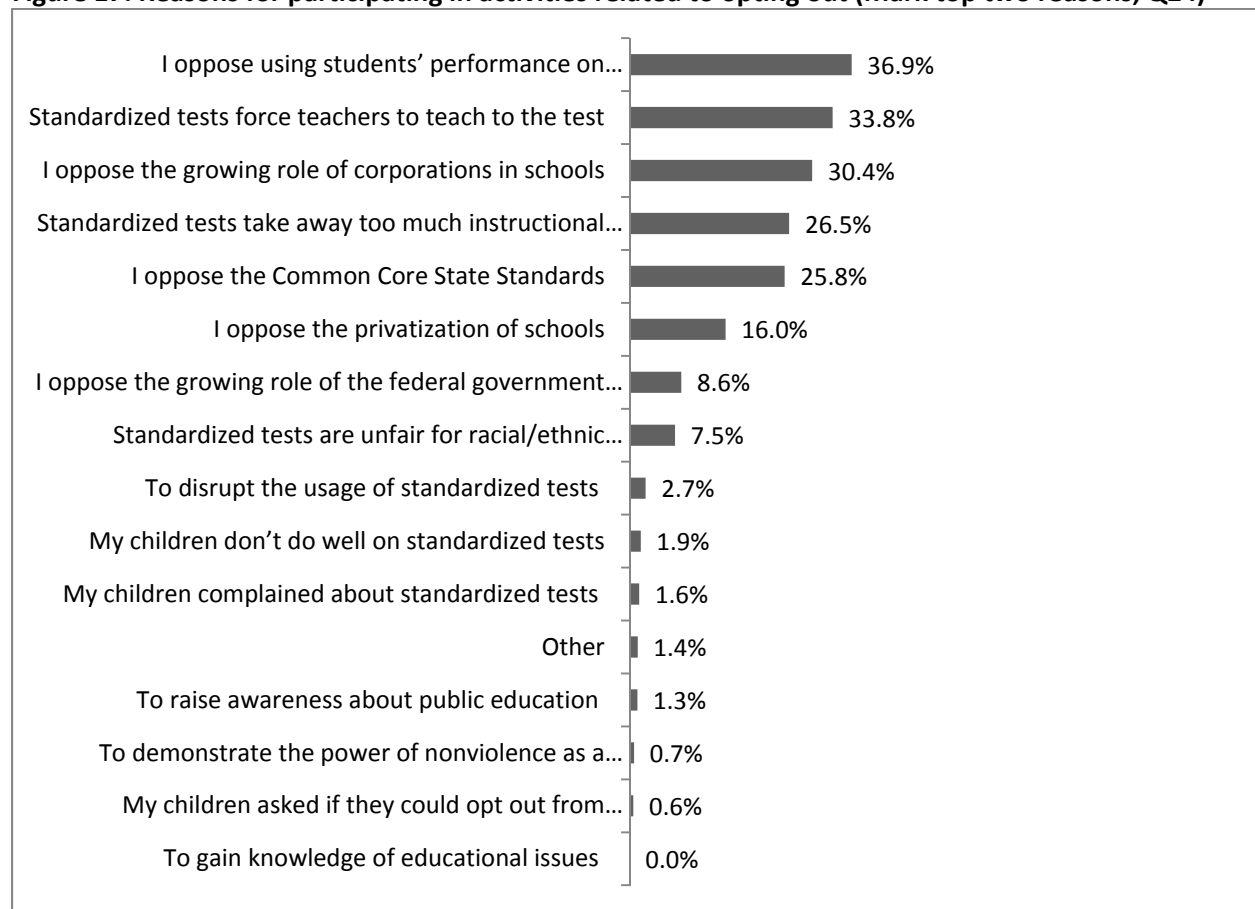


Figure 18A: Reasons for participating in activities related to opting out, by political ideology (Q24)

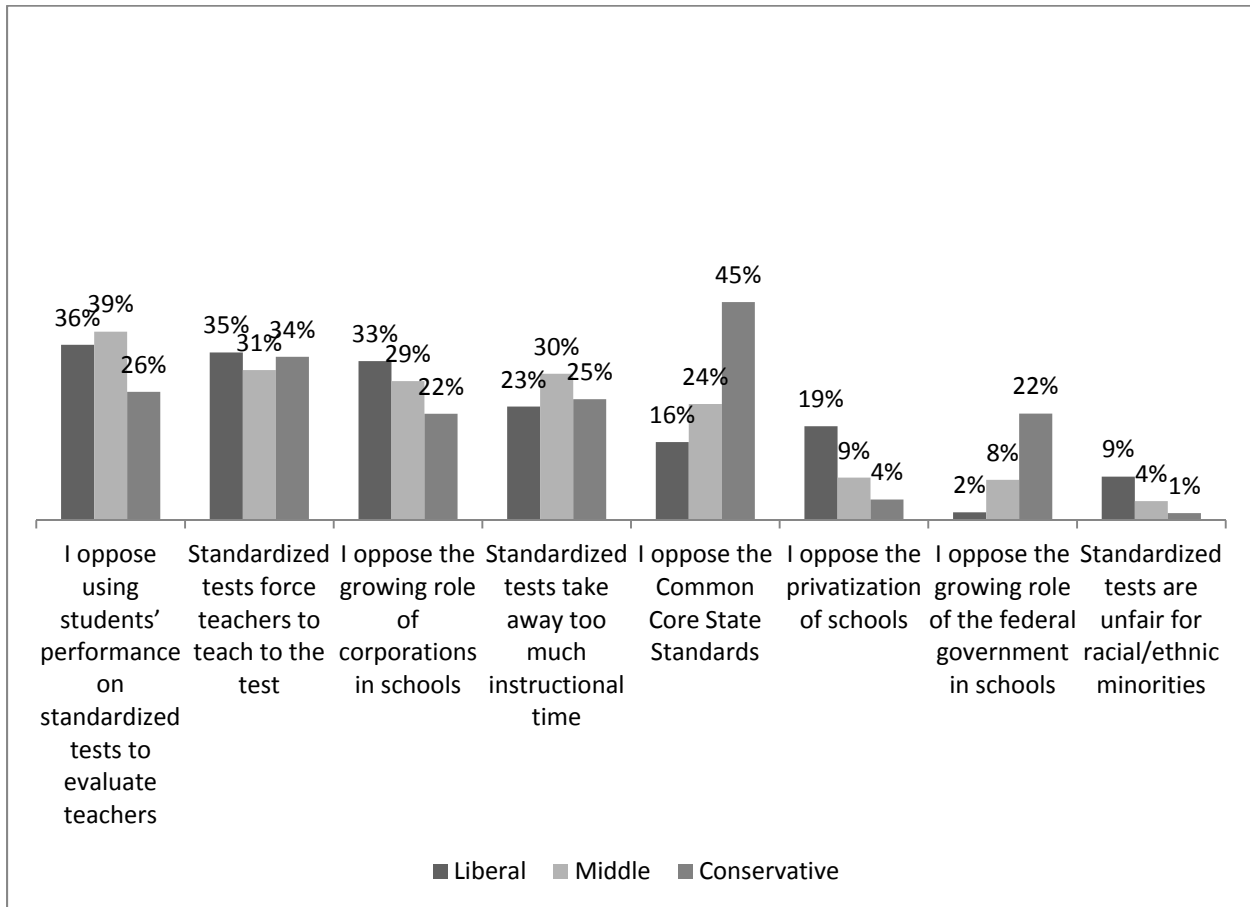


Figure 18B: Reasons for participating in activities related to opting out, by party identification (Q24)

