EDGE research

50CAN

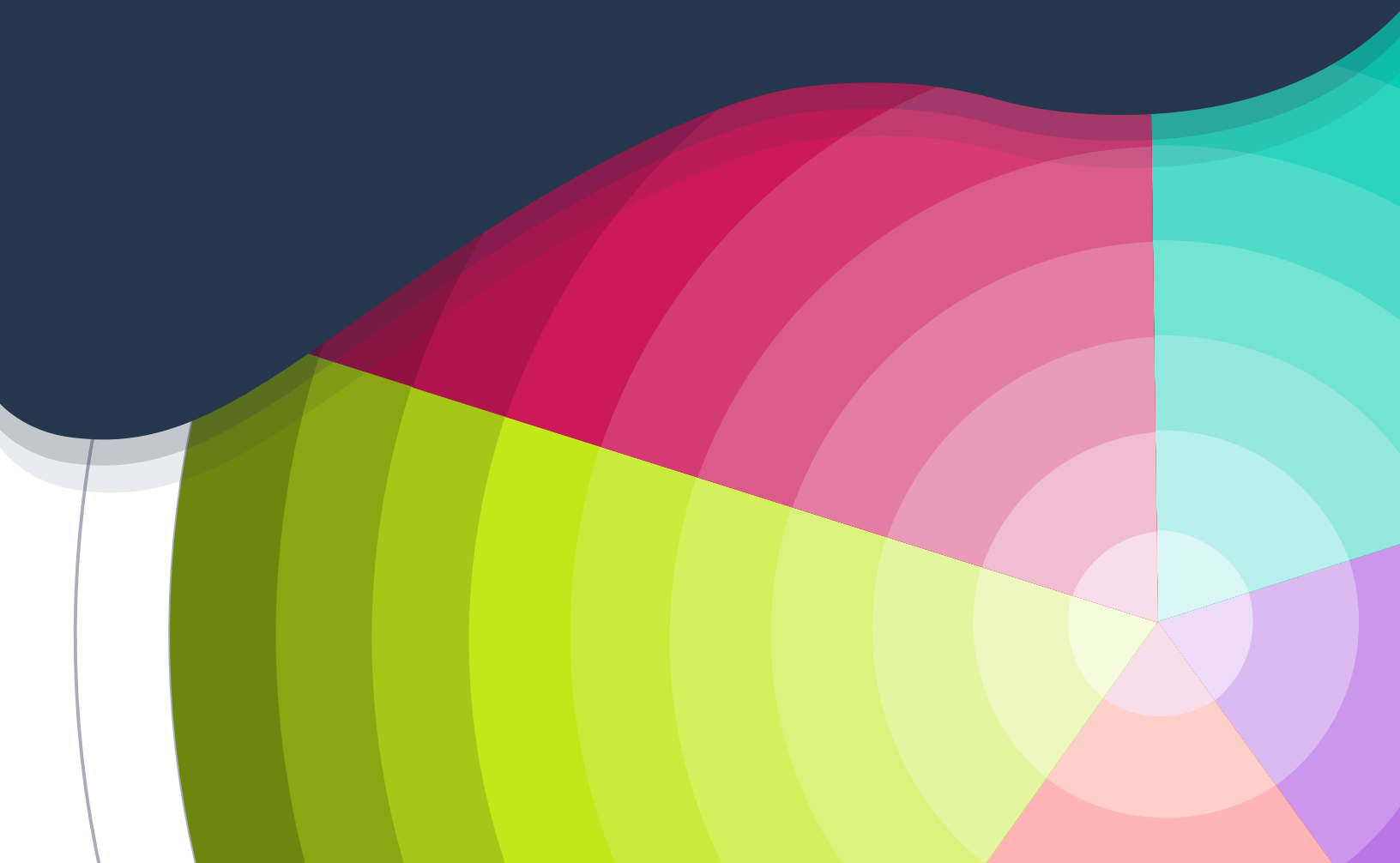
TRANSFORM EDUCATION NOW

2nd Edition

The State of Educational Opportunity in Colorado

A Survey of Colorado Parents

February 2026



2nd Edition

The State of Educational Opportunity in Colorado

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TRANSFORM EDUCATION NOW

Dear Friends,

Transform Education Now believes that every child in every neighborhood, and in every classroom, deserves an education that opens the world to their aspirations and allows them to dream. We organize alongside families across Colorado to make that dream a reality.

This process starts with understanding the world as it exists today and the experience of families navigating our school systems. When families are informed and heard by policymakers, we are better able to focus on the opportunities that will make the greatest impact for students across our state.

The belief that every child in Colorado deserves a high quality education is the foundation of our work at Transform Education Now. Our second edition of the Survey of Educational Opportunity in Colorado, developed in partnership with 50CAN and Edge Research, highlights how families experience our education system today and allows us to see how perspectives have changed since 2024. As Colorado continues to evolve, it is critical that we continue to listen to families, particularly those from historically marginalized communities and who are left without access to high quality options throughout the state. Over time, we will be able to track patterns and focus our efforts and resources in places they are needed most, while comparing Colorado to other states to identify gaps that demand attention and celebrate places where we stand among the national leaders.

In Colorado, 515 parents and guardians of school aged children participated in a survey in fall 2025 contributing to a national effort that includes over 23,000 families nationwide along with a representative same in each state and D.C. allowing for a state-by-state comparison.

As Colorado celebrates the progress that has happened over the last year, several themes stand out:

Families report growing satisfaction with their school options. The percentage of parents saying they are very satisfied with their child increased six points, the percentage of parents saying they would make the same choice of school increased five points and the percentage of parents saying they feel like they have a choice increased five points.

Participation in tutoring is growing. The percentage of children who received tutoring in the past year is up eight points and now exceeds the national average.

Parent engagement is going backwards in Colorado. The percentage of families that reviewed information about school performance dropped three points and the percentage that attended parent meetings dropped two points.

At a time when **mental health continues to be a public health concern,** we are failing to meet the moment, leaving families wanting more to support the mental health of their students.

Colorado families have said loud and clear that they want more high-quality options and opportunities that support the well-being of their children. It is now on all of us to create the equitable investments and infrastructure to make that possible across Colorado.

Over the following pages, you'll find:

- The **methodology** of the survey and an explanation of how the results are presented.
- A two-page summary of the **results** for Colorado across the five categories and 15 questions.
- **Maps and other visualizations** of how Colorado compares to the rest of the nation on important questions.

The full Colorado report is available at transformeducationnow.org.
National results, the survey instrument, and the complete dataset can be found at 50can.org.

Our hope is that this second edition continues to support informed decision-making as Colorado works to expand educational opportunity for every student.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Hernández

Nicholas Hernández
Executive Director
Transform Education Now (TEN)

Methodology

Edge Research conducted a nationwide survey of 23,104 U.S. parents and guardians of school-aged children (K-12th grade) in each of the 50 states plus the District of Columbia. **In Colorado, 515 parents and guardians of K-12 children were surveyed.** Respondents could take the survey in either English or Spanish, based on their preference. The survey was in the field from September 30, 2025, to December 1, 2025.

DATA COLLECTION

The survey used a mixed-mode methodology to reach as many households as possible. First, survey respondents were recruited using online, non-probability samples obtained via national opt-in consumer research panels. These surveys were mobile-optimized (meaning participants can take the survey on a PC or mobile device, which helps reach those who do not have internet access but do have a mobile data plan). In states where Edge Research was not able to collect enough surveys using this method, they obtained supplementary text-to-web interviews.

SURVEY REPRESENTATIVENESS

As respondents entered the survey, they submitted demographic information, and quotas were set to ensure the sample is proportionately distributed in accordance with the most recent U.S. Census and National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data on U.S. parents in each state. Quotas functioned by predetermining the number of desired respondents by gender identity, race, ethnicity, child's grade, and grade level in each state. Once the desired number was reached with each quota group, it closed, and additional respondents were turned away. After the survey came out of the field, Edge Research reviewed the data and applied additional weights by income, marital status, parent gender, race/ethnicity, school type, and area (e.g., urban, suburban, small town, rural) within states.

The following tables provide the demographics of survey respondents in Colorado after weighting.

RACE/ETHNICITY

Hispanic/ Latino of Any Race	White Alone	Black/ African American Alone	American Indian or Alaska Native Alone	Asian Alone	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander Alone	Some Other Race Alone	Two or More Races
23%	67%	3%	0.3%	2%	0.2%	0.5%	3%

INCOME DISTRIBUTION

Low Income	Middle Income	High Income
33%	57%	10%

SCHOOL LEVEL

K-5th	6th-8th	9th-12th
46%	24%	30%

[1] https://www.census.gov/
[2] https://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/tableviewer/acsProfile/2021

GRADE OF CHILD												
K	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade	9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade
8%	8%	7%	7%	7%	9%	8%	7%	9%	7%	8%	8%	7%

SCHOOL TYPE								
Local or Traditional Public School	Public Magnet School	Public Charter School	Private Independent School	Parochial/ Religious School	Virtual/ Online Public School	Homeschool	Microschool	Other Type of School
66%	6%	11%	8%	1%	4%	3%	0.5%	0.5%

INCOME DEFINITIONS

In the pages that follow, we provide results for low-, middle- and high-income parents. These income buckets were calculated using the Pew Research Center's study on "The State of the American Middle Class" and their category definitions:

- Middle-income households are defined as those with an income that is two-thirds to double that of the U.S. median household income, after being adjusted for household size.
- Lower-income households have incomes less than two-thirds of the median
- High-income households have incomes that are more than double the median.

Following these definitions, Edge Research adjusted the incomes reported in the survey to reflect a three-person household using the equivalence scales technique. Pulling from the U.S. Census 2023 Annual Social and Economic Supplements, they used the three-person household income breaks of $61,000 to $183,000 as middle, and values above and below those thresholds as lower and upper income respectively. Edge Research also adjusted each household income using Regional Price Parities (RPPs)—indexes from the Bureau of Economic Analysis—that compare local prices to the national average. These tell whether an area is more or less expensive than the country overall. RPPs are applied differently based on what is known about the household's location. If the exact metro area is known, the RPP is used for that metro area. If the household is in a non-metro (rural or small town) area, the RPP for non-metro areas in that state is used.

DATA QUALITY CONTROL AND STANDARDS

Edge Research employed several practices to ensure data quality. The survey platform used reCAPTCHA to screen for bots. They also applied a third-party tool called Research Defender to screen out known bad actors and respondents with high survey-taking rates. In addition, data was monitored regularly while in the field. Once all responses were collected, they applied additional data cleaning processes, clearing data for cheating, speeding, inattentiveness, and AI-generated responses.

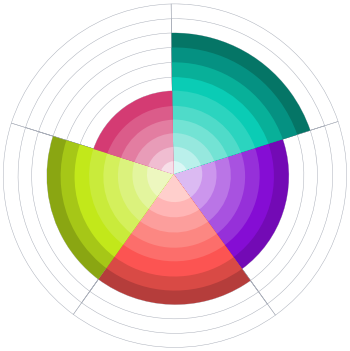
Edge Research follows the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) Code of Professional Ethics and Practices to maintain the highest standards of competence, integrity, accountability, and transparency in public opinion and survey research work.

[3] https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/cps/cps-asec.2023.html#list-tab-165711867
[4] Standards and Ethics - AAPOR

How to Read the Results

One challenge with a survey of this size was how to present the results in an accessible way that doesn't sacrifice the depth of insights. We decided to present the answers in two ways: first with an overview of the results across 15 questions for our state and then with a more in-depth look at how our state compared to all the other states for a few key questions.

OUR STATE SUMMARY



To help make it easier to look at our state's full results at a glance, we present the answers from our parents over two pages. At the top of the first page is the number of parents who participated in the survey.

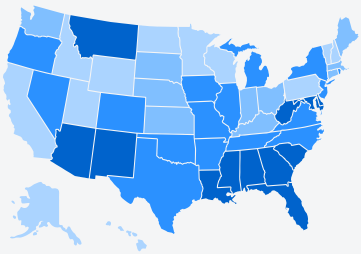
We also provide a way to view our state's **relative strengths and weaknesses through a circle with five wedges**, one for each of the five categories of the survey: 1) School quality and opportunity (**pink**), 2) Tutoring, summer, and mental health (**green**), 3) Out of school activities (**teal**), 4) Information and engagement (**purple**), and 5) College and career readiness (**orange**).

Each of the five categories is made up of three questions. These are presented below each category with **our state's results compared to other states represented by a tier** shown to the right of each question, from low to high. These tiers are scored from 1 (low) to 4 (high) and the scores across the three questions determine how many rows are colored in for the wedge (up to a possible number of 12 rows).

The state results for each question are presented in circles that offer a comparison of the state against the national average and the 2025 results compared to 2024. For yes/no questions, the results are presented as the percentage who said yes, rounded to the nearest whole number. For questions about parents' opinions and attitudes, we utilized a Likert scale and **reported out the percentage choosing the highest option**. For example, on question 1, which measures parents' satisfaction with their child's school, we present the percentage who answered that they were "very satisfied." This helps ground the comparison discussion in a high bar for success.

OUR STATE IN CONTEXT

The second section of this report provides comparative results for all 50 states plus D.C., one question at a time.

