



DATA FOR *PROGRESS*

# CHILDRENS' MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS IN SCHOOLS: NATIONAL TOPLINE, AND NATIONAL TOPLINE BY PARTY ID

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The United States is experiencing a mental health crisis among its adolescents. Nearly one in five children suffer from mental health issues, and rates of suicide and depression have risen over 50 percent in recent years.<sup>1</sup> However, voters support a wide range of policies to make access to mental health care universal.

## Executive summary

- ▶ Voters overwhelmingly support both an expansion of mental health services in schools, and requirements to cover mental health care.
- ▶ Support is strong across partisan lines and could be a path for Democrats to improve margins with independent voters.
- ▶ Women voters are more supportive of mental health interventions than men, offering a path for Democrats seeking to peel off women voters already concerned about Trump.

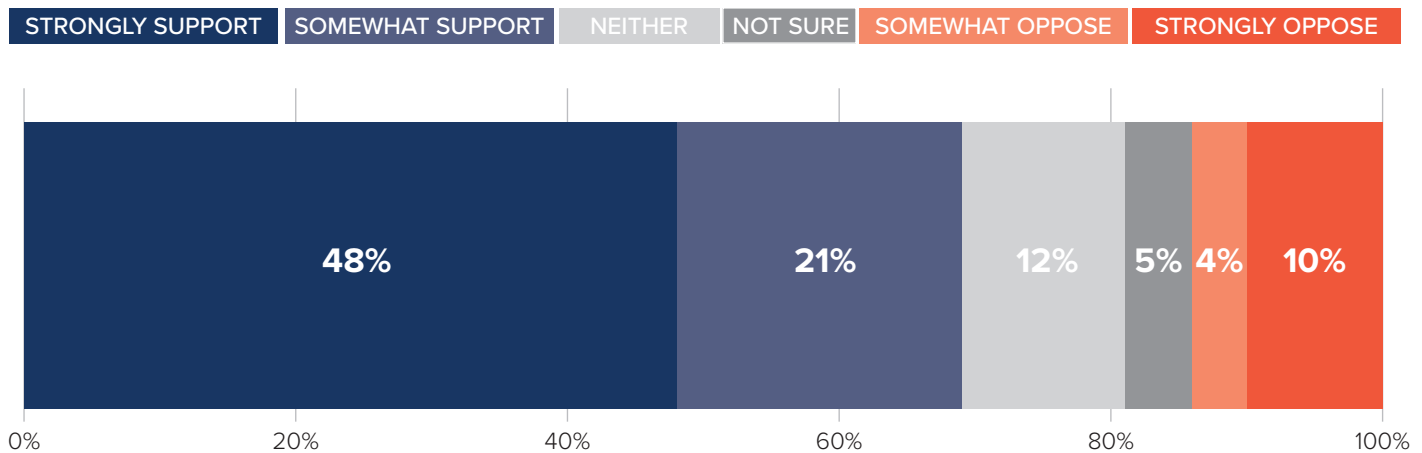
In our survey,<sup>2</sup> we asked voters to consider a program that would provide for adequate mental health treatment for all children in America’s schools. Specifically, we asked respondents:

*Would you [support or oppose] a policy requiring all schools to provide mental health services to all children, regardless of income?*

The item’s wording included the notion of a legal “requirement”—an accurate characterization of the policy, but also a wording choice generally associated with lower overall approval of the policy—but did not include a cost estimate, since policy analysts have not yet established one.

Sixty-nine percent of respondents in our survey somewhat or strongly supported such a policy, while only 14 percent of voters opposed this policy. (Seventeen percent are neutral or unsure.)

### SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS



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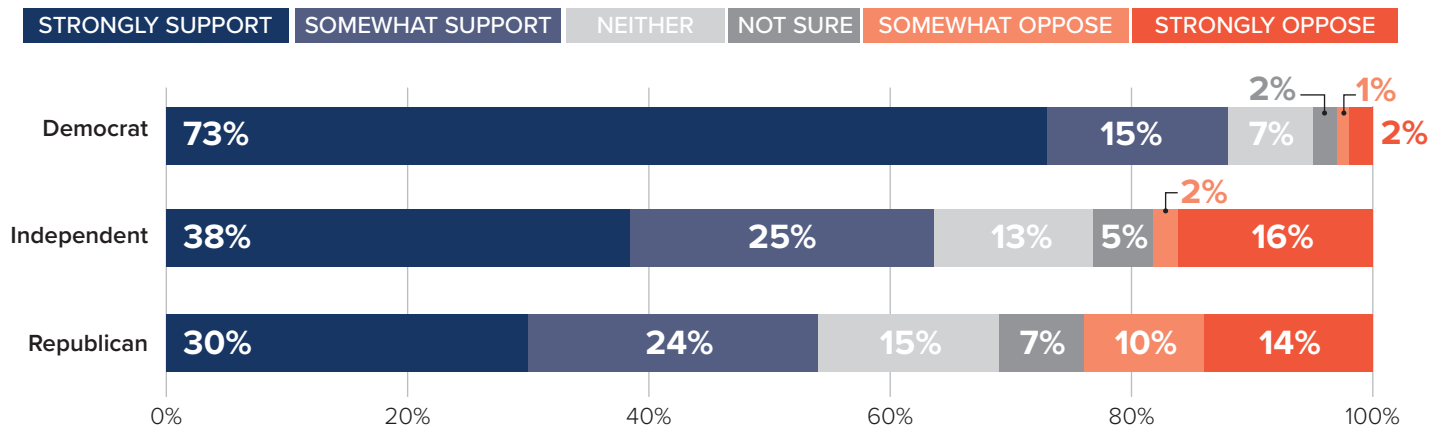
Additionally, the idea has strong bipartisan support. Eighty-eight percent of Democrats somewhat or strongly support such a policy, and even among Republicans, an outright majority of respondents (54 percent) somewhat or strongly supported the policy.

Women voters were significantly more likely than male voters to support school programs for mental health. While about 74 percent of women voters supported a policy to provide mental health services to children, just 54 percent of male voters also supported such programs. Though this gap is large, overall support for such programs was very high among men and women voters.

On net, school mental health programs were favored by a 64 percent margin among women, and a 43 percent margin among men. And the prime takeaway should be that voters overwhelmingly favor funding such programs.

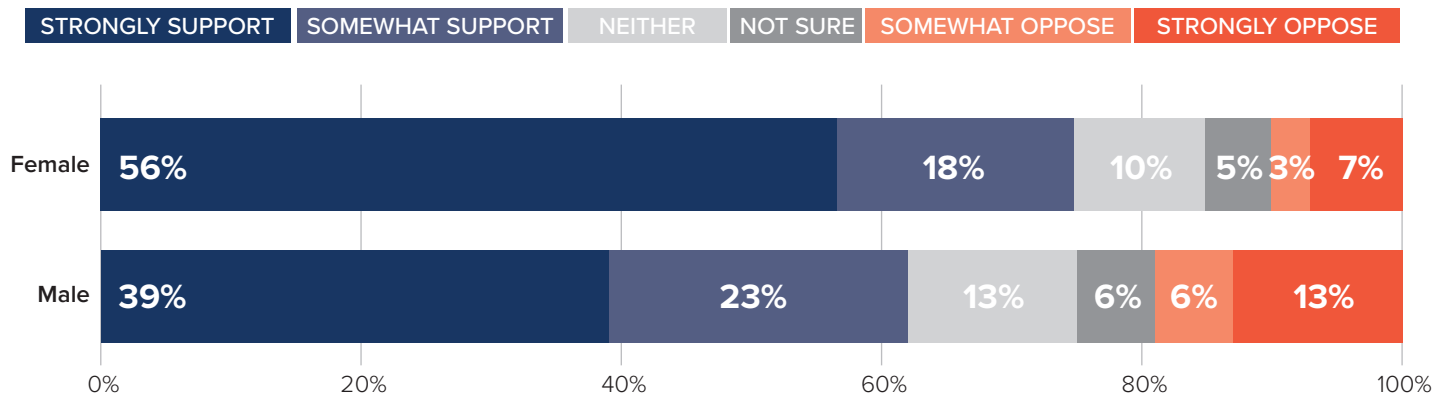
On net, the margin of support for this policy is 55 percent. Policies with this level of net support are very uncommon. A typical policy of this level of net support would broadly include appealing ideas that the parties have not yet polarized on, one example being the Green New Deal's jobs program prior to voters' finding out that Republicans were against it in the fall of 2018.

SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS BY PARTY ID



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SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS BY GENDER



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## Evidence-based mental health and substance abuse services: National topline, and topline by party identification

Later in our survey, we asked voters about support for a broader set of mental health provisions in insurance plans for those suffering from substance abuse. Specifically, we asked voters:

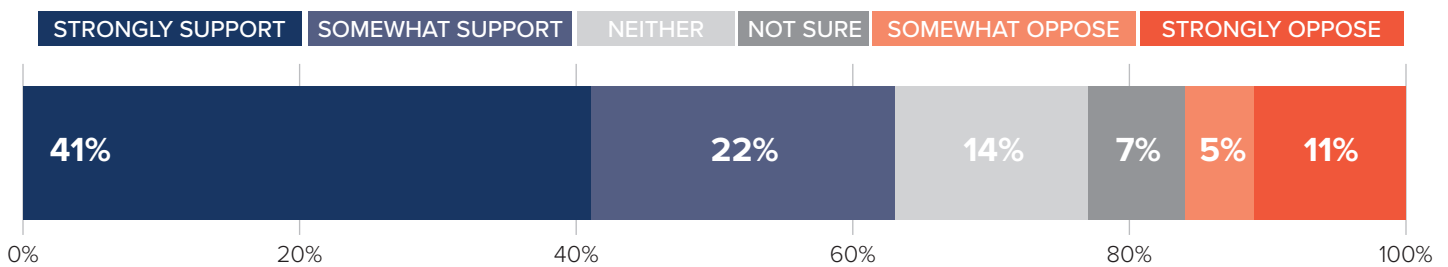
*Would you [support or oppose] a policy expanding mental health and substance abuse disorder services, such as federally mandating insurers expand coverage for all evidence-based services?*

Here we once again sought to realistically appraise the policy’s inevitable call for a “federal mandate” while also not including a cost estimate since such an estimate is not currently available from a reputable source.

As with the previous item, we find overwhelming support for expanded mental health and substance abuse services. Sixty-three percent of voters support the policy, compared to just 16 percent who are opposed.

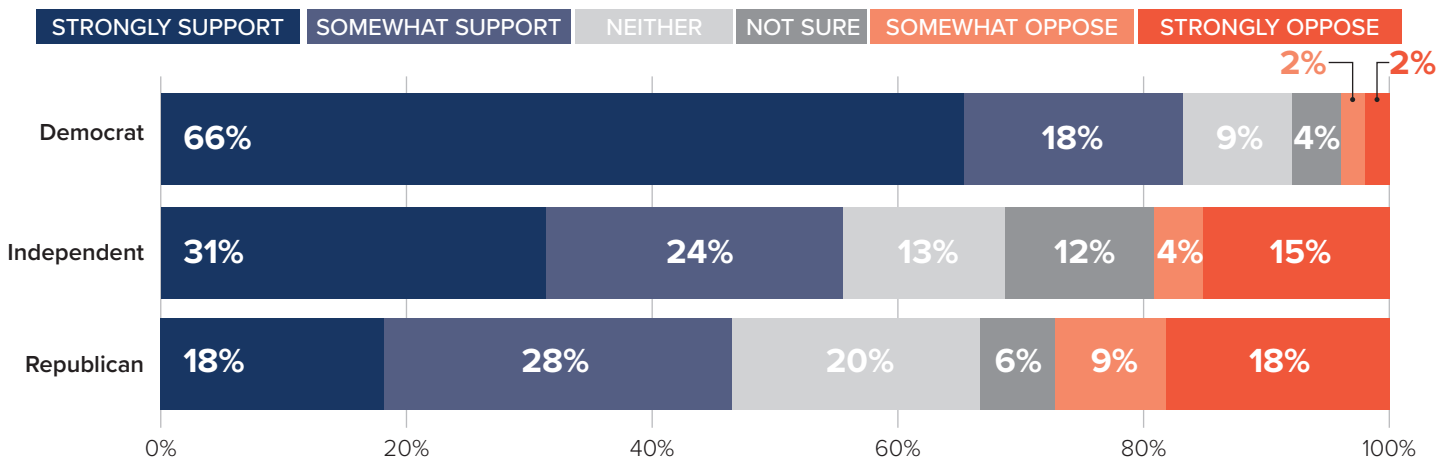
While there is a slightly clearer partisan divide on this policy than the previous, expanded mental health and substance abuse services also enjoy clear bipartisan support. Democrats and independents overwhelmingly support such a policy (margins of support were 80 percent and 36 percent, respectively), and Republicans narrowly support the policy (19 percent margin of support).