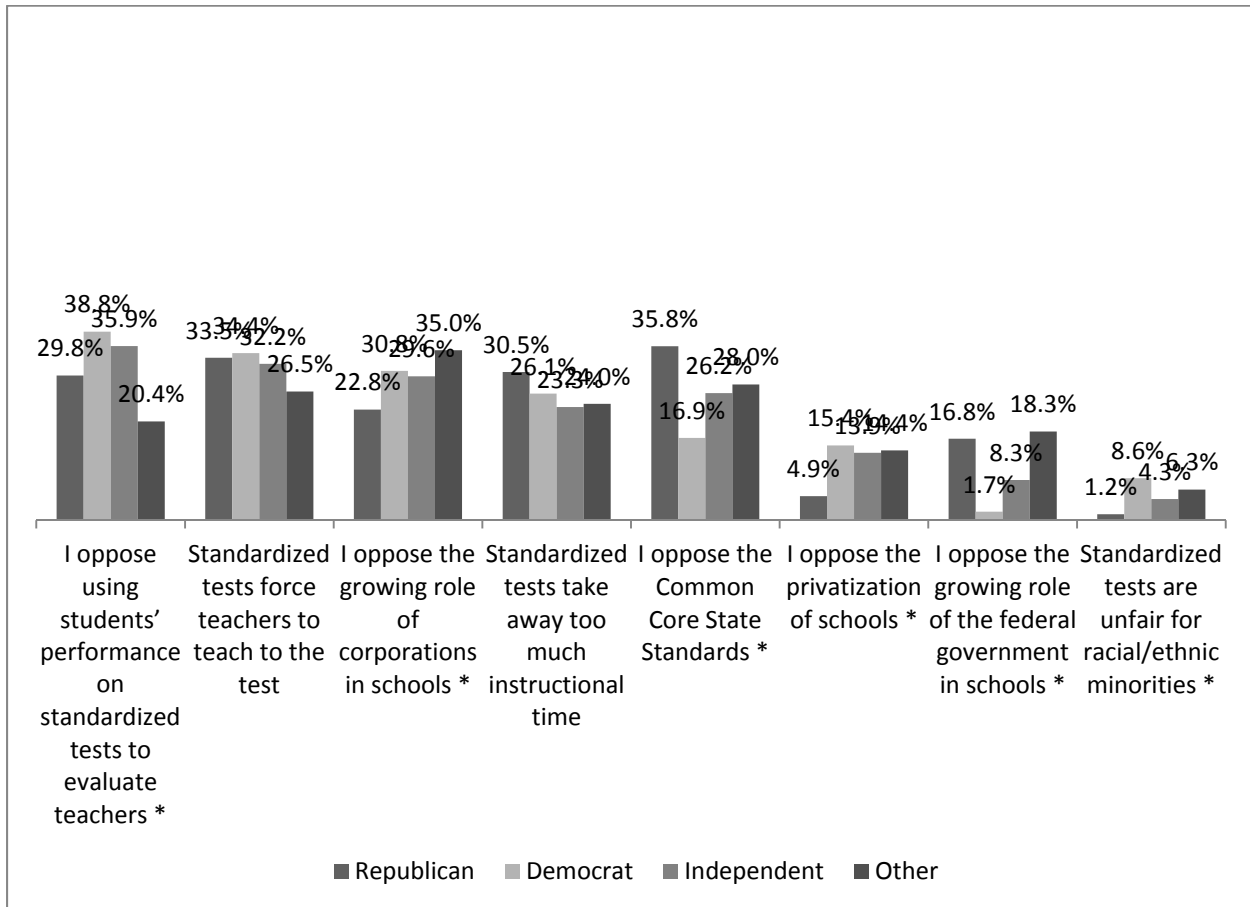


Figure 19: Reasons for participating in activities related to opting out, by teachers vs. non-teachers (Q24)