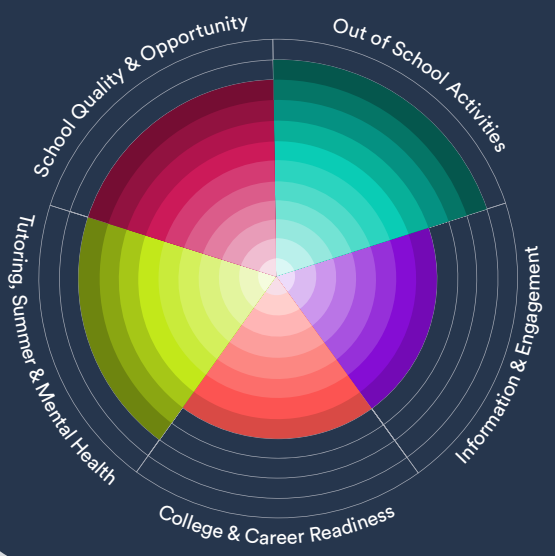


For the maps, a key provides the scale for the map and explains the numbers behind each of the four shades of blue. The darkest shade of blue is always the highest numbers and the lightest shade of blue is always the lowest numbers. Our state is outlined in red.

For the list, states are ordered from highest performing states at the top to lowest performing states at the bottom. Our state is identified with a red box to make it easier to spot.

COLORADO

Surveyed September 30 - December 1, 2025
Sample size (N) = 515 parents and guardians



SCHOOL QUALITY AND OPPORTUNITY

State Tier		2024 CO Average	2025 CO Average	2024-2025 Difference	National Average
Medium-Low	**Very Satisfied with School** Percentage answering they are very satisfied with their child's school	40%	46%	+6%	47%
High	**Would Make the Same Choice** Percentage answering that they would send their child to the school they go to today	69%	74%	+5%	68%
High	**Feel They Have a Choice** Percentage answering they feel like they have a choice in what school their child attends	75%	80%	+5%	70%

TUTORING, SUMMER AND MENTAL HEALTH

State Tier		2024 CO Average	2025 CO Average	2024-2025 Difference	National Average
High	**Tutoring Participation** Percentage of children who have received academic tutoring in this past school year	19%	27%	+8%	24%
Medium-Low	**Summer Program Participation** Percentage of children who participated in a supervised summer program	40%	35%	-5%	39%
High	**Very Satisfied with Mental Health Support** Percentage answering they are very satisfied with how the school supports their child's mental health needs	35%	43%	+8%	41%

OUT OF SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

State Tier		2024 CO Average	2025 CO Average	2024-2025 Difference	National Average
Medium-High	**Afterschool Participation** Percentage of children who regularly participated in a supervised afterschool program in this past school year	29%	27%	-2%	25%
High	**Organized Sports Participation** Percentage of children who have participated in organized sports in the past 12 months	55%	61%	+6%	59%
High	**Art, Dance or Music Participation** Percentage of children who have participated in art, dance, music or other lessons in the past 12 months	54%	59%	+5%	54%

INFORMATION AND ENGAGEMENT

State Tier		2024 CO Average	2025 CO Average	2024-2025 Difference	National Average
Medium-High	**Reviewed School Performance** Percentage who reviewed information about the school's performance compared to other schools	31%	28%	-3%	26%
Medium-Low	**Very Familiar with School Budget** Percentage who say they are very familiar with how budget decisions are made at their child's school	20%	20%	0%	22%
Medium-Low	**Attended Parent Meetings** Percentage who attended meetings held by parent organizations at their child's school, such as PTA or PTO	22%	20%	-2%	26%

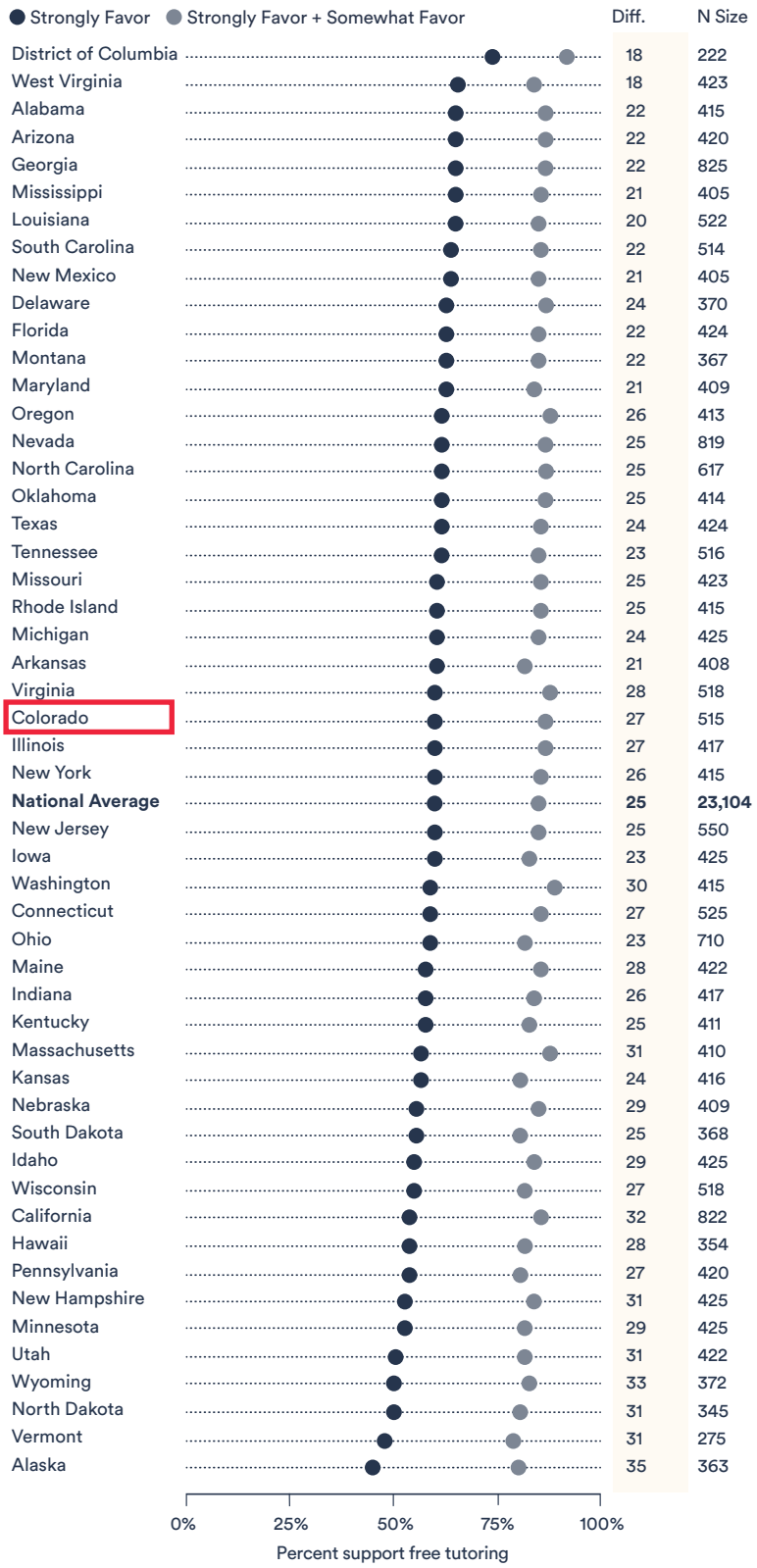
COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

State Tier		2024 CO Average	2025 CO Average	2024-2025 Difference	National Average
Medium-Low	**Confidence in Workforce Preparation** Percentage who are extremely confident their child will be well equipped to succeed in the workforce	29%	33%	+4%	35%
Medium-Low	**Confidence in College Preparation** Percentage who are extremely confident their child will be well prepared for college	27%	31%	+4%	32%
Medium-High	**Volunteer or Service Participation** Percentage of students who participated in a volunteer or community service organization in the past 12 months	29%	34%	+5%	33%

Colorado in Context: A 50-State Perspective

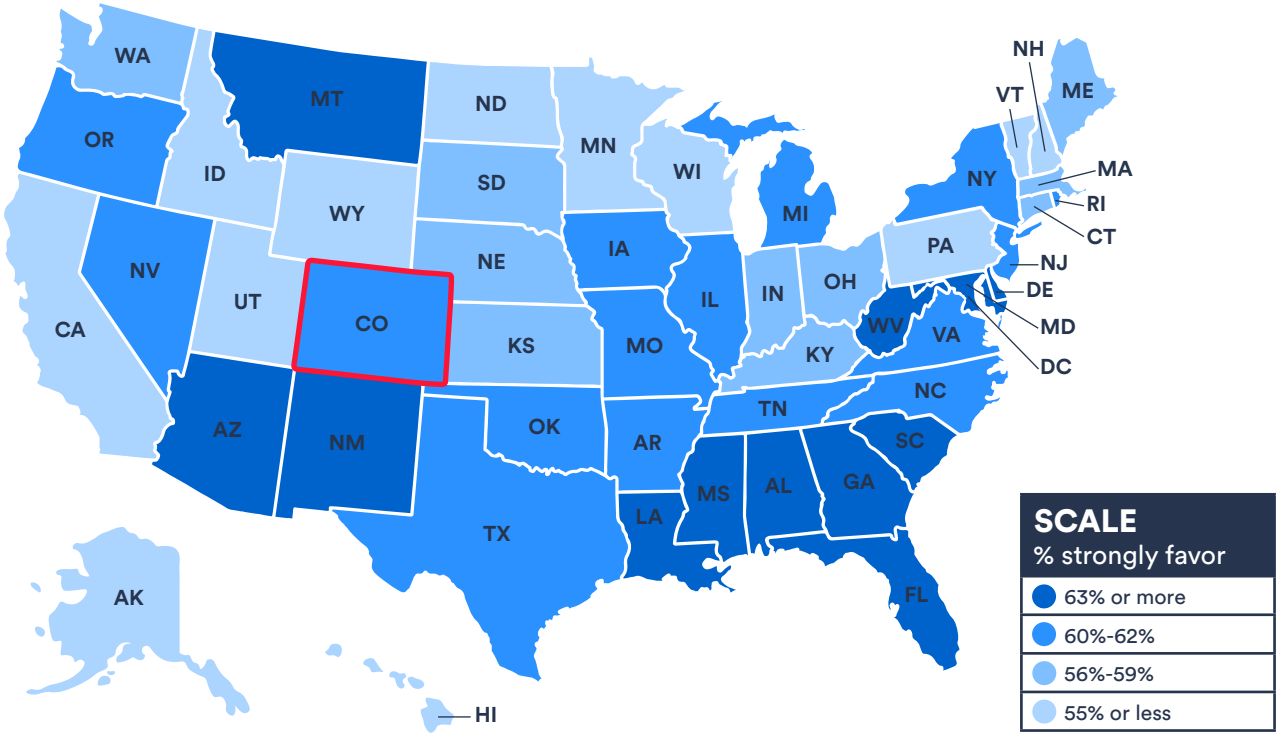
SUPPORT FOR FREE TUTORING BY STATE

Percentage answering they favor free tutoring for K-12 students who fall below grade level



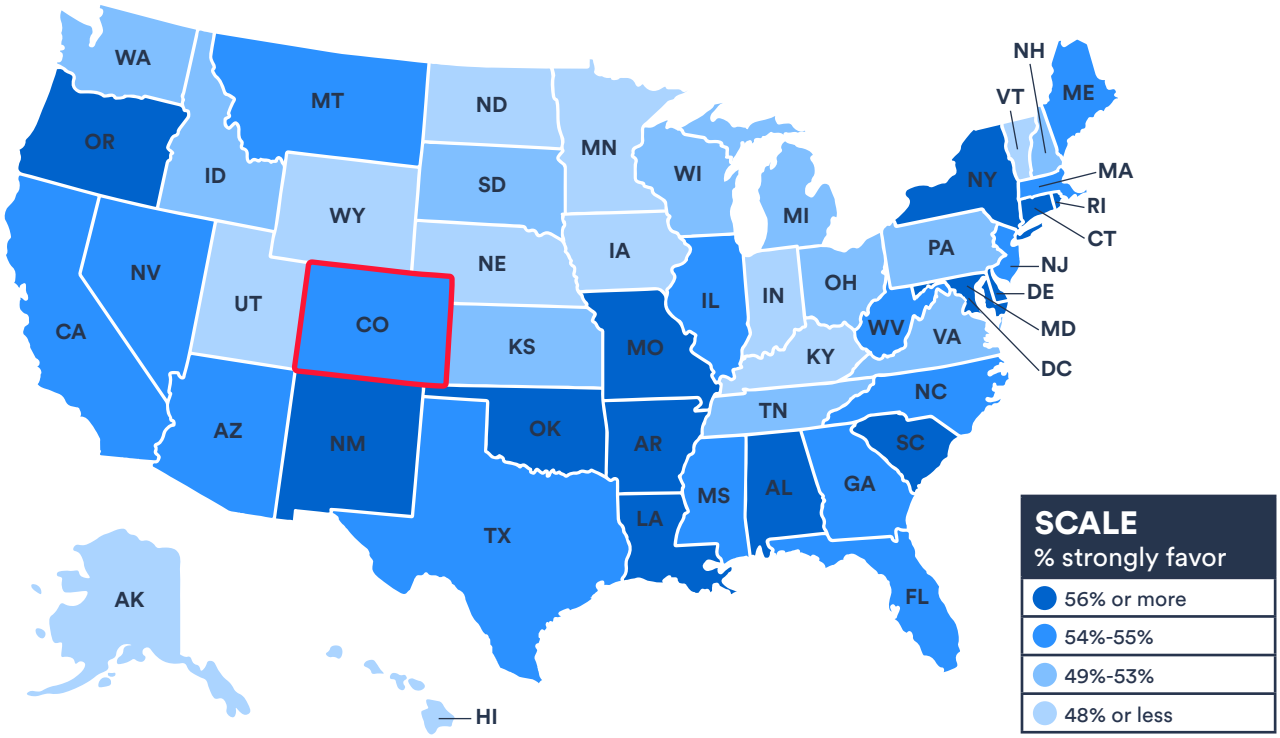
STRONGLY FAVOR FREE TUTORING BY STATE

Percentage answering they strongly favor free tutoring for K-12 students who fall below grade level