SUPPORT FOR EXPANDING MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES, INCLUDING THROUGH INSURANCE MANDATES



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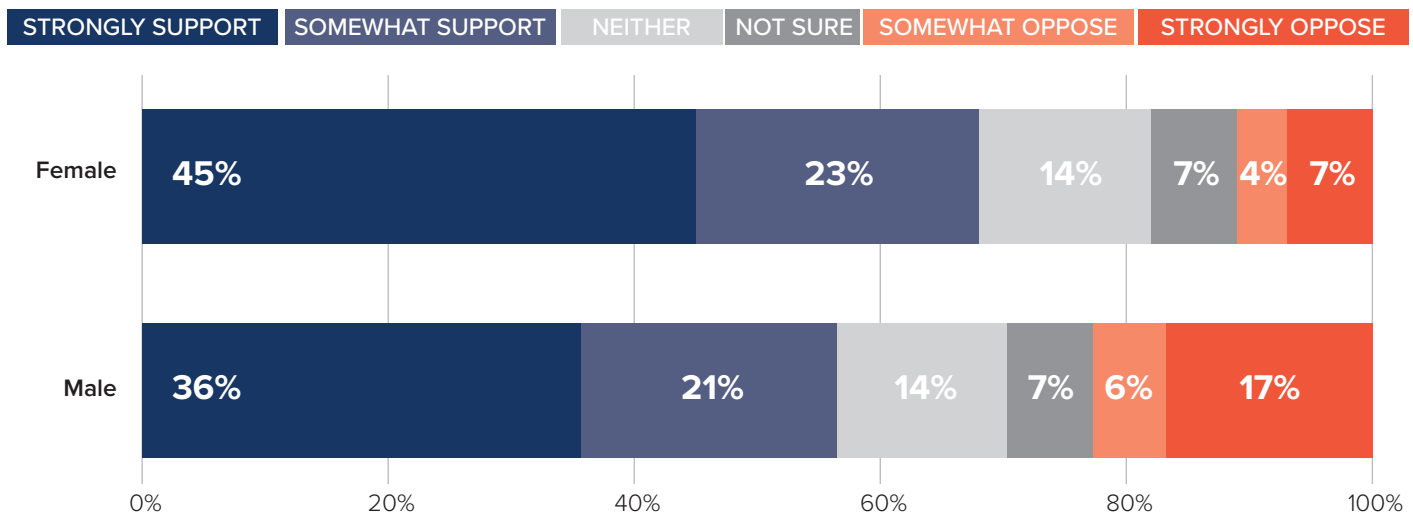
SUPPORT FOR EXPANDING MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES, INCLUDING THROUGH INSURANCE MANDATES BY PARTY ID



There is a smaller gender gap on this item than on the question of mental health programs for students. About 68 percent of women and 57 percent of men support

expanding mental health and substance abuse services. The margin of support among women is about 57 percent, and among men, it is about 34 percent.

SUPPORT FOR EXPANDING MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES, INCLUDING THROUGH INSURANCE MANDATES  
BY GENDER



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ENDNOTES

1. National Vital Statistics Reports, “Recent Increases in Injury Mortality Among Children and Adolescents Aged 10–19 Years in the United States: 1999–2016,” June 1, 2018, [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr67/nvsr67\\_04.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr67/nvsr67_04.pdf); Jean Twenge, “Age, period, and cohort trends in mood disorder indicators and suicide-related outcomes in a nationally representative dataset, 2005-2017,” March 14, 2019, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/30869927>; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Improving Access to Children’s Mental Health Care,” July 19, 2019, <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmental-health/access.html>.
2. On behalf of Data for Progress, YouGov Blue fielded a national survey of US registered voters. The national-issues survey was conducted by YouGov Blue from April 29, 2019 to May 5, 2019 using YouGov’s online panel. The sample consists of 1,095 respondents interviewed on the internet who were registered to vote. The sample was weighted to be representative of the national population of voters by age, race, sex, education, and region using a 2018 US voter frame.

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