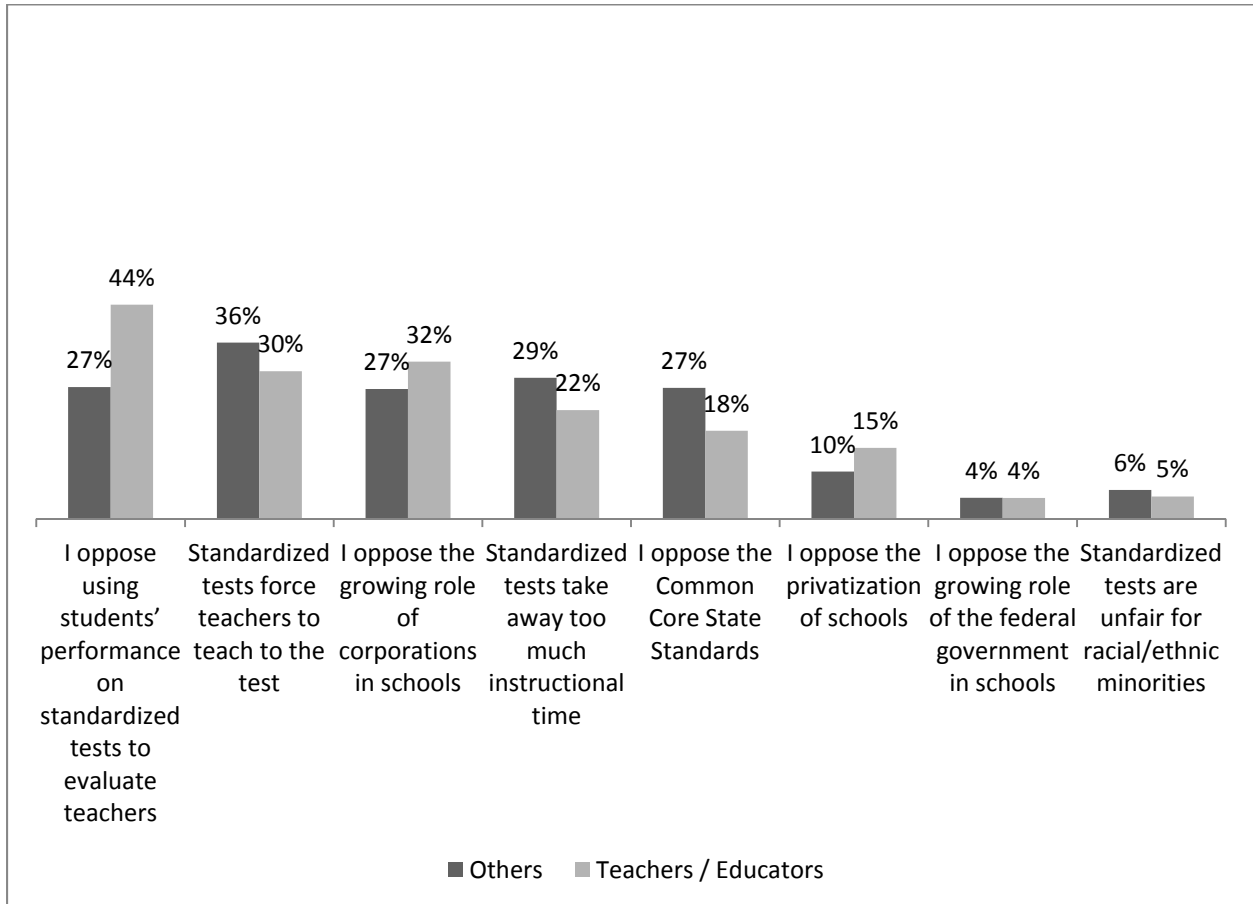


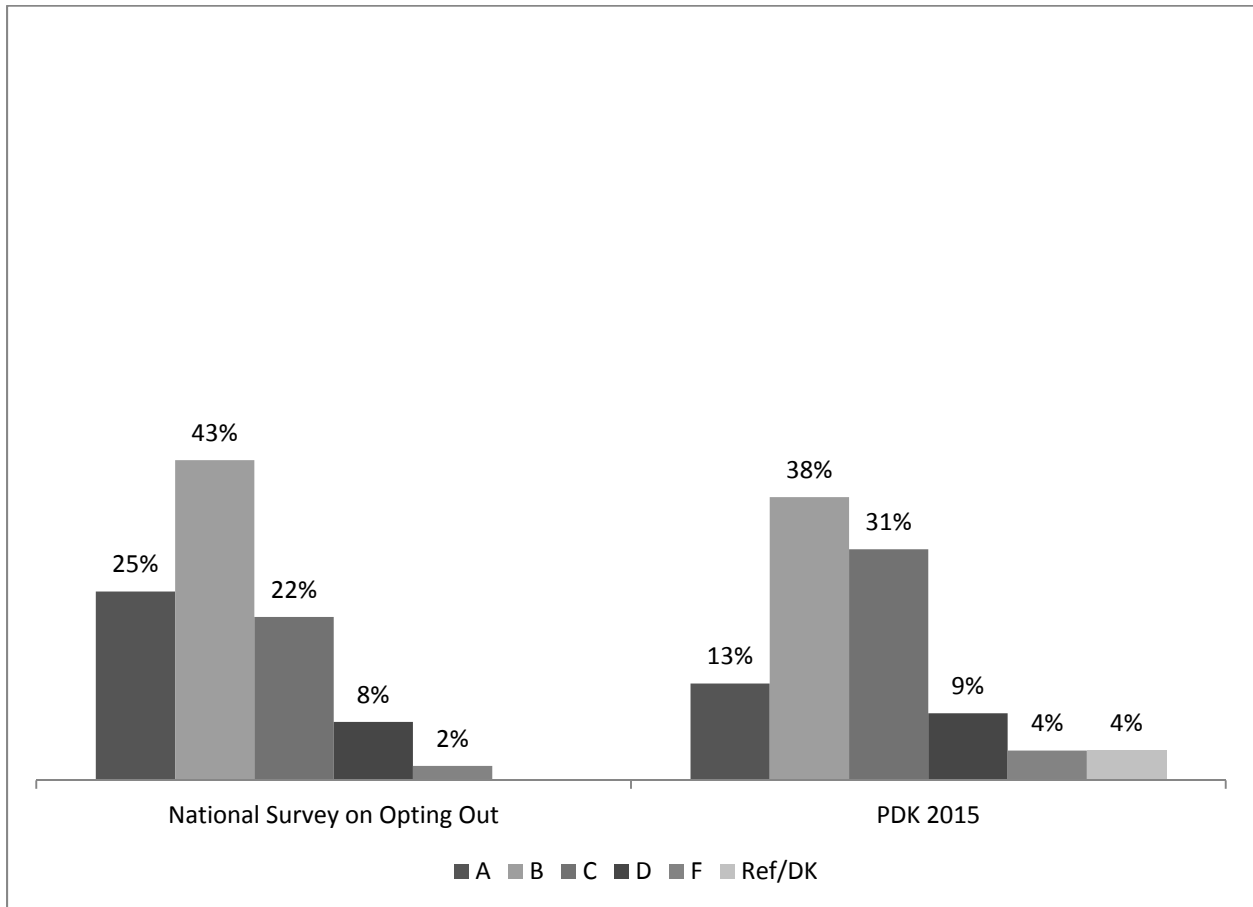
Figure 20: What grade would you give public schools in your community? (Q25)

Figure 21A: How supportive are you of the following types of student tests? (Q29)
% very supportive