STRONGLY FAVOR FREE SUMMER CAMP BY STATE

Percentage answering they strongly favor free summer camp and other programs for K-12 students



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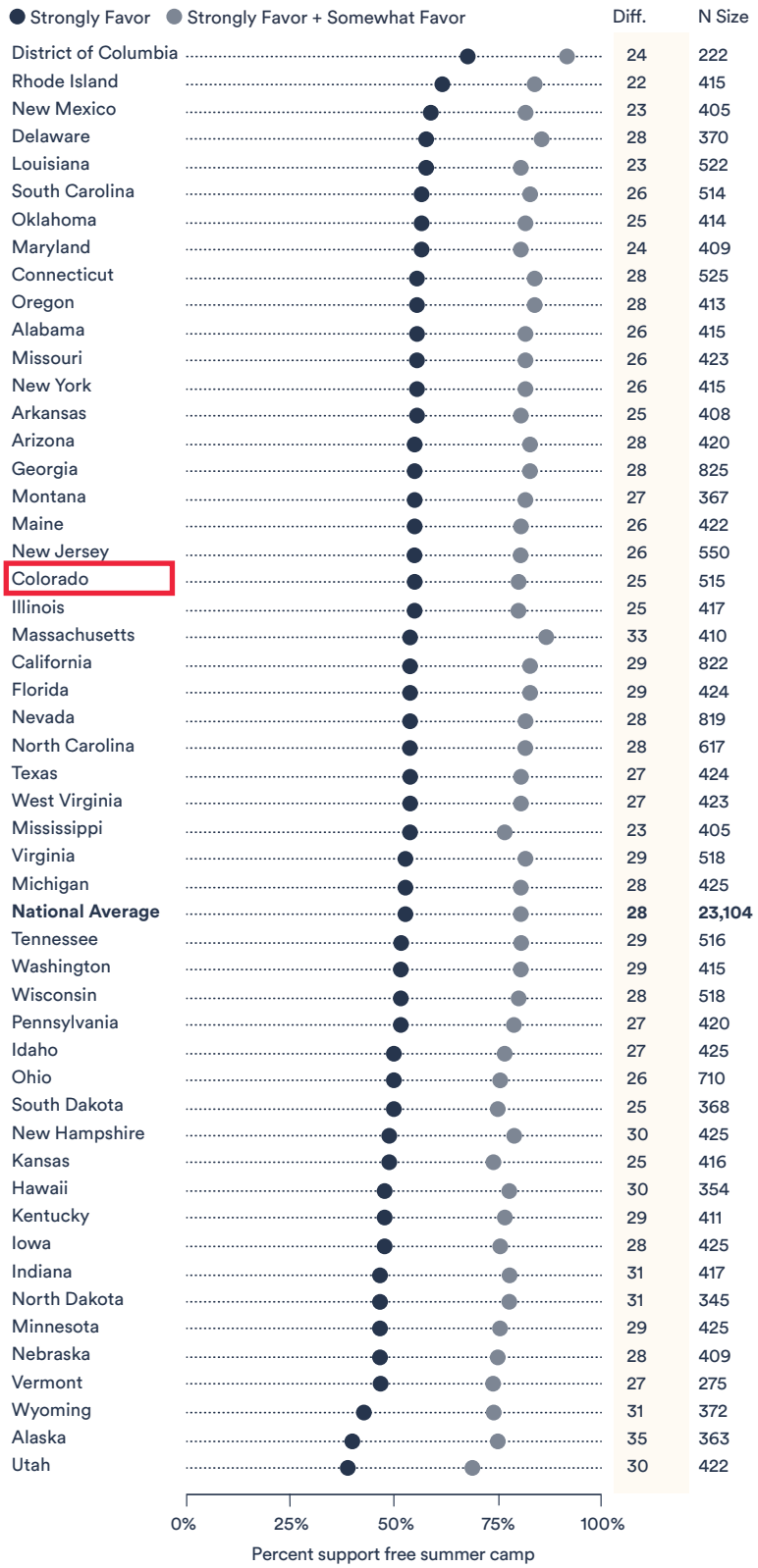
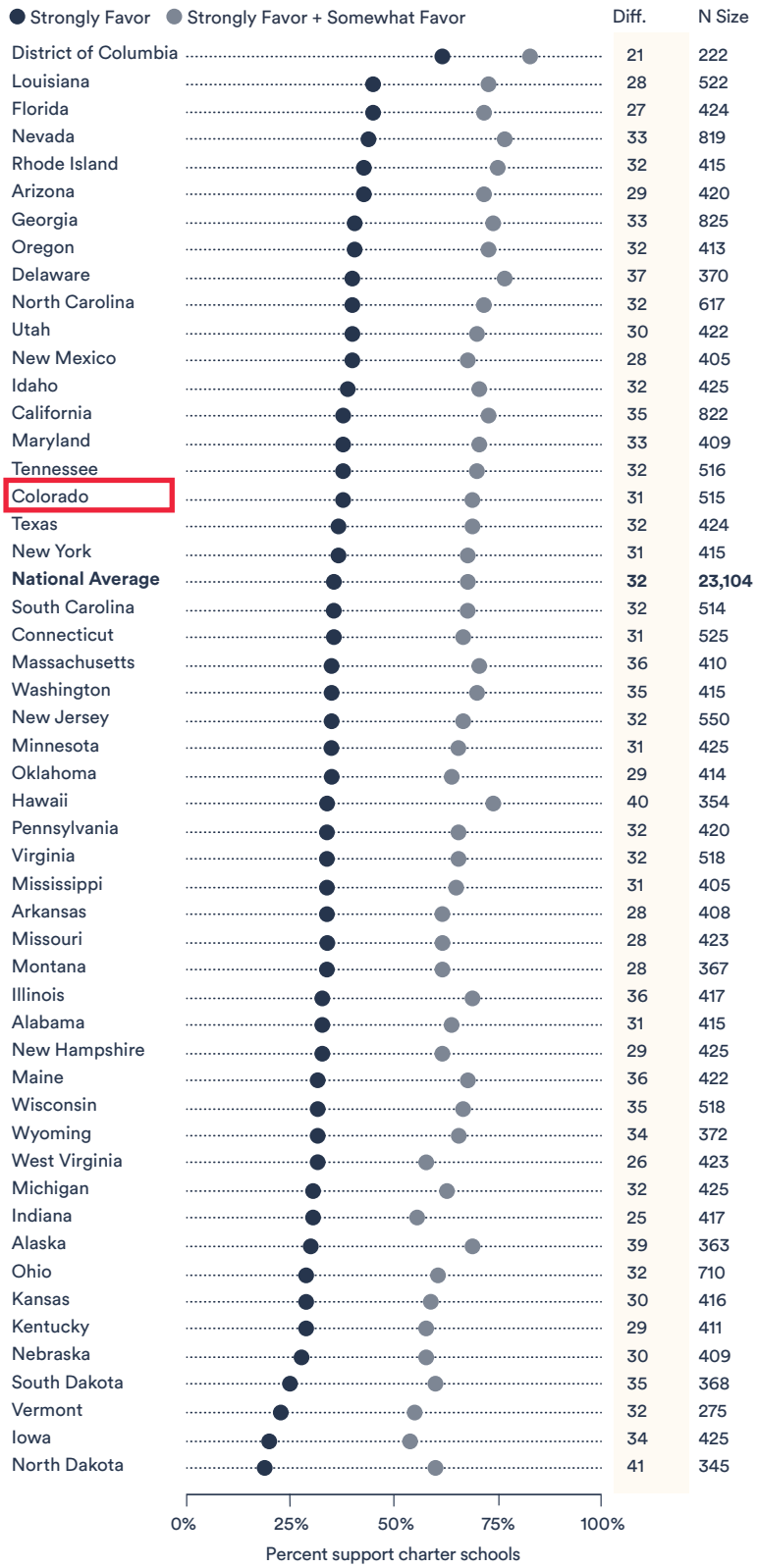


SUPPORT FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS BY STATE

Percentage answering they favor charter school (public schools exempt from some regulations in exchange for greater accountability for results)



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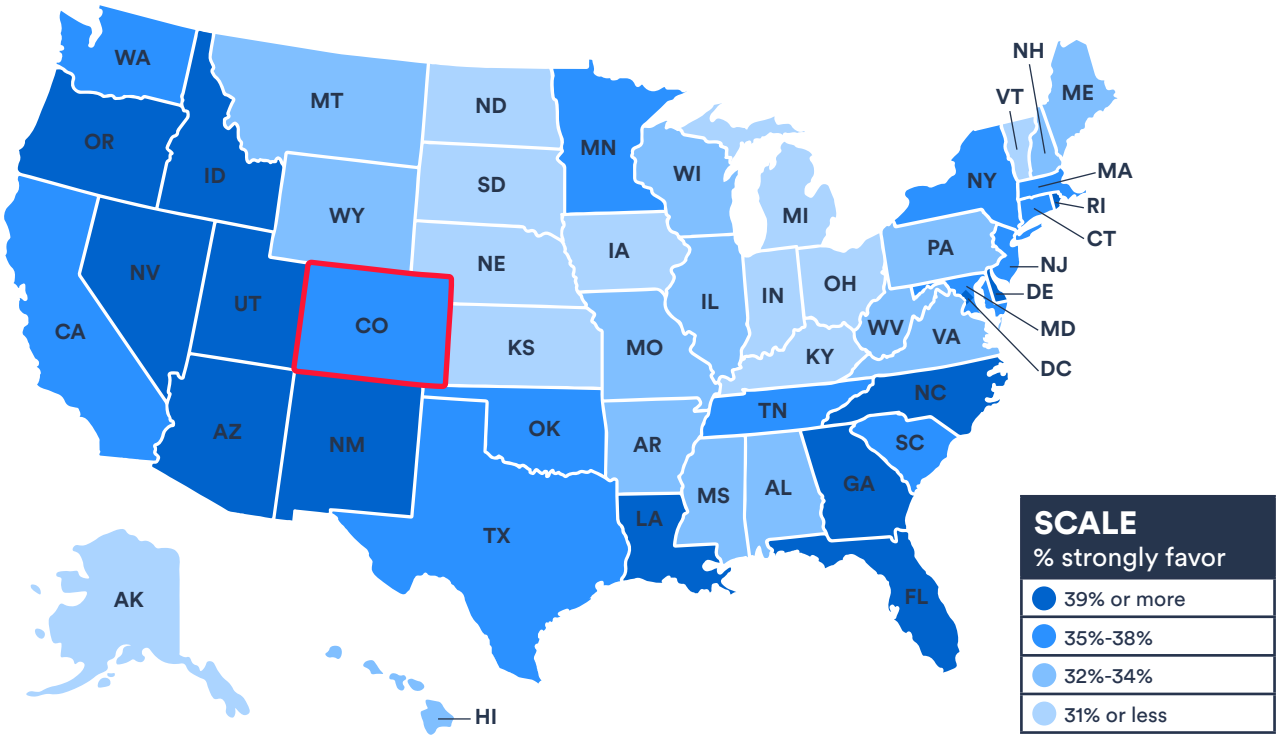
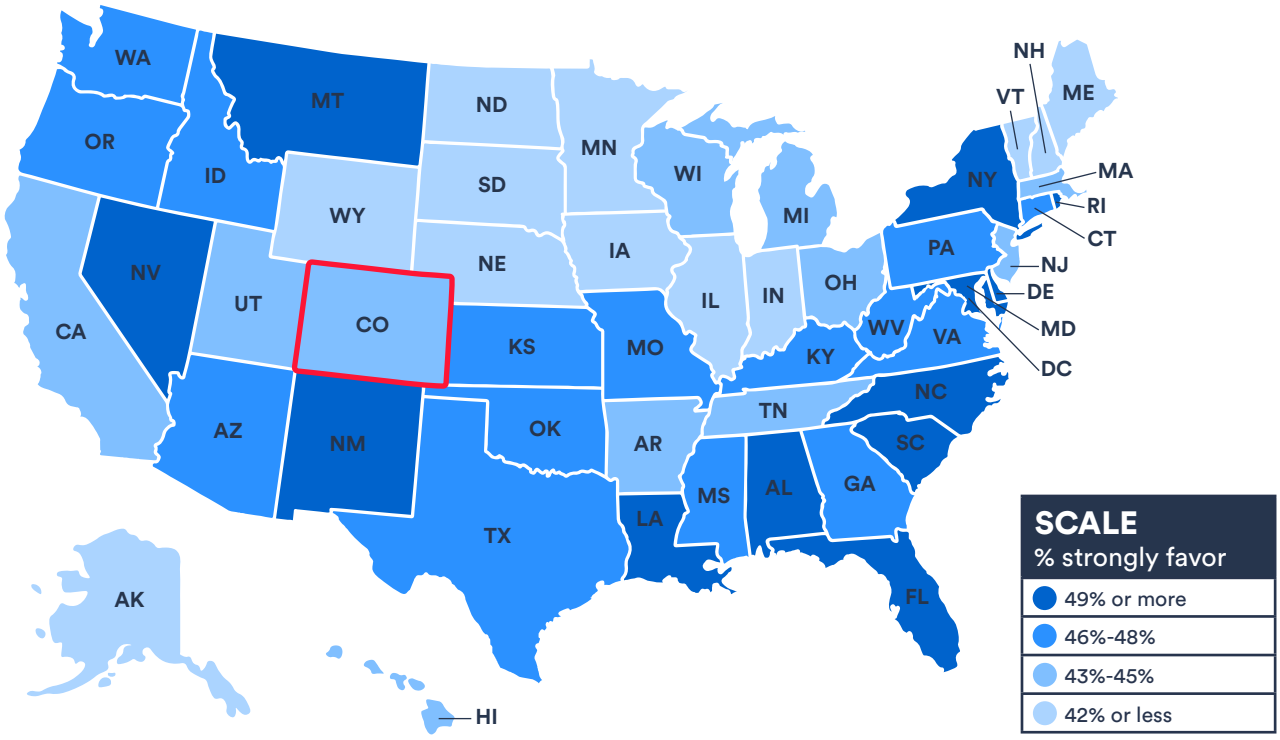


STRONGLY FAVOR EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS BY STATE

Percentage answering they strongly favor ESAs, a government savings account where parents can use the funds for multiple educational purposes and other programs for K-12 students



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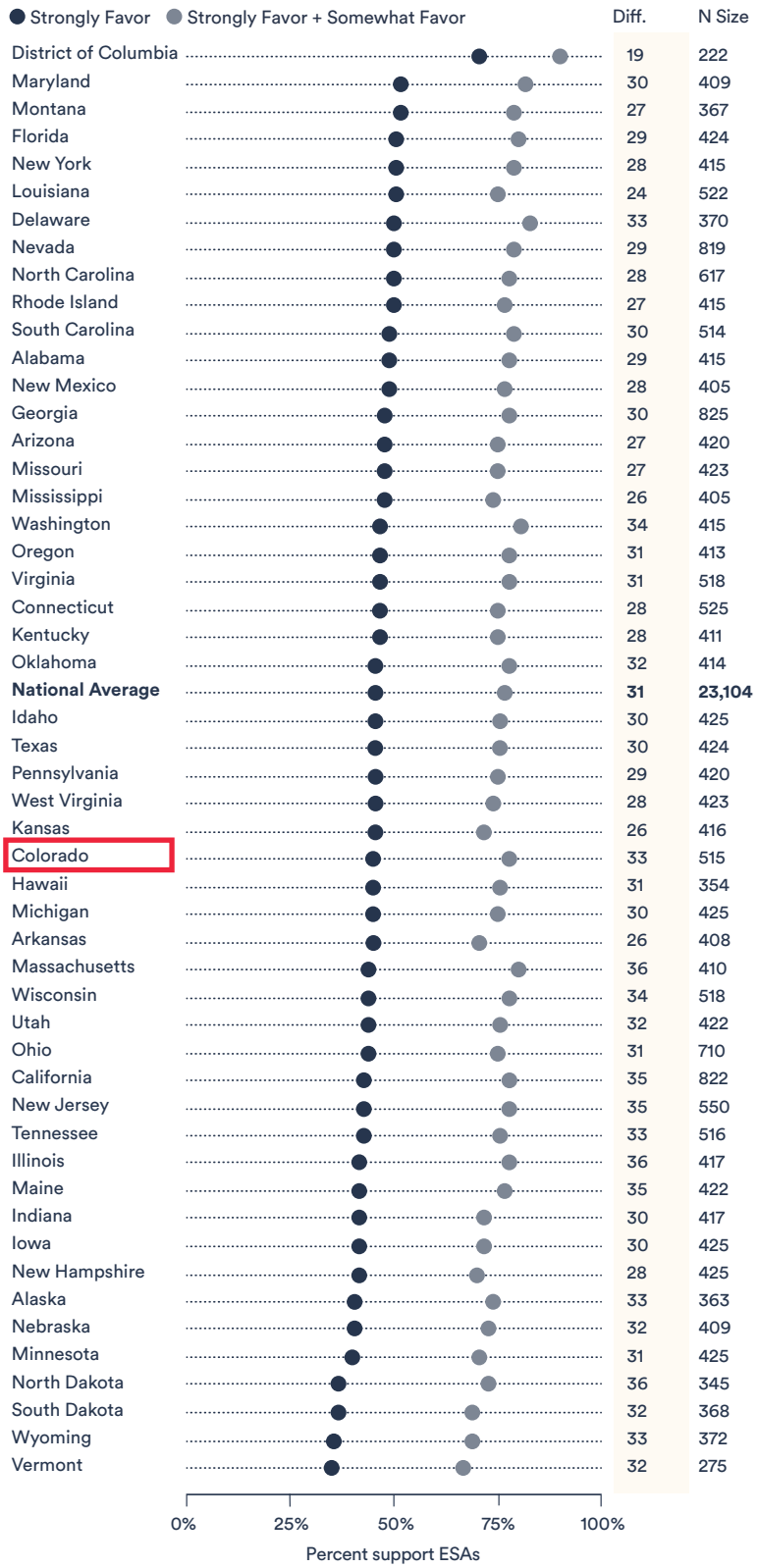
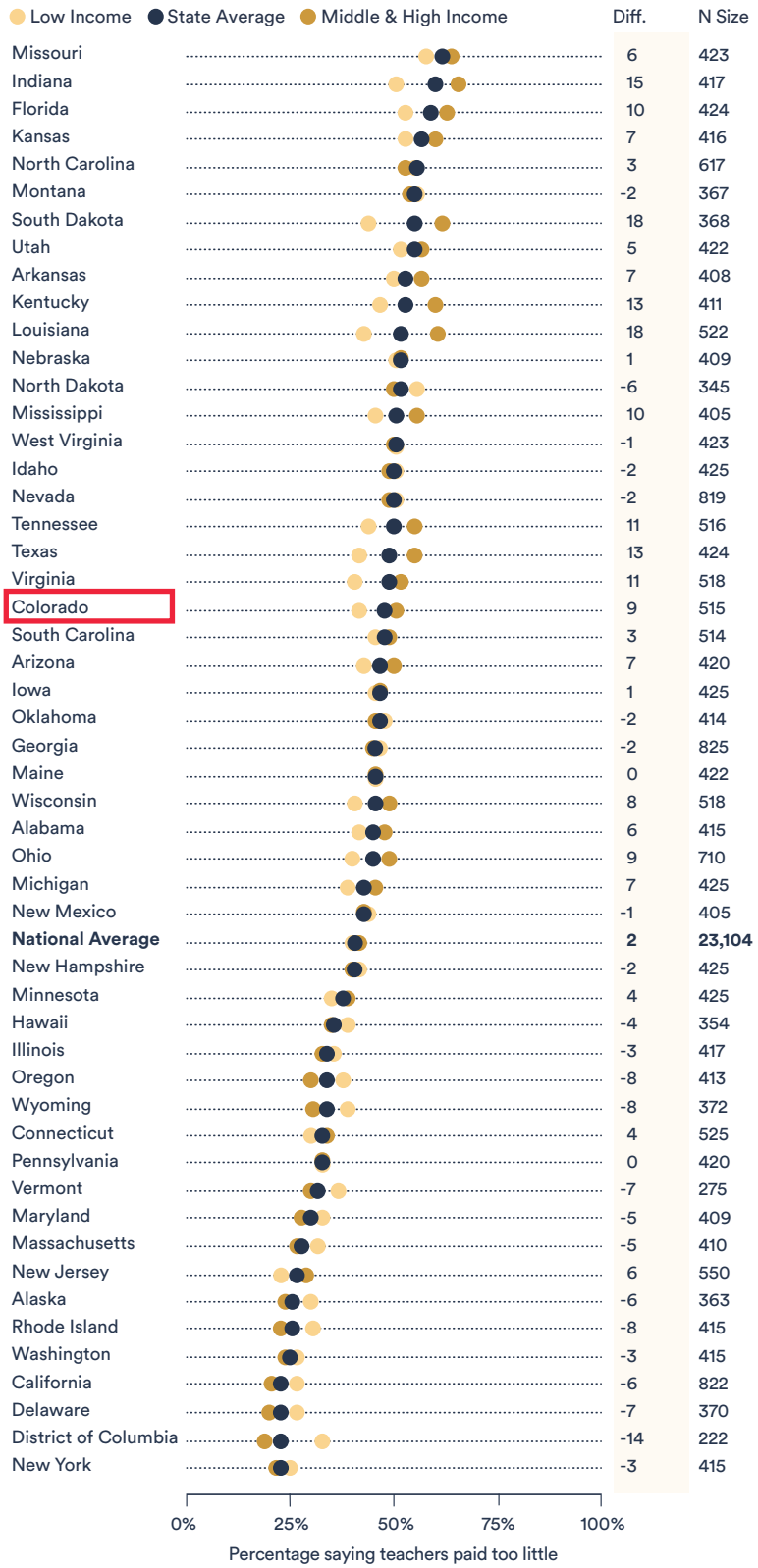


SUPPORT FOR HIGHER SALARIES BY STATE & INCOME

Percentage who think the average public school teacher in their state is paid too little after being told the average public school teacher salary in their state



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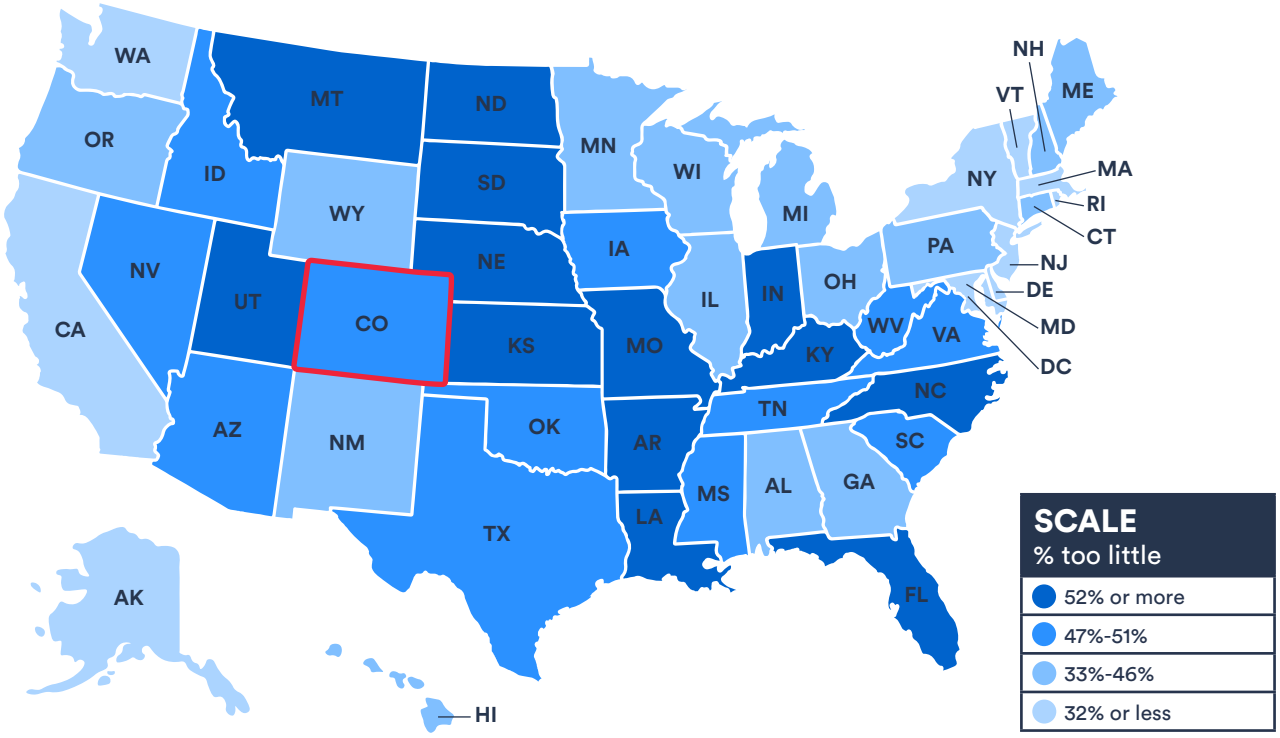
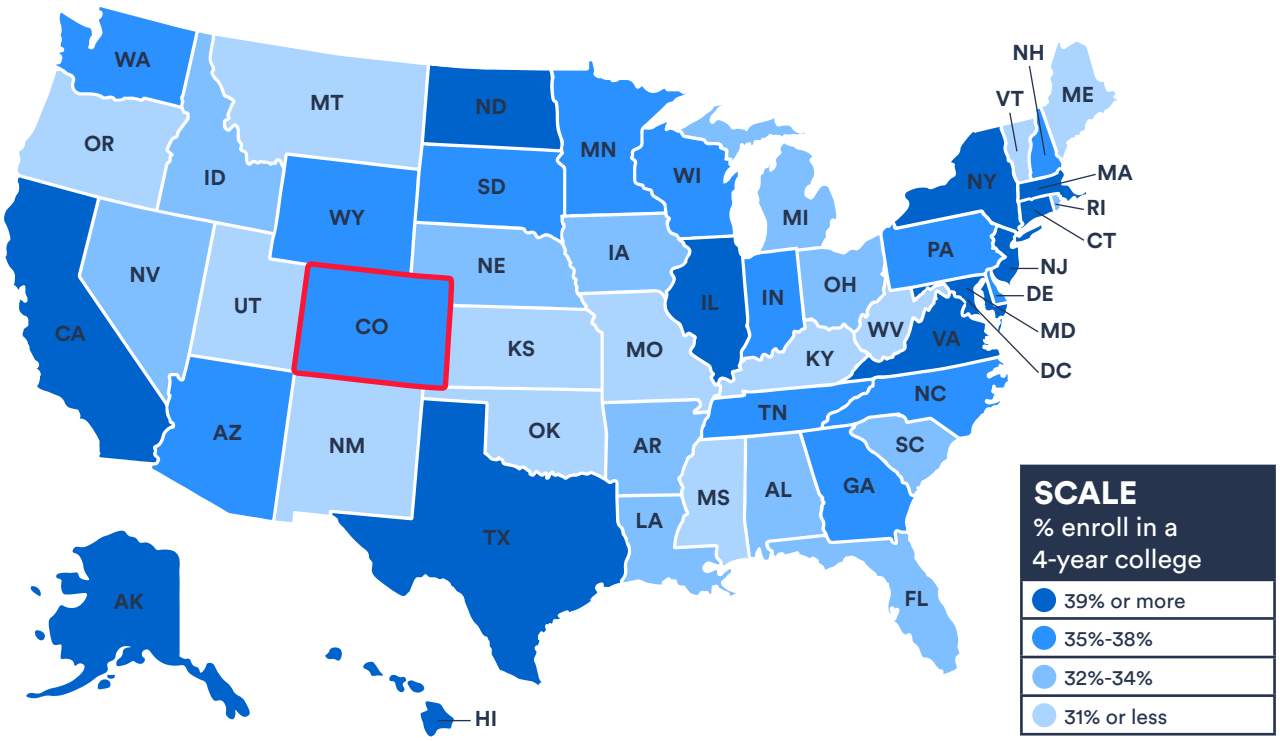