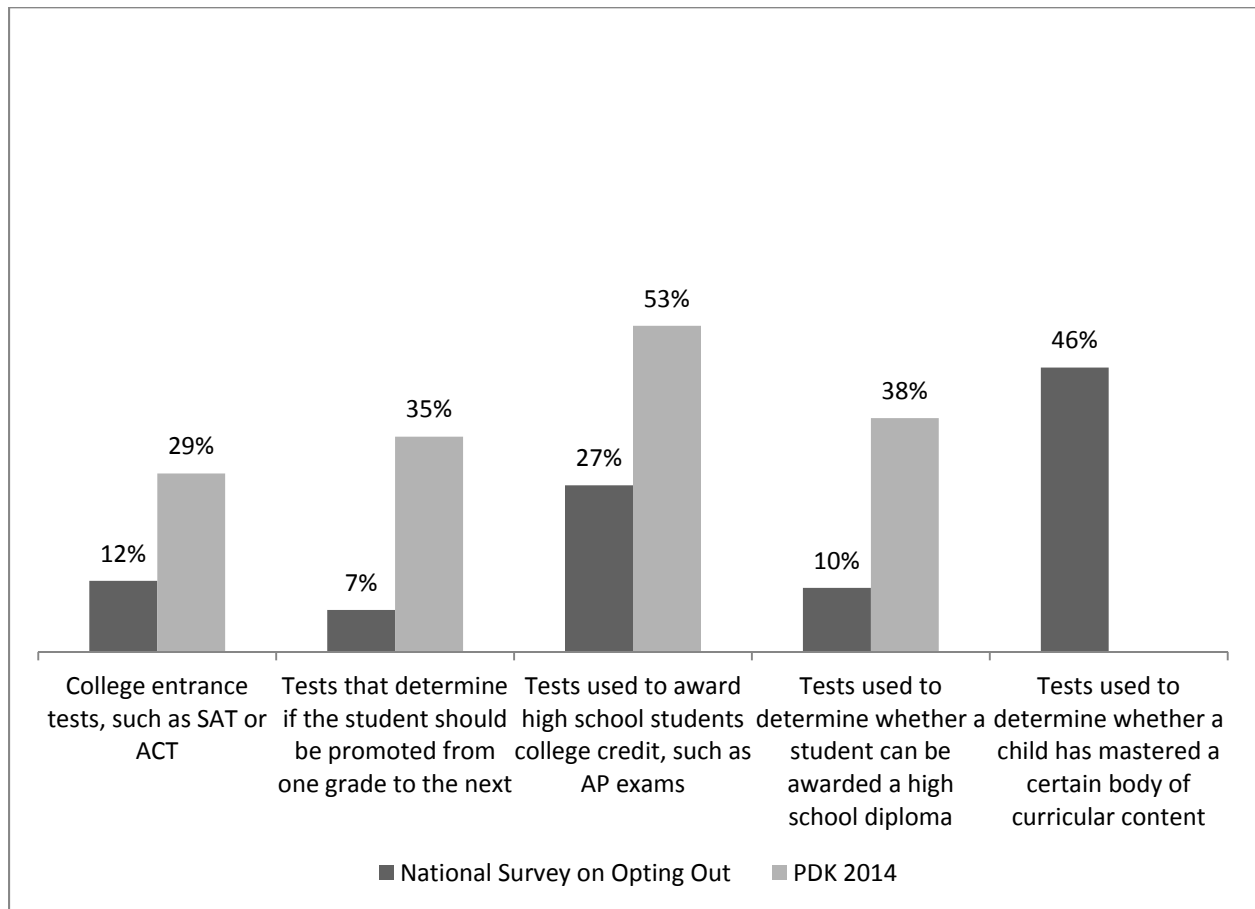


Figure 22B: How supportive are you of the following types of student tests? (Q29)
% very supportive and supportive

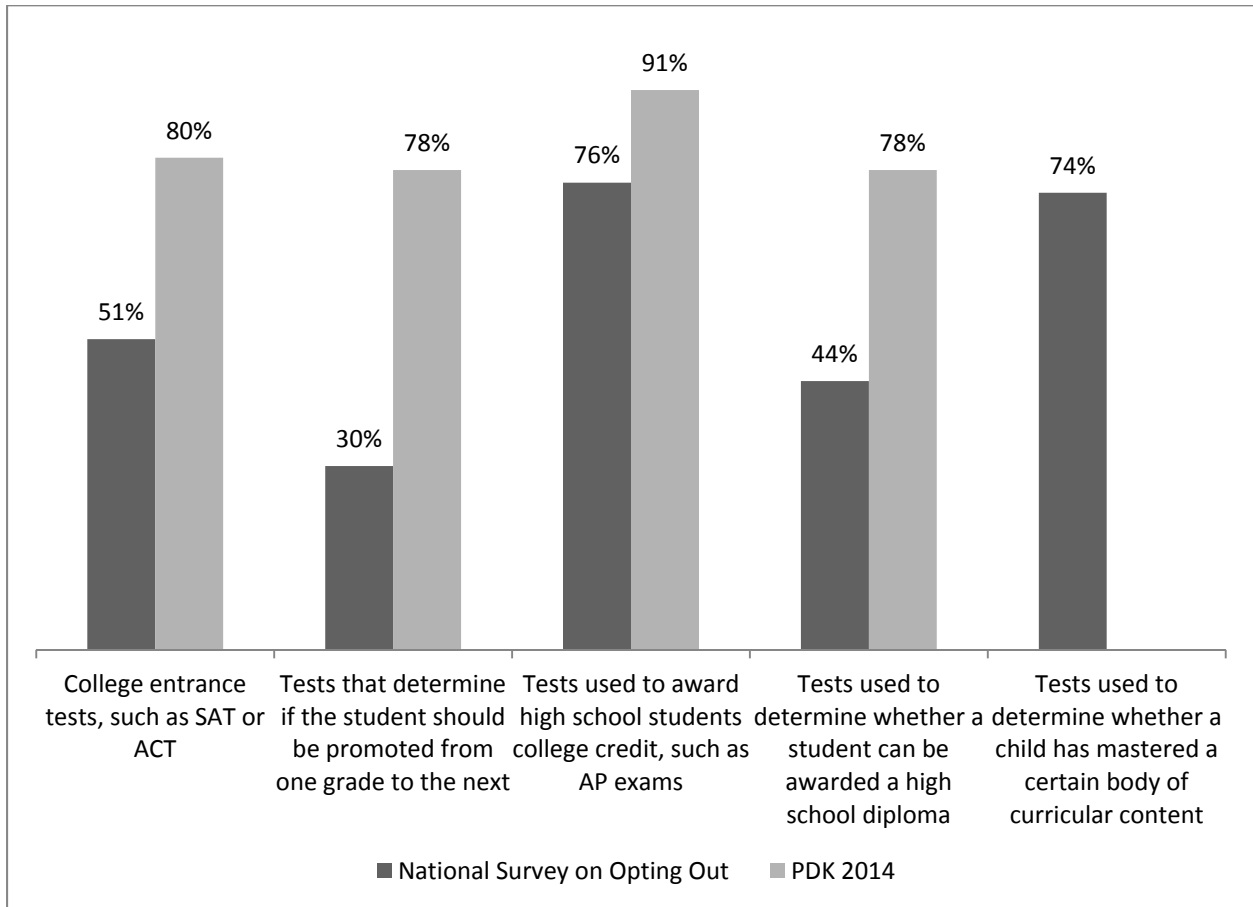


Figure 23: How important are the following ideas for improving public schools in your community? (Q31)

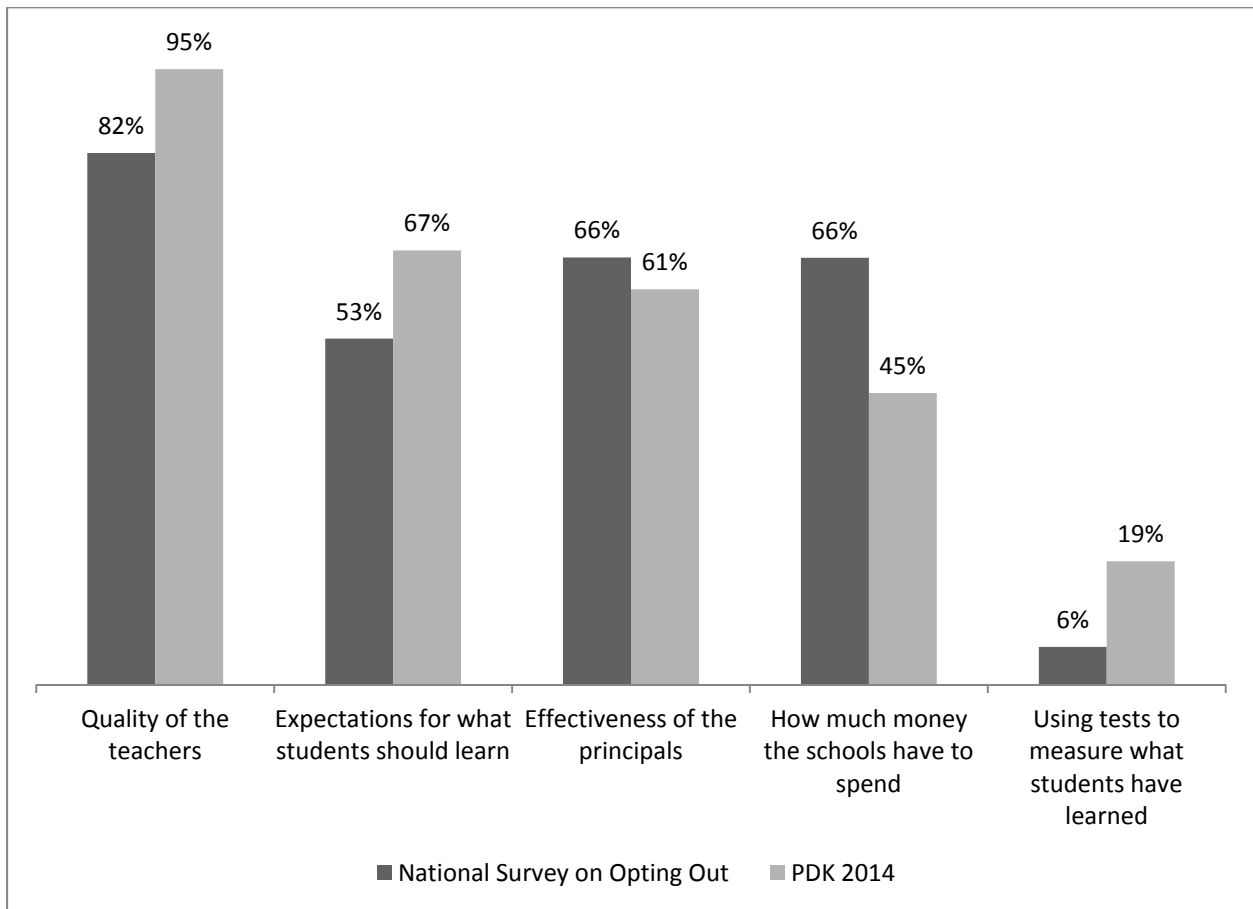


Figure 24: In your opinion, which of the following approaches would provide the most accurate picture of a student's academic progress? (Mark all that apply; Q32)

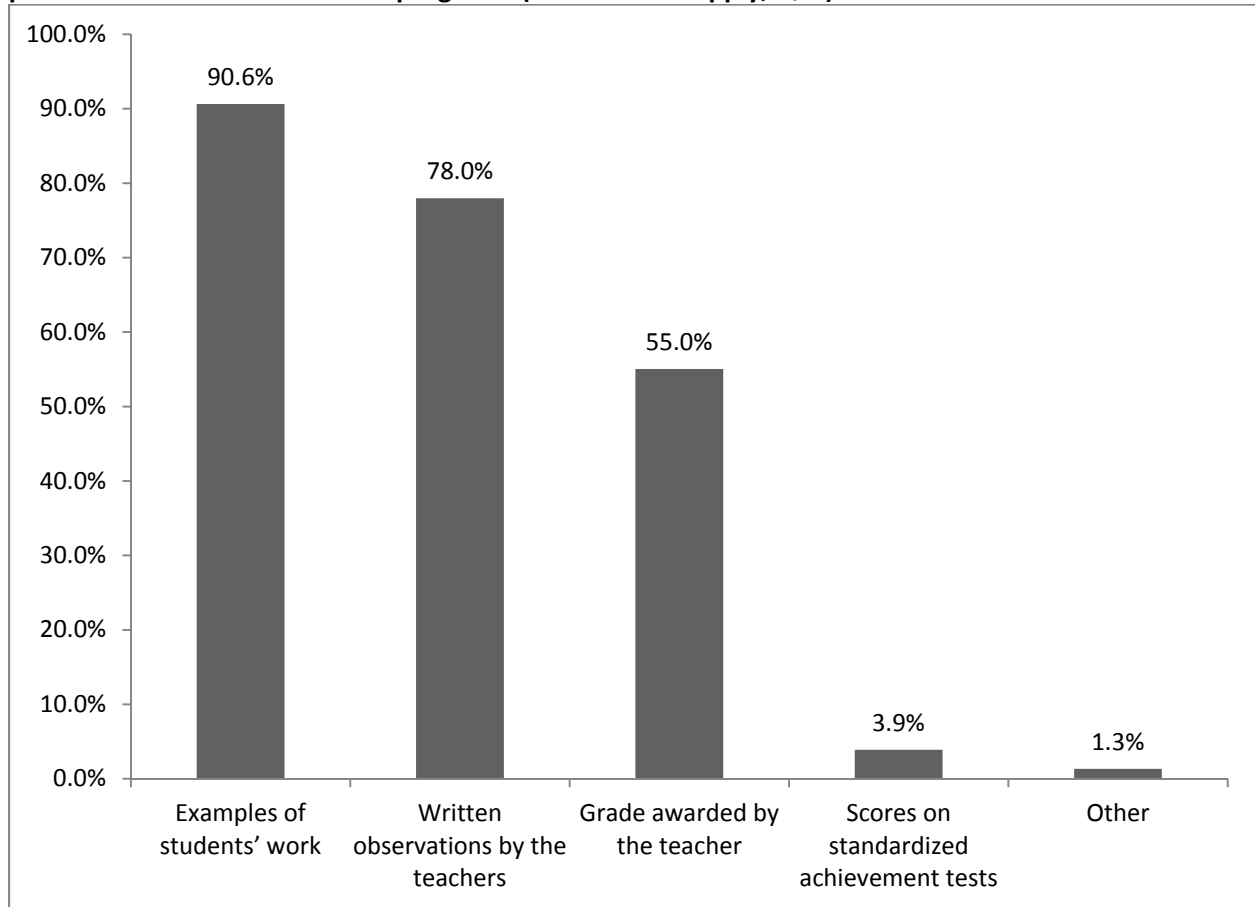


Figure 25: Who should have the greatest influence on the following education issues in k-12 public schools? (Q27)