THINK WILL ENROLL IN COLLEGE BY STATE

Percentage who think their child will enroll in a four-year college immediately after completing high school



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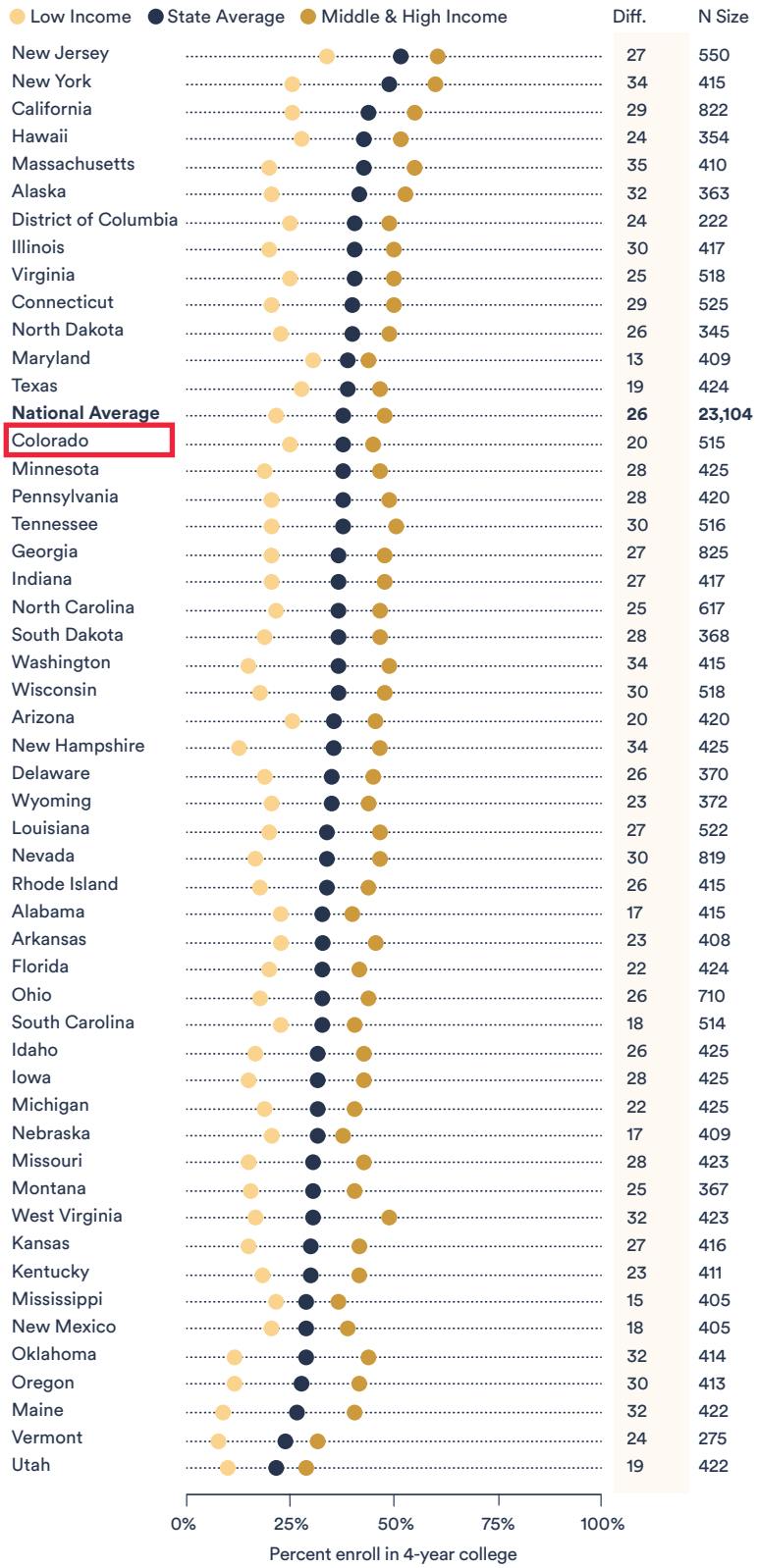
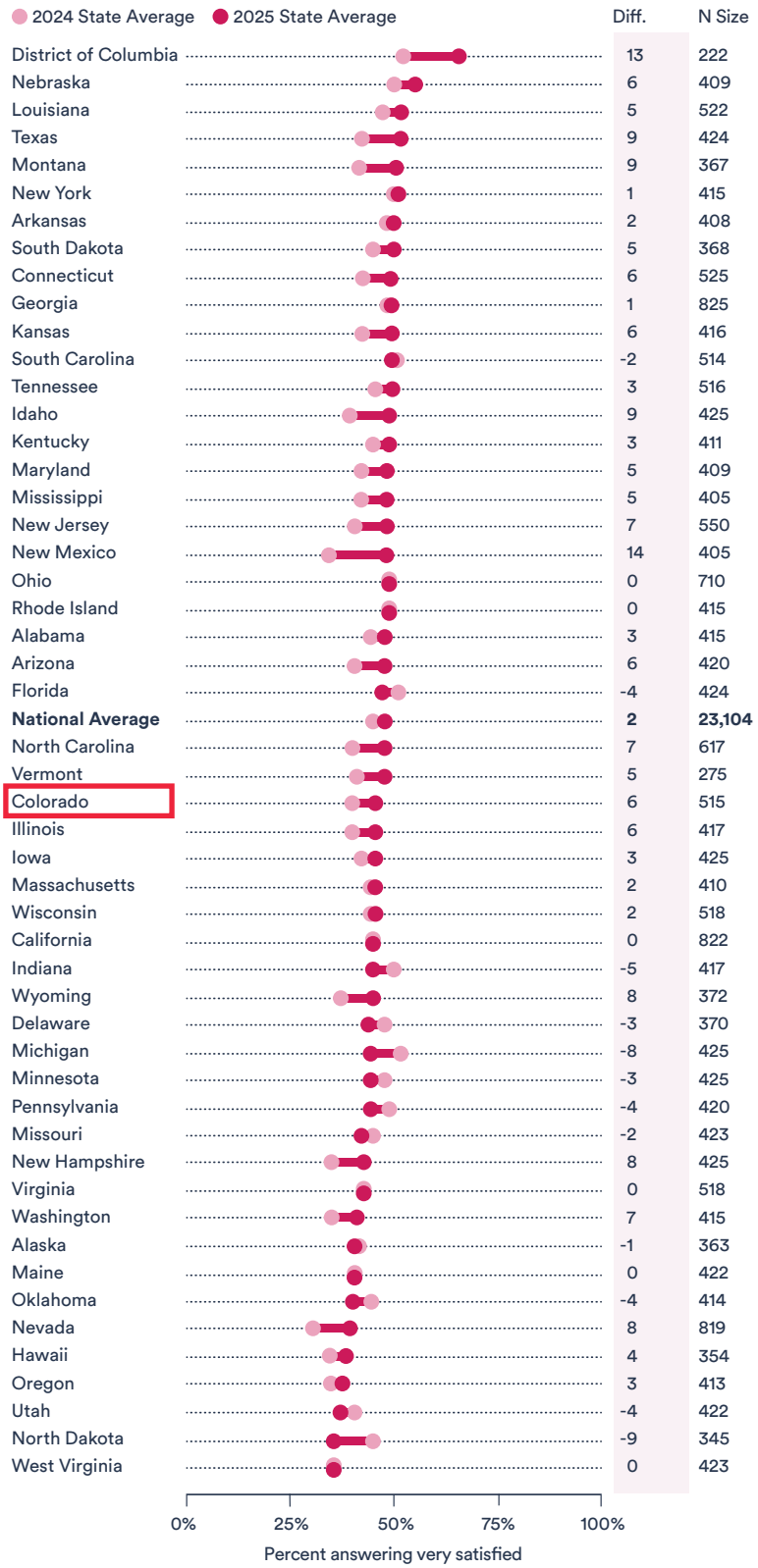


VERY SATISFIED WITH SCHOOL BY STATE & YEAR

Percentage answering they are very satisfied with their child's school



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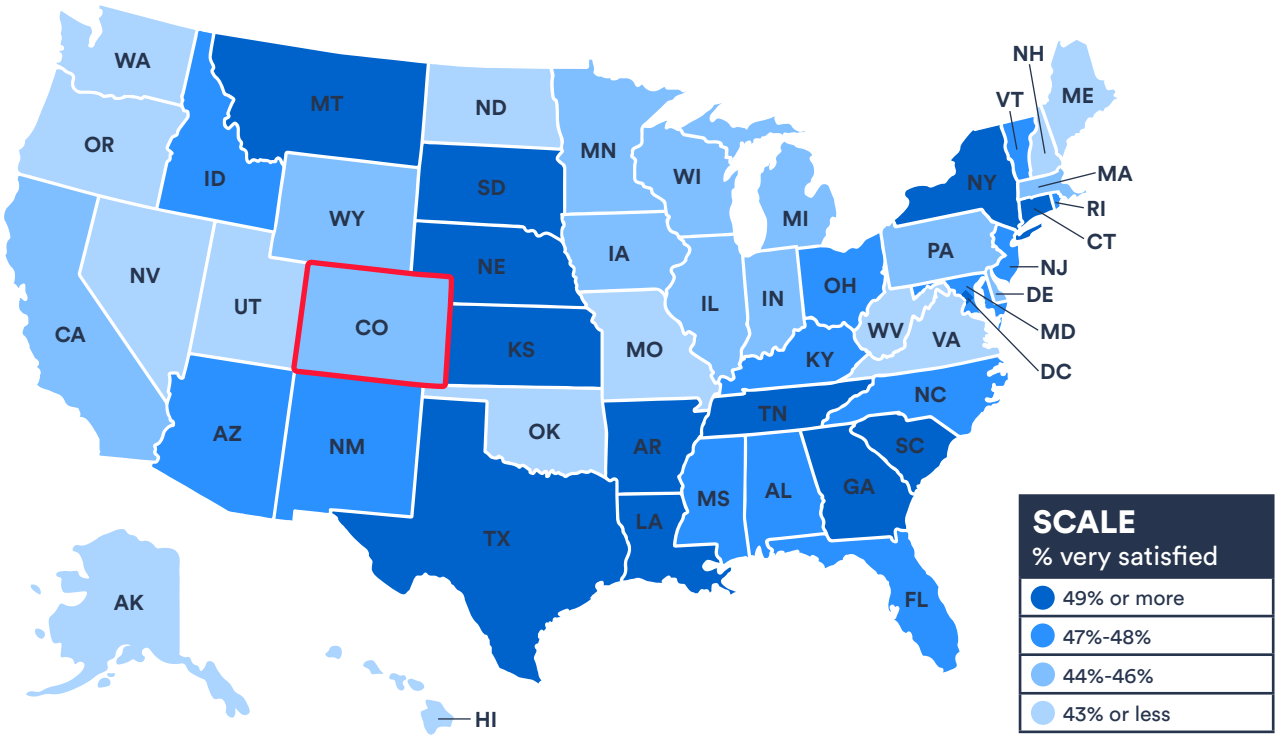
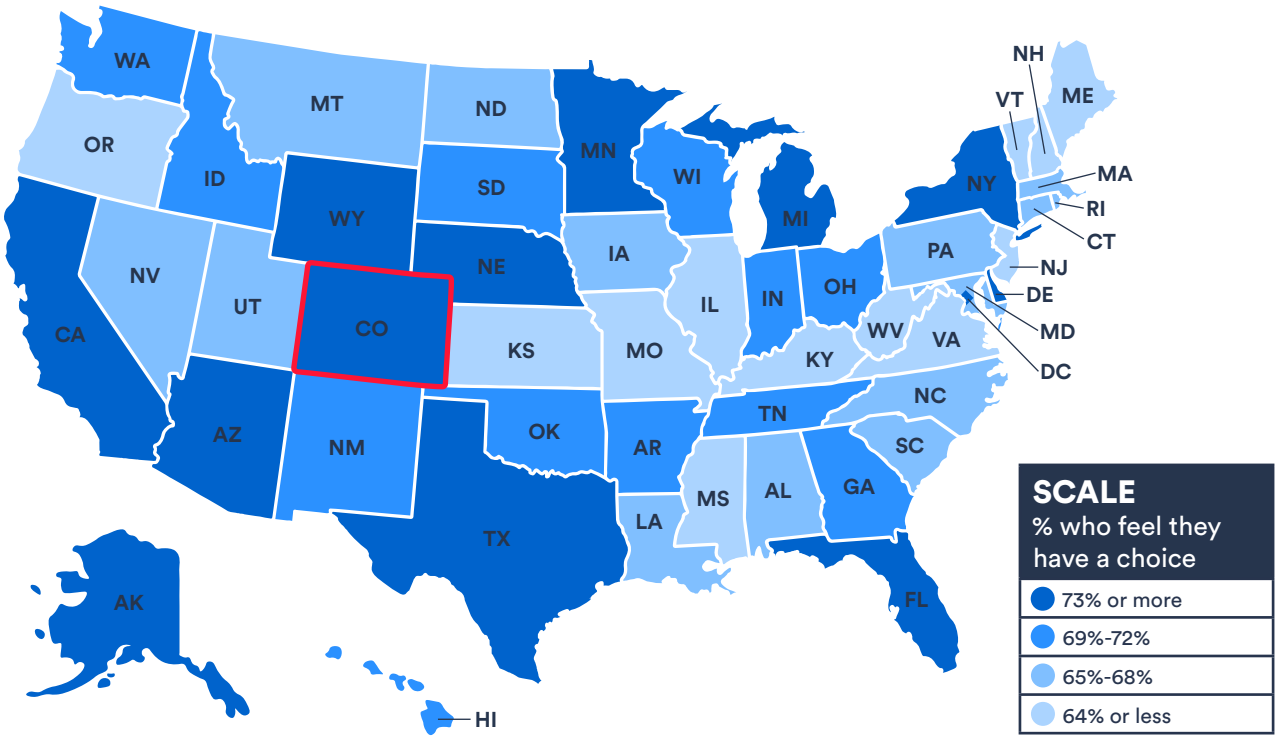