Figure 25A: Paying for the k-12 public education system

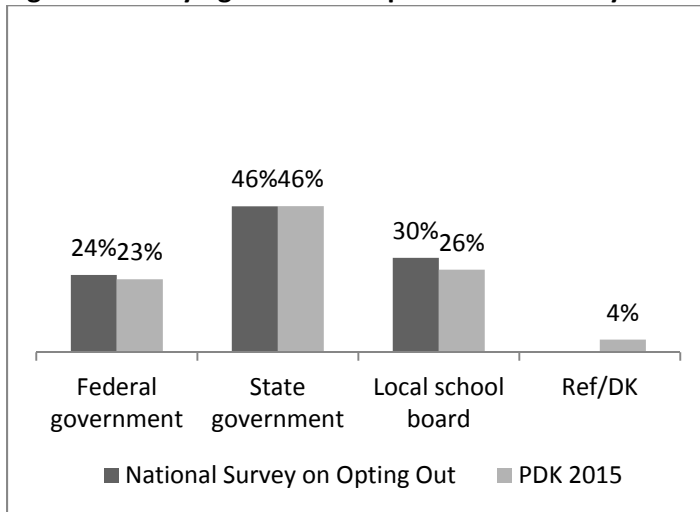


Figure 25B: Deciding what is taught in the school

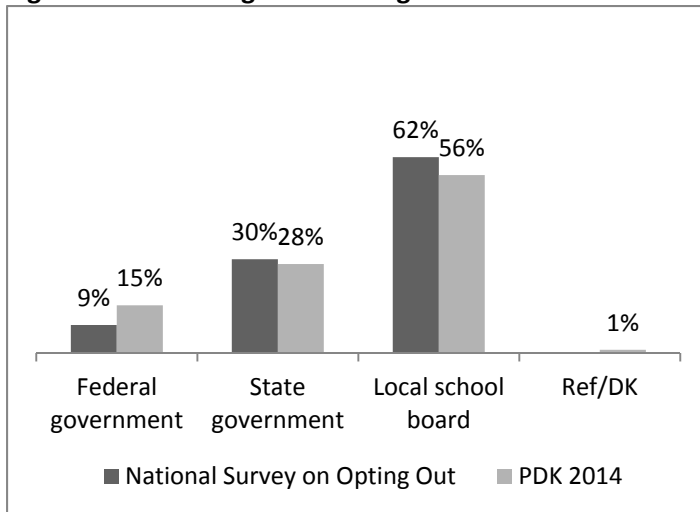


Figure 25C: Holding schools accountable for what students learn

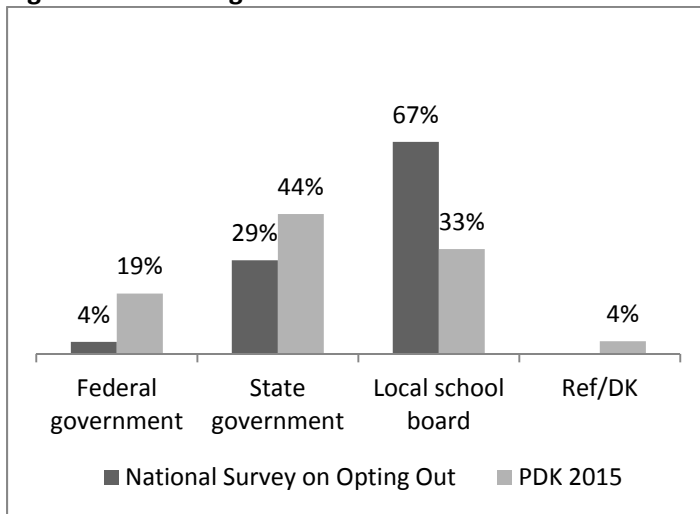


Figure 25D: Determining the right amount of testing

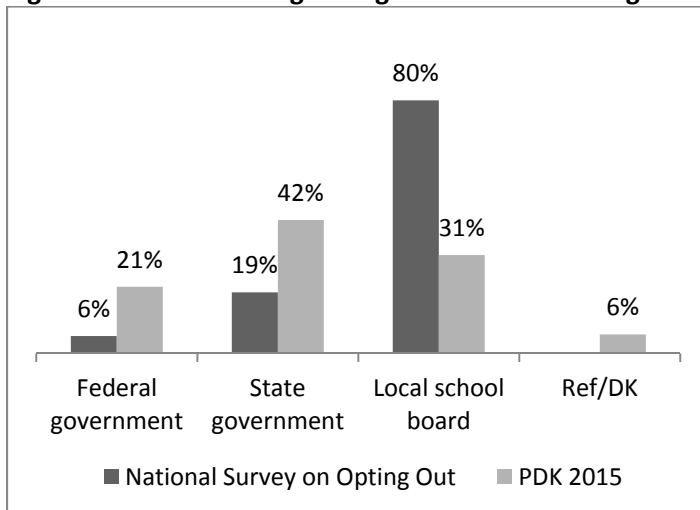


Figure 25E: Setting educational standards for what students should know

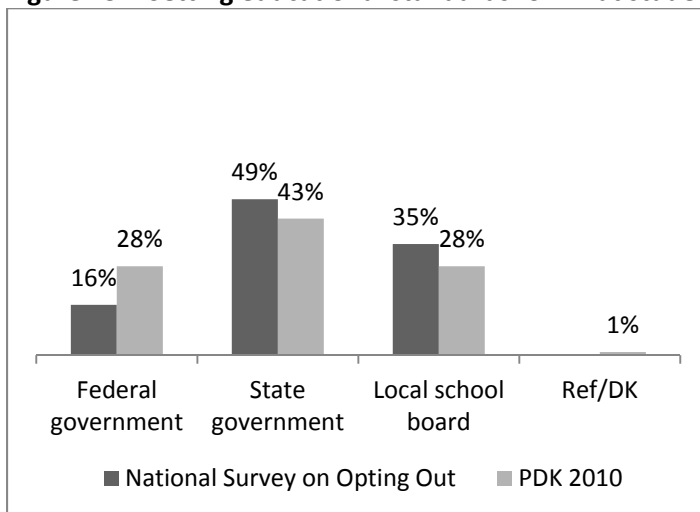
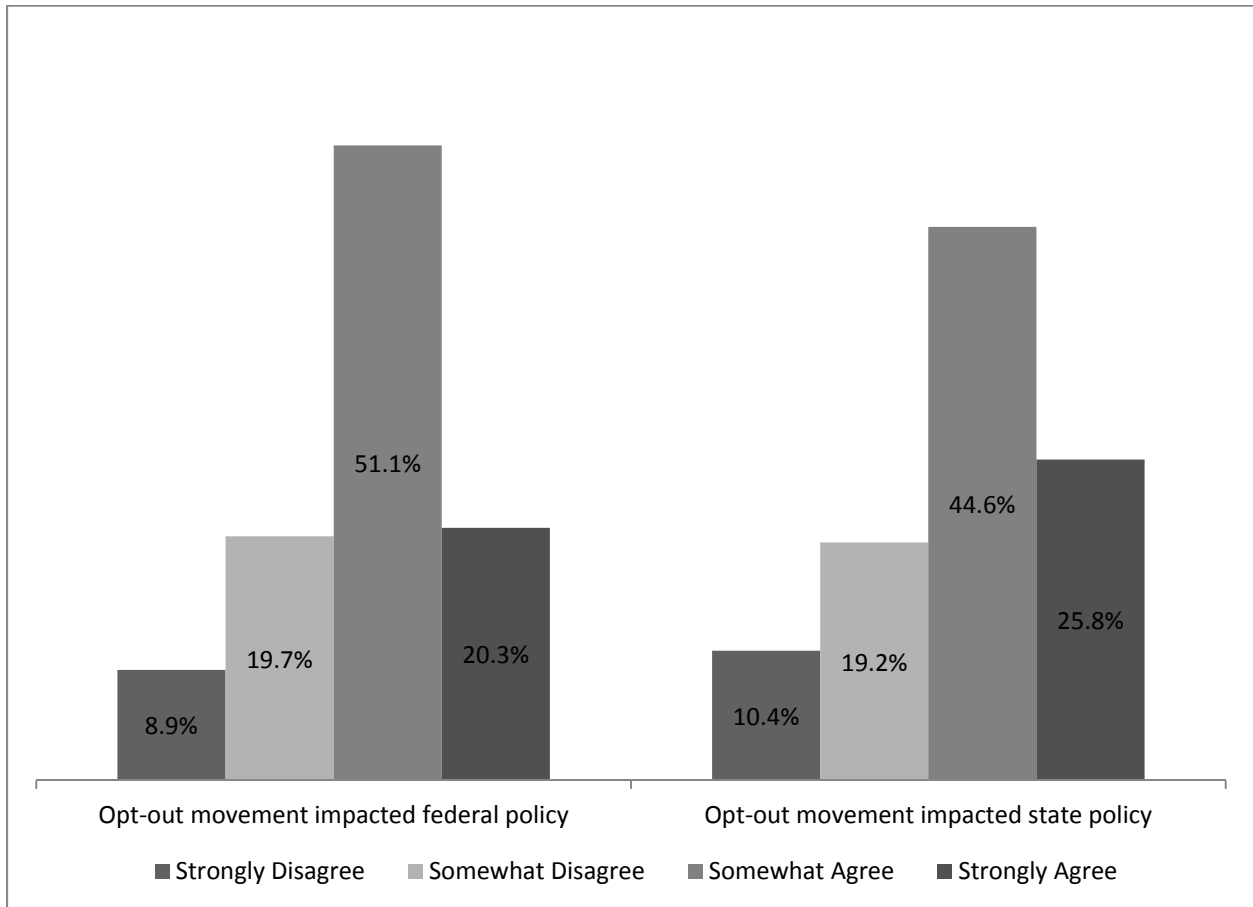


Figure 26: Perceived impact of the opt out movement at the state and federal levels (Q22)

Appendix 1: National Survey on Opting out

Q1 How did you first hear about opting out?

- Teachers or other education professionals
- Friends, neighbors or relatives
- Other parents at your child's school
- School communications such as a web site, email or newsletter
- Media (TV, radio, newspaper)
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, listserv, email, etc.)
- My children or their friends
- Public figure or organization
- Other (ENTER TEXT)

Q2 You indicated that you first heard about opting out from the media. Did you hear from national media or local media?

- National media
- Local media

Q3 You indicated that you first heard about opting out from public figure or organization. Did you hear from national, state or local public figure or organization?

- National public figure or organization
- State public figure or organization
- Local public figure or organization

Q4 When did you first hear about opting out?

- Within the past year
- 1-2 years ago
- 3-4 years ago
- 5 years ago or beforehand

Q5 Which of the following sources provided information that made you want to know more about and/or participate in activities relating to opting out? (Mark all that apply)

- Teachers or other education professionals
- Friends, neighbors or relatives
- Other parents at your child's school
- School communications such as a web site, email or newsletter
- Media (TV, radio, newspaper)
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, listserv, email, etc.)
- My children or their friends
- Public figure or organization
- Other (ENTER TEXT)

Q6 Are you currently the parent or guardian of a child under age 18?

- Yes
- No

Q7 If yes, how many children under 18 are you responsible for?

Q8 Have you opted out your child/children from standardized testing?

- Yes, I have opted out my child/children
- No, I have not opted out my child/children

Q9 When did you first opt out from standardized testing?

- Within the past year
- 1-2 years ago
- 3-4 years ago
- 5 years ago or beforehand

Q10 Please use the textbox below to share with us why you decided to opt out.

Q11 When you have opted out, did you opt out all or some of your children?

- I opted out all of my children
- I opted out some of my children

Q12 Have you ever taken any of the following actions relating to opting out? (Mark all that apply)

- Attended a meeting
- Taken part in a demonstration or protest (e.g., held a banner, handed out leaflets)
- Called into a live radio or TV show to express an opinion
- Contacted a politician or other elected official to express a view
- Discussed with other parents in school
- Donated money to a social or political activity
- Joined an email list, an online chat forum, or a blog
- Posted on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, etc.)
- Raised money for a social or political activity
- Sent a "letter to the editor" to a newspaper or magazine
- Signed a petition
- Tried to convince others to get involved
- Other (ENTER TEXT)

Q13 You indicated that you have contacted a politician or other elected official to express a view. Which level of the government did you contact? (Mark all that apply)

- National level official
- State government official
- Local government official

Q14 Please use the textbox below to share with us why you decided not to opt out.

Q15 How likely is it that you will opt your child/children out of standardized testing this year or in the future?

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Somewhat unlikely
- Not at all likely

Q16 How many parents of school-aged children do you know who opted their children out of standardized testing?

- None
- One
- Between 2 and 5
- Between 6 and 10
- More than 10

Q17 How many of these parents do you consider close friends?

- None
- Few
- Some
- Many
- Most

Q18 Have you ever been contacted by an organization to participate in any opt out activities?

- Yes
- No

Q19 If yes, which organization(s) have contacted you to participate in any opt out activities? Use the textbox below.