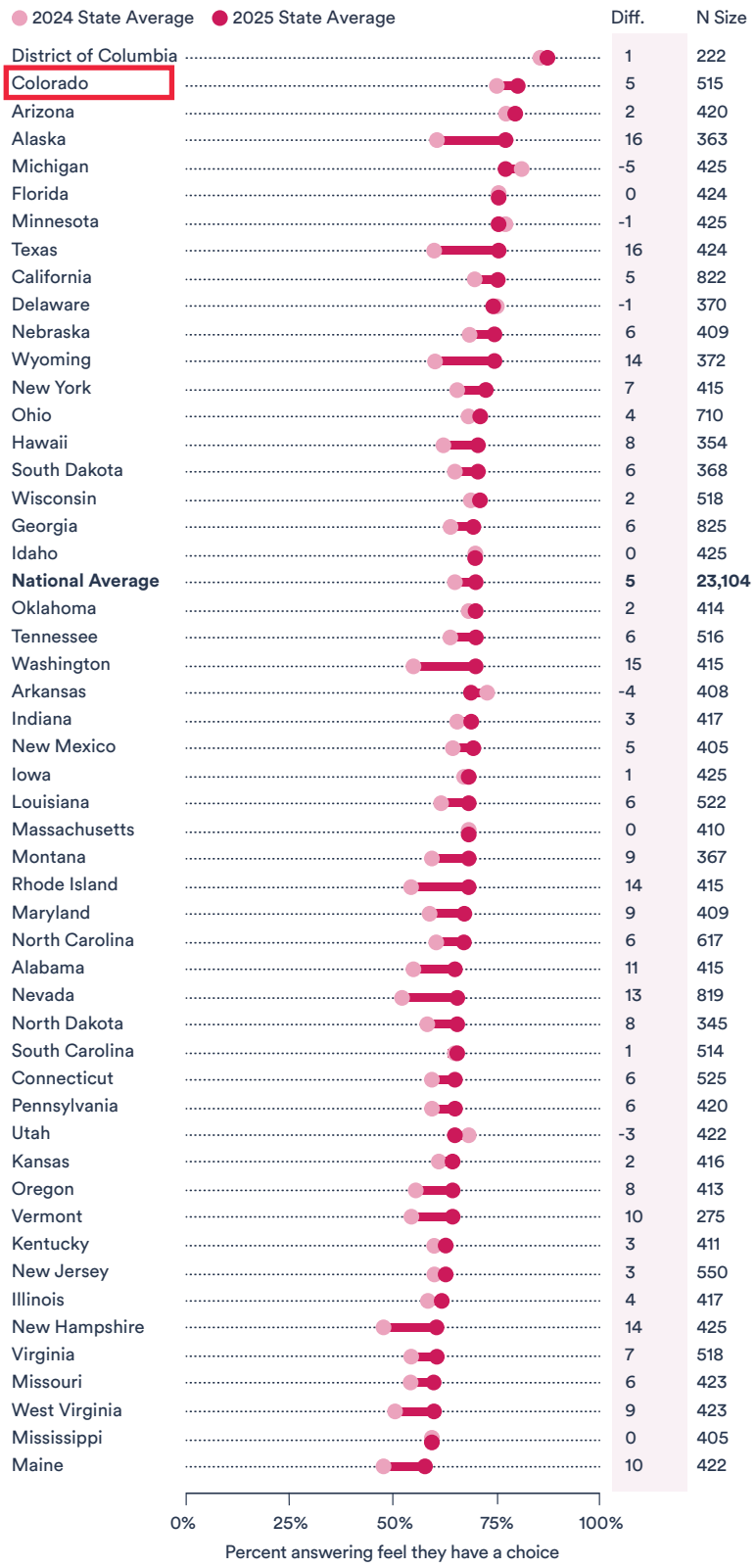
FEEL THEY HAVE A CHOICE BY STATE

Percentage answering they feel like they have a choice in what school their child attends



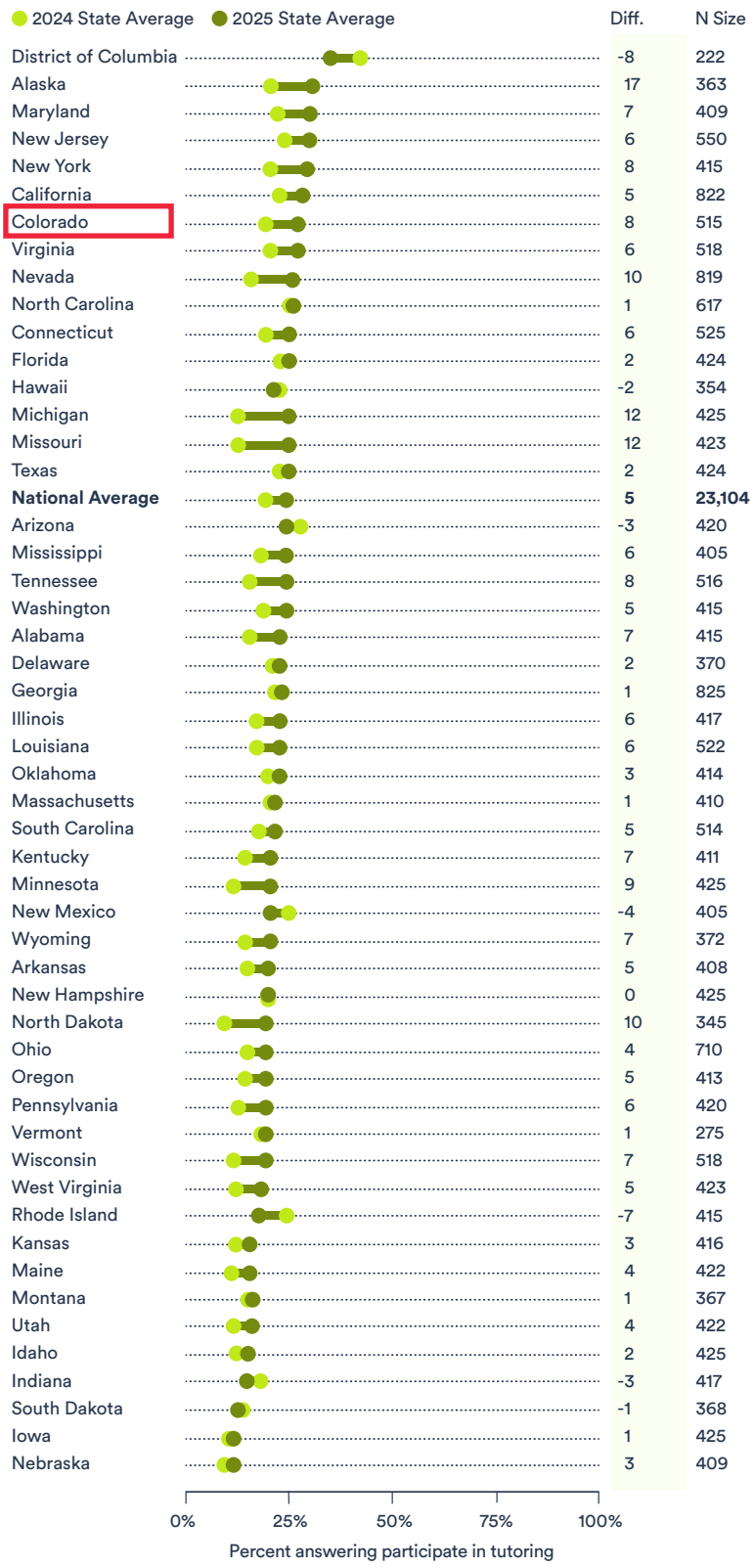
FEEL THEY HAVE A CHOICE BY STATE & YEAR

Percentage answering they feel like they have a choice in what school their child attends



TUTORING PARTICIPATION BY STATE & YEAR

Percentage of children who have received academic tutoring in this past school year