Q20 Have you discussed opting out with your children?

- Yes
- No

Q21 In your opinion, what problem does the opt out movement try to address? Use the textbox below.

Q22 Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The opt out movement has impacted federal assessment policy				
The opt out movement has impacted state assessment policy				

Q23 People have different reasons for participating in activities related to opting out. In this question, we are interested in the main reasons for your participation. Please choose up to five reasons. [Randomized Order]

- I oppose the Common Core State Standards
- I oppose the growing role of corporations in schools
- I oppose the growing role of the federal government in schools
- I oppose the privatization of schools
- I oppose using students' performance on standardized tests to evaluate teachers
- My children asked if they could opt out from standardized tests
- My children complained about standardized tests
- My children don't do well on standardized tests
- Standardized tests are unfair for racial/ethnic minorities
- Standardized tests force teachers to teach to the test
- Standardized tests take away too much instructional time
- To demonstrate the power of nonviolence as a vehicle for social change
- To disrupt the usage of standardized tests
- To gain knowledge of educational issues
- To raise awareness about public education
- Other (ENTER TEXT)

Q24 From all the reasons you mentioned, what are the main two reasons?

Q25 What grade would you give public schools in your community?

- A (1)
 B (2)
 C (3)
 D (4)
 F (5)

Q26 Thinking about the school-age children for whom you are currently responsible, what kinds of schools have they attended? (Mark all that apply)

- Public school
 Charter school
 Private school
 Home school
 Parochial/religious school

Q27 Who should have the greatest influence on the following education issues in k-12 public schools?

	Federal government	State government	Local school board
Paying for the k-12 public education system			
Deciding what is taught in the school			
Holding schools accountable for what students learn			
Determining the right amount of testing			
Setting educational standards for what students should know			

Q28 How important is it for you to know how the students in your community's schools perform on standardized tests compared to the following:

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not at all important
Students in other school districts				
Students in other states				
Students in other countries				

Q29 How supportive are you of the following types of student tests?

	Very supportive	Somewhat supportive	Not very supportive	Not at all supportive
College entrance tests, such as SAT or ACT				
Tests that determine if the student should be promoted from one grade to the next				
Tests used to award high school students college credit, such as AP exams				
Tests used to determine whether a student can be awarded a high school diploma				
Tests used to determine whether a child has mastered a certain body of curricular content				

Q30 Do you think the teachers in your child's/children's schools generally support or oppose standardized testing?

- Strongly support
- Somewhat support
- Neither support nor oppose
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose

Q31 There are many ideas about how to improve the quality of public schools. How important are the following ideas for improving public schools in your community?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not at all important
Quality of the teachers				
Expectations for what students should learn				
Effectiveness of the principals				
How much money the schools have to spend				
Using tests to measure what students have learned				
Other factors (ENTER TEXT)				

Q32 In your opinion, which of the following approaches would provide the most accurate picture of a student's academic progress? (Mark all that apply)

- Examples of students' work
- Written observations by the teachers
- Grade awarded by the teacher
- Scores on standardized achievement tests
- Other

Q33 How would you classify your political views? Please use a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is extremely liberal, 4 is middle of the road, and 7 is extremely conservative

- 1 Extremely liberal
- 2
- 3
- 4 middle of the road
- 5
- 6
- 7 Extremely conservative

Q34 Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, Independent, or something else?

- Republican
- Democrat
- Independent
- Other: (ENTER TEXT)

Q35 In 2012, you may remember that Barack Obama ran for President on the Democratic ticket against Mitt Romney on the Republican ticket. Do you remember for sure whether or not you voted in that election?

- Voted
- Did not vote
- Don't remember

Q36 In general, how often do you discuss politics and public affairs with others?

- Every day
- At least once a week
- At least once a month
- Less than once a month
- Never

Q37 People sometimes belong to different kinds of voluntary organizations. Please indicate whether you have participated in the activities of any of the following organizations during the past twelve months. (Mark all that apply)

	Yes	No
Church or religious organization		
Sport or recreational organization		
Art, music or educational organization		
Labor union		
Political party		
Environmental organization		
Professional association		
Humanitarian or charitable organization		
Consumer organization		
Civil rights organization		
Any other organization (write in)		

Q38 Have you ever participated in any activities relating to the following issues?(Mark all that apply)

- Anti-War/Peace
- Civil rights
- Ecology and environment
- Gun rights
- Family values
- Labor / workers' rights / fair wage
- LGBT rights / marriage equality
- Occupy Wall Street
- Tea Party
- Women's rights / pro-choice
- Anti-abortion / pro-life
- Other protests (ENTER TEXT)

Q39 What is your gender?

- Man
- Woman
- Other (ENTER TEXT)
- I prefer not to answer

Q40 What year were you born?

Q41 What racial/ethnic group best describes you? (Mark all that apply)

- American Indian/Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black/African American
- Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- White/Caucasian
- Other (ENTER TEXT)

Q42 What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Less than high school
- High school
- Associate/community college/nursing degree (AA/AS)
- Some college but no degree
- Bachelor's degree (BA/BS/AB)
- Graduate degree (Masters, M.D, J.D, or other professional or doctorate degree)

Q43 Do you consider yourself to be:

- Heterosexual or straight
- Gay or lesbian
- Bisexual
- Other
- I prefer not to answer

Q44 This research study focused on the opt out movement in the United States. What state do you live in?

Q45 Your current residence is in which zip code?

Q46 What is your current marital status?

- Married / living with a partner
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated
- Never married

Q47 What language(s) other than English do you speak at home? (ENTER TEXT)

Q48 Do you have access to the Internet or World Wide Web in your home?

- Yes
- No

Q49 Are you currently working for pay?

- Yes
- No

Q50 Does anyone in your close circle of family or friends work in the education field?

- Yes
- No

Q51 Do you work in the education field as a teacher or an educator?

- Yes
- No

Q52 What kind of work do you do for your main job? (ENTER TEXT)

Q53 In an average week, how many hours do you typically work in your job or jobs? (ENTER TEXT)

Q54 What religion do you consider yourself?

- Catholic
- Protestant
- Other Christian
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Some other religion (ENTER TEXT)
- I have no religious affiliation

Q55 Would you describe yourself as:

- Very religious
- Moderately religious
- Slightly religious
- Not religious at all

Q56 The last question is for classification purposes only. Considering all sources of income and all salaries, what was your household's total annual income in 2015?

- 0 - \$19,999
- \$20,000 - \$29,999
- \$30,000 - \$39,999
- \$40,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$74,999
- \$75,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 - \$149,999
- More than \$150,000
- Other (ENTER TEXT)

Q57 We are interested in your thoughts about opting out or the other issues we have raised in this survey. Please use the textbox below to add any additional comments. (ENTER TEXT)