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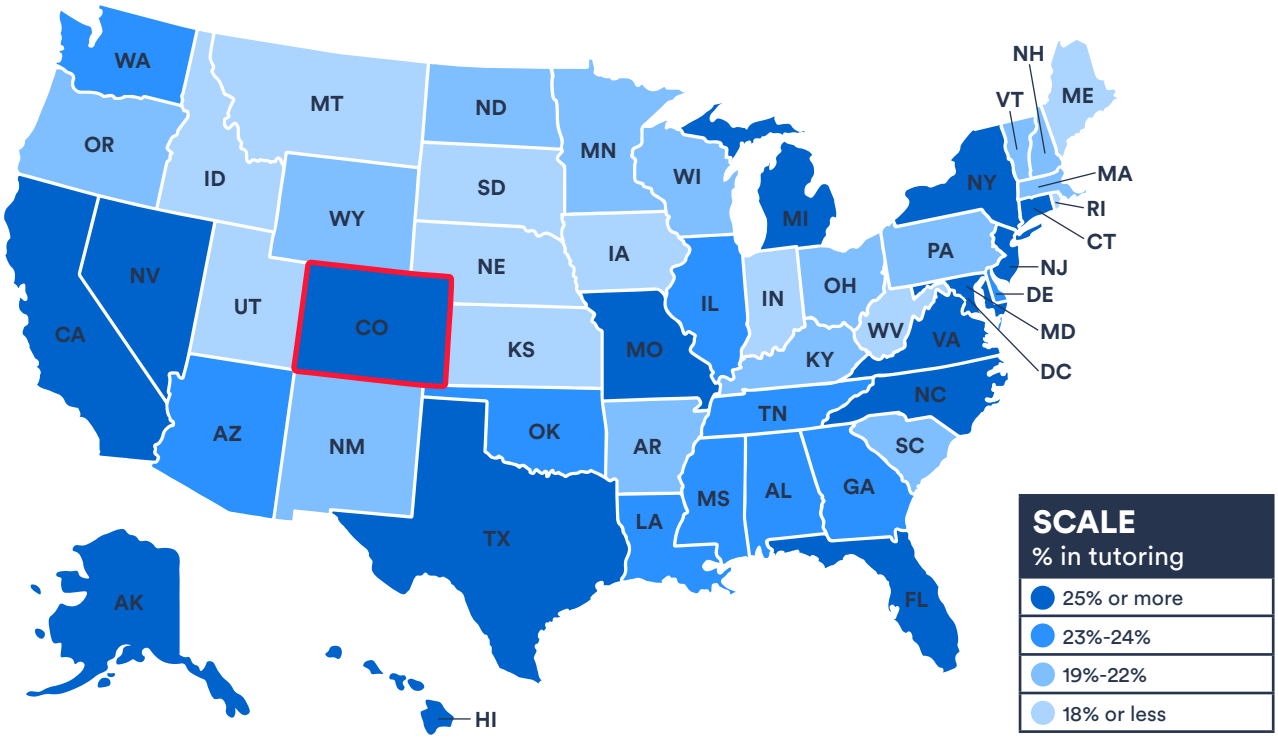
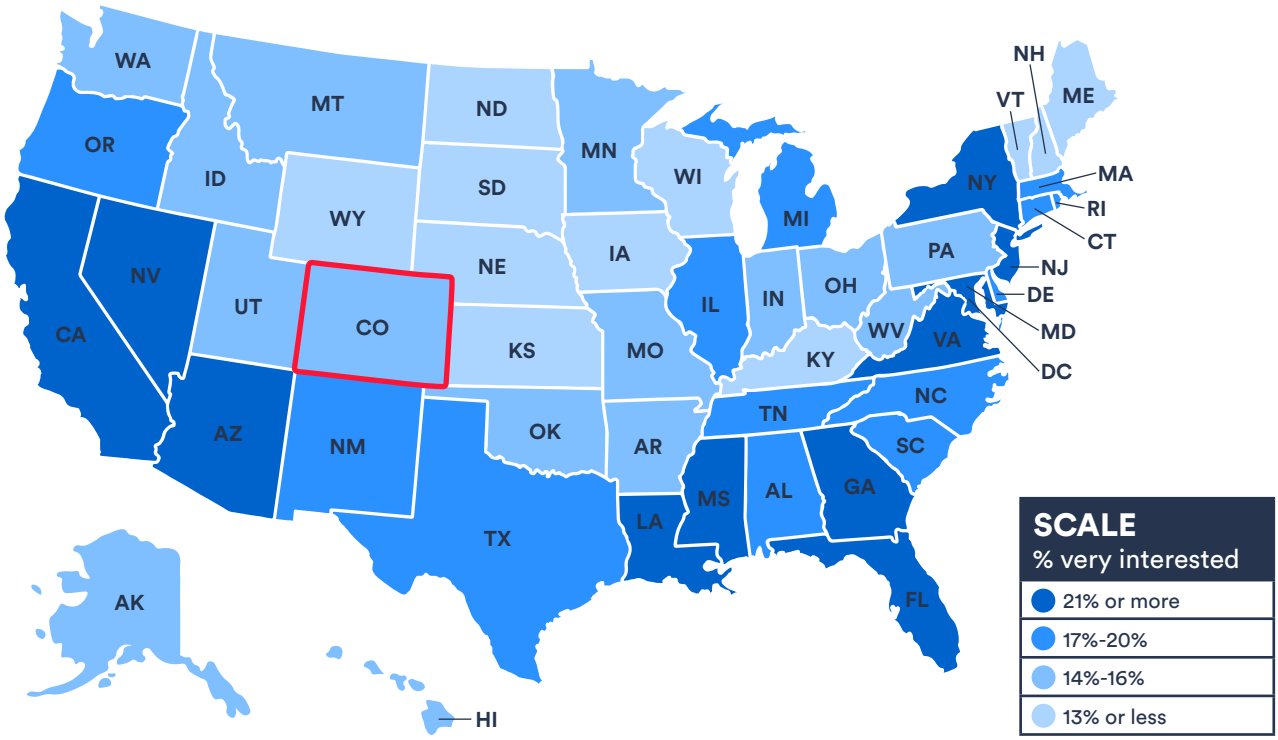


UNMET DEMAND FOR TUTORING BY STATE

Percentage of families who don't have a tutor who are very interested in tutoring



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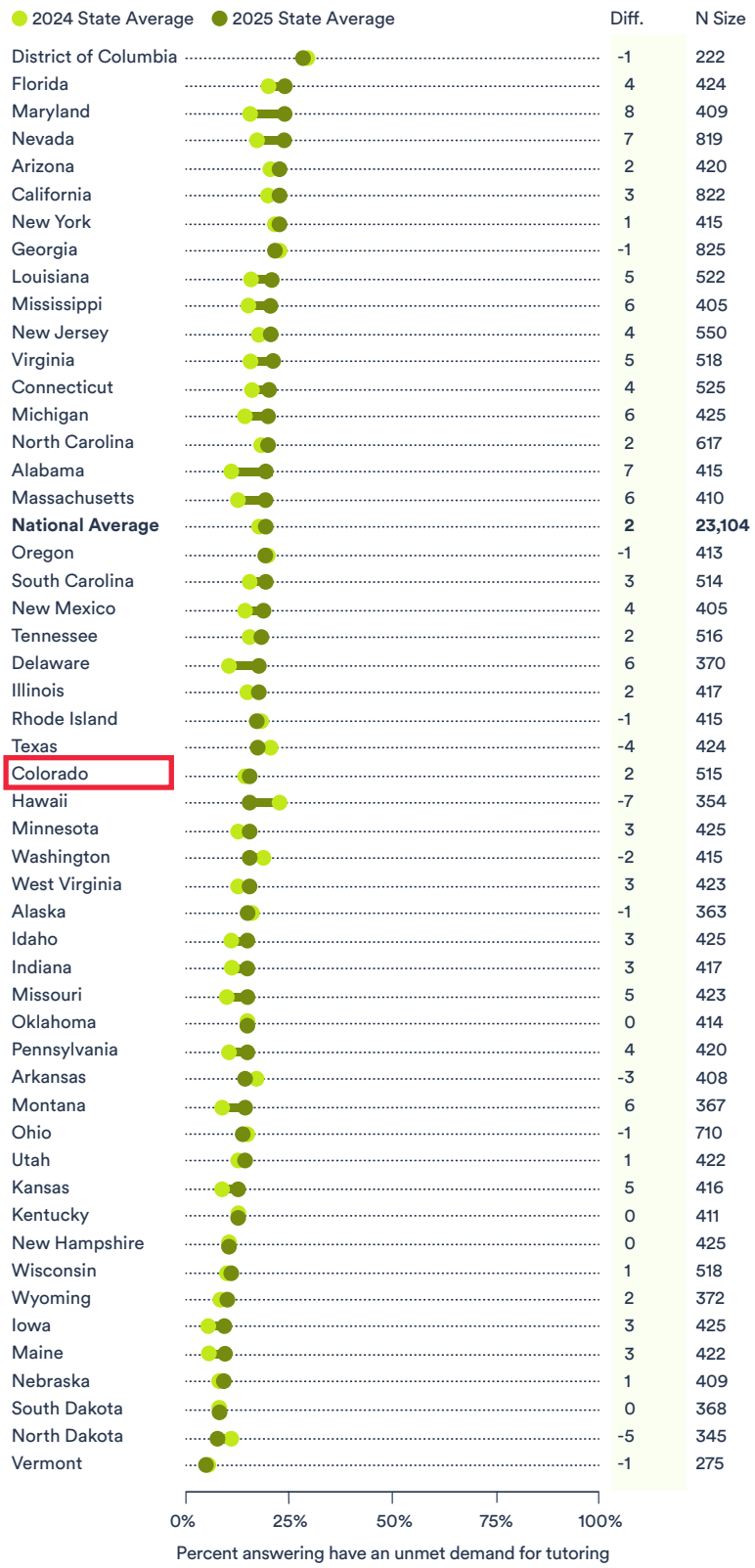
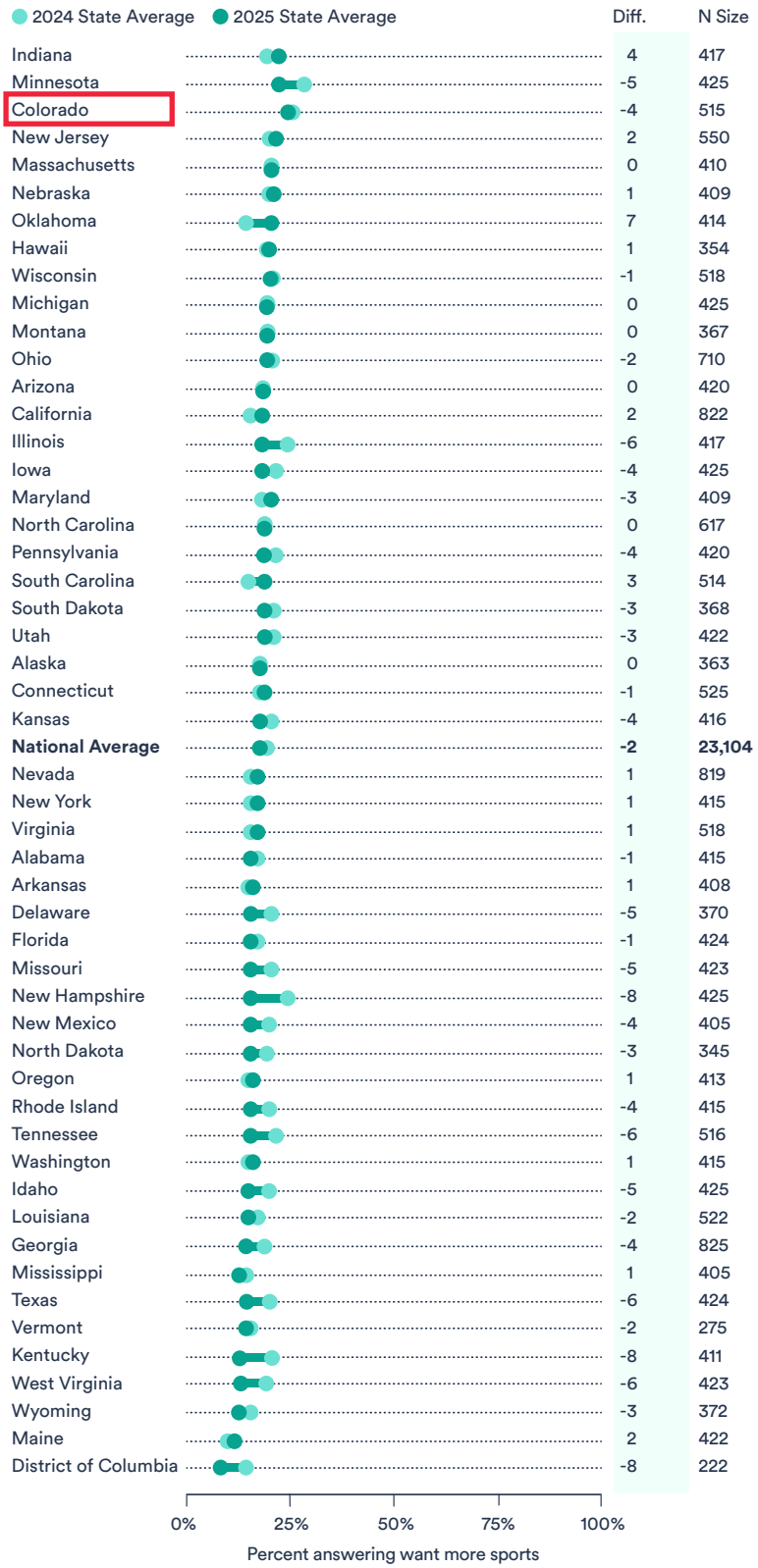


WANT MORE SPORTS BY STATE & YEAR

Percentage who said if they had more time and/or money, organized sports would be the activity most beneficial to their child



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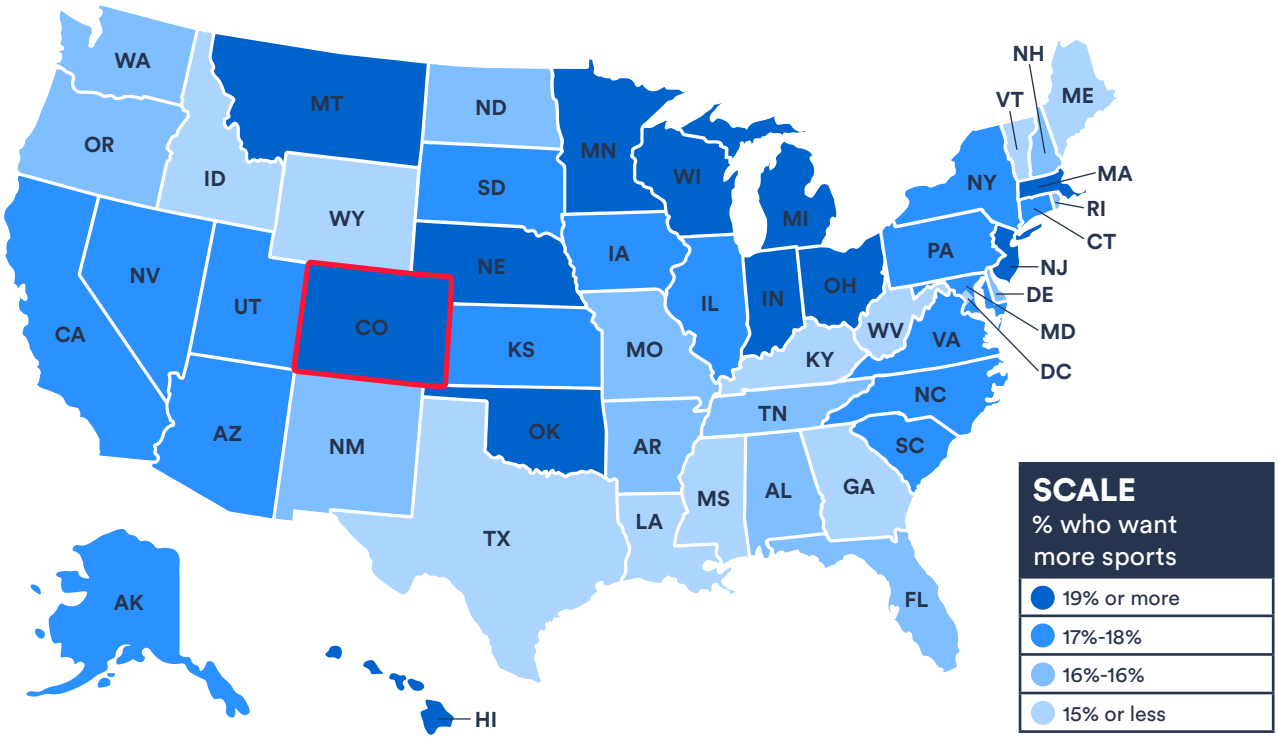
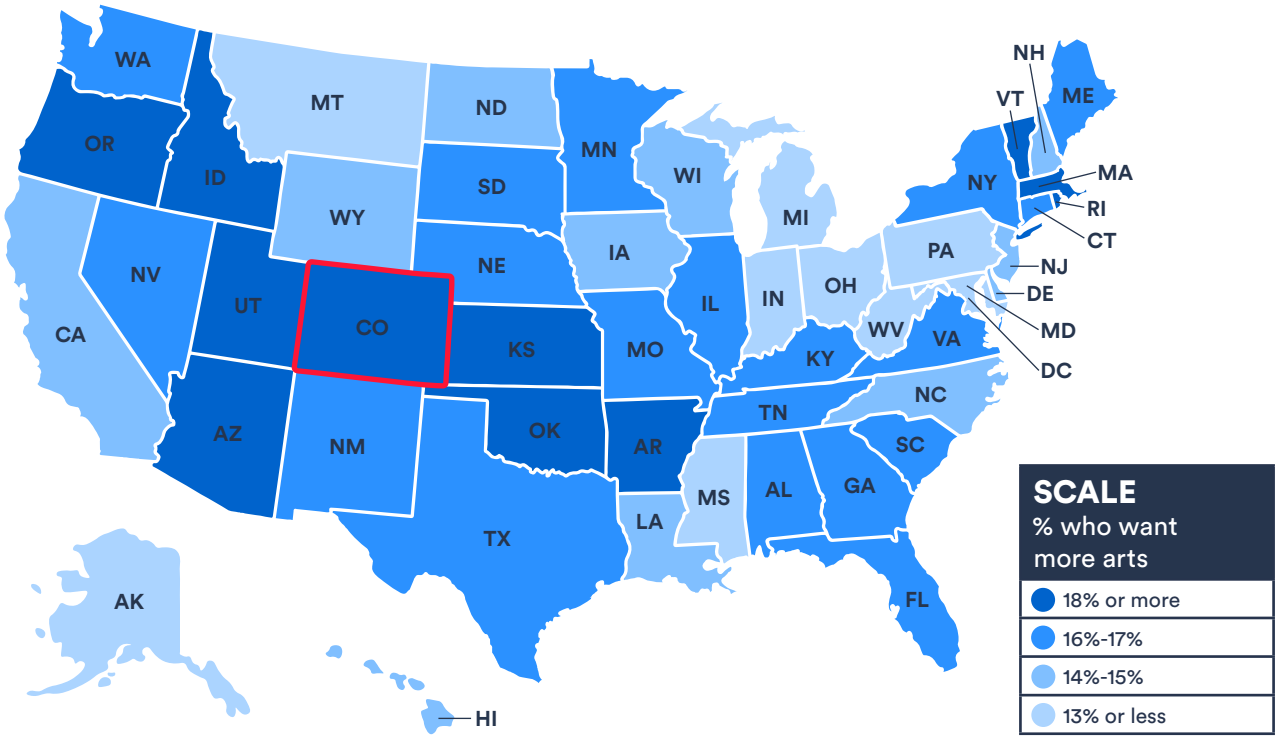


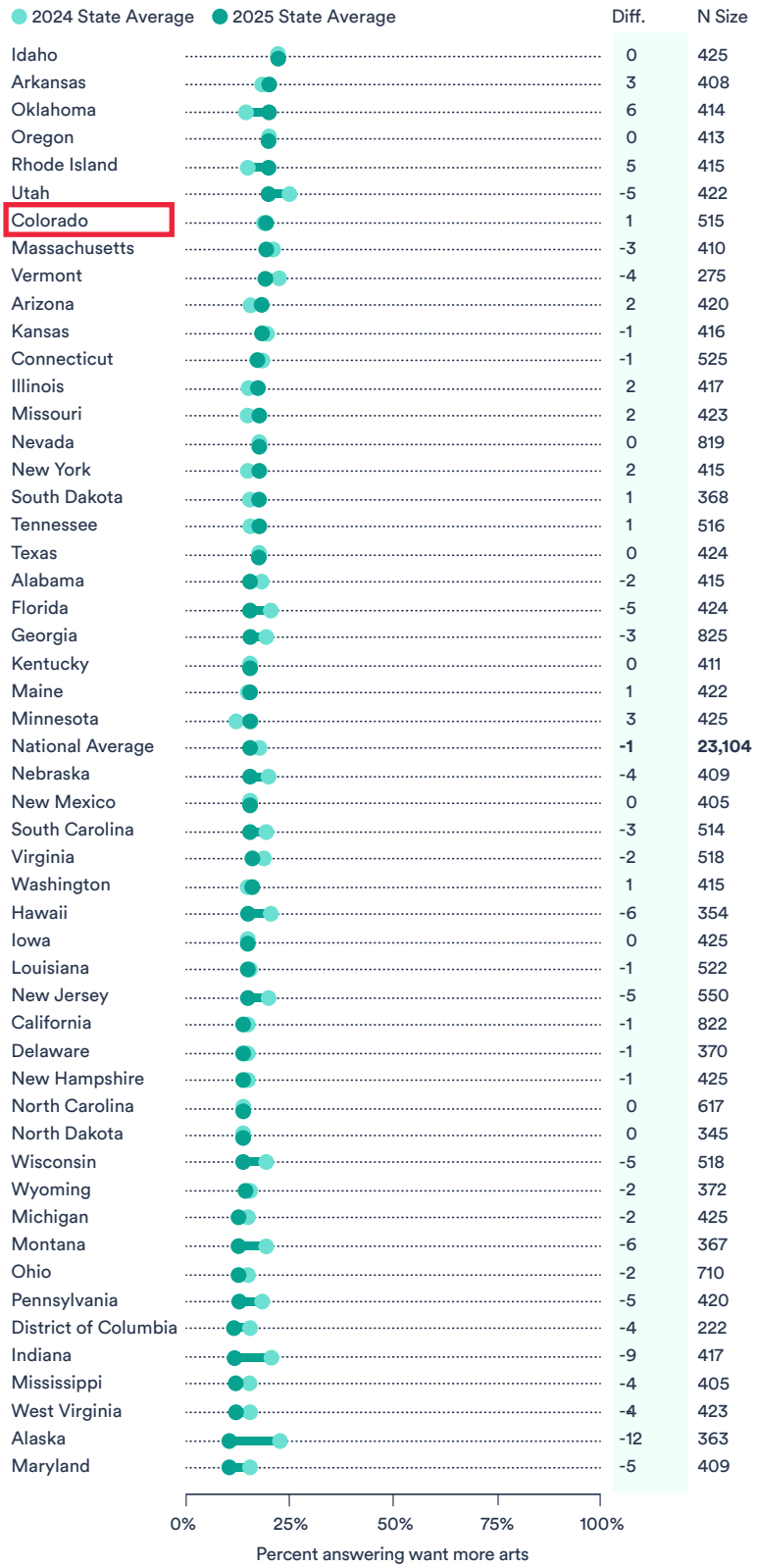
WANT MORE ARTS BY STATE

Percentage who said if they had more time and/or money, art, dance or music would be the activity most beneficial to their child



WANT MORE ARTS BY STATE & YEAR

Percentage who said if they had more time and/or money, art, dance or music would be the activity most beneficial to their child



ABOUT TEN

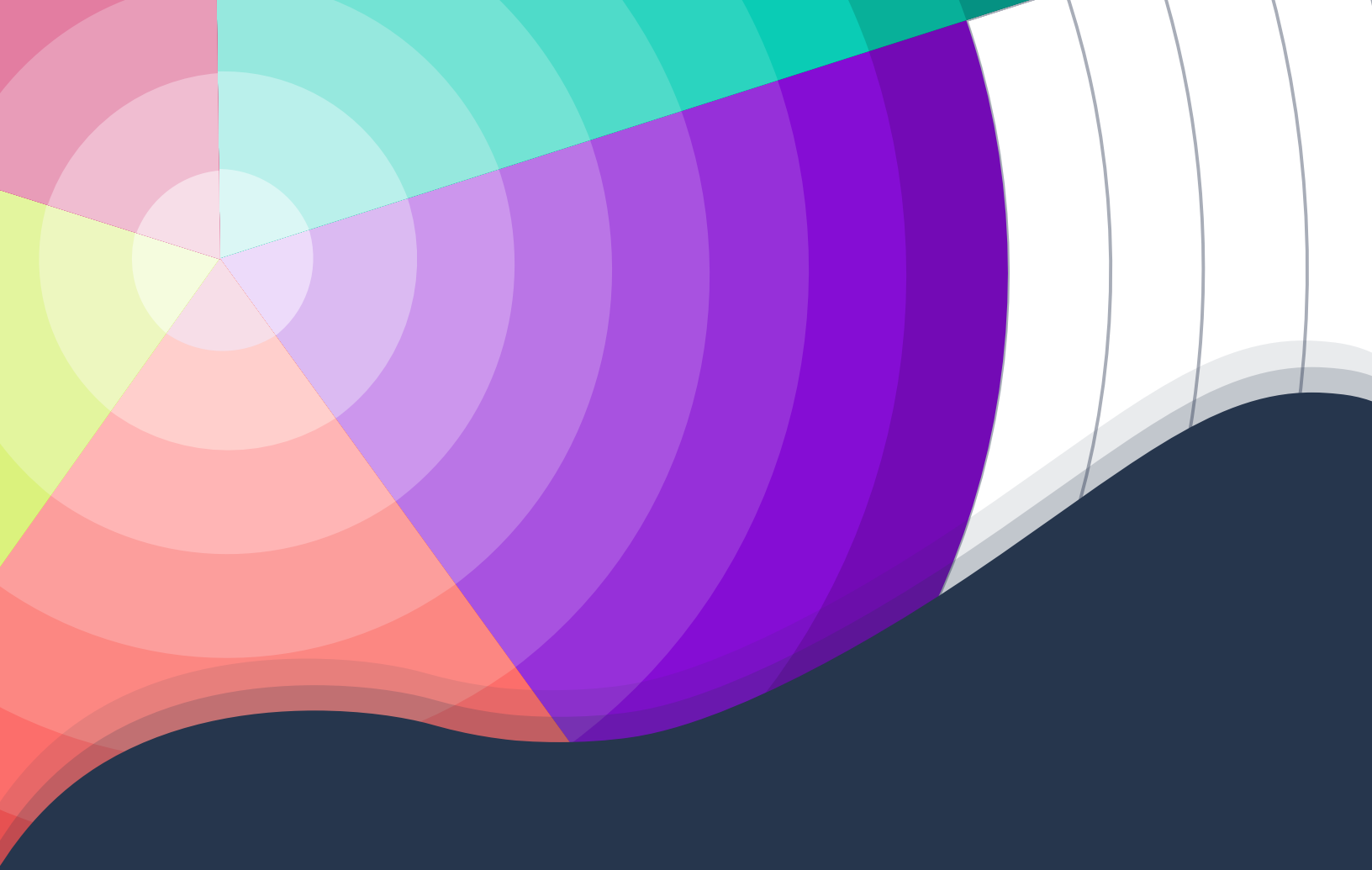
The mission of **Transform Education Now** is to partner with parents in order to ensure access to a world class education for all students in Colorado. Our education systems have been unequal for far too long, and TEN exists to change that system by partnering with families, students, community leaders, charter providers, local school districts and elected officials to demand high quality schools in all neighborhoods and communities.

ABOUT 50CAN

50CAN is an education advocacy organization focused on building the dynamic, student-centered education system of the future so that all kids, regardless of address, receive a high quality education. At the center of this work is our support for local education advocates who together have secured more than 275 transformative policy wins since our founding in 2011. This advocacy work is complemented by fellowships to spark and amplify the voices of changemakers, support for educational entrepreneurs as they build proof points of a better tomorrow, and efforts to help elected leaders better serve the public through a deeper understanding of education policy.

ABOUT EDGE RESEARCH

Edge Research tells data-driven stories that make our clients' programs, products, and brands successful. One of Edge's key verticals is education, which ranges from early childhood development, to K-12 and postsecondary education, to lifelong learning. We work for dozens of foundations, advocacy organizations, curriculum providers, associations, districts, schools and universities. Edge is constantly in the field talking to parents, students, teachers, administrators, and other education decision makers – getting the pulse on the issues that matter most.



EDGE research

50CAN

TRANSFORM EDUCATION NOW