

Ask Alabama Poll Results



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PRESS RELEASE

Alabama residents give their local schools high marks

Percentage in state assigning schools a grade of A or B exceeds national norm.

Auburn, August 17, 2009: As local schools prepared to reopen across Alabama, Auburn University pollsters found a high degree of satisfaction with their recent performance. When asked to grade local schools in their community, the majority of a statewide sample of 639 residents interviewed in July by telephone assigned high marks: 25 percent gave their local schools a grade of A and another 36 percent gave them a B.

"These grades are extraordinary," said Dr. Don-Terry Veal, Director of the Center for Governmental Services that conducted the poll. "When the Gallup organization last asked this same question to a nationwide sample, only 46 percent of Americans gave their local schools a grade of A or B. That 61 percent of Alabama residents do so now is a credit to the recent performance of local schools here."

The positive poll report comes on the heels of an announcement from Alabama officials that 86 percent of the state's local schools have met goals established by the No Child Left Behind program administered by the U.S. Department of Education.

Not everyone polled was so happy with their local schools, however. Twenty-six percent (26%) gave local schools in their community a grade of C, six percent a D, and three percent dished out a failing grade of F. Nationally, Gallup reports that 16 percent of all Americans give their local schools a grade of D or F.

The Auburn poll analysts found that satisfaction varies across the state, with residents of southeast counties most likely to give their schools grades of A or B (80 percent). Residents of southwest counties were least likely to give those top marks to their schools (49 percent A or B). Rural residents are more satisfied with their schools (67 percent A or B) than are suburban (57 percent) or urban (62 percent) residents

"Surprisingly, there were few differences in the opinions of older and younger poll respondents, and men were only slightly more positive than women," said poll center manager Patrick Rose. "We also find that African-Americans are mildly more satisfied with their local schools (65 percent A or B) than are whites (60 percent).

Educational attainment also figures into Alabamians' perceptions of their schools. Among residents with only a high school education, more than two-thirds (67 percent) give local schools an A or B. But just 58 percent of college grads and 59 percent of residents with a graduate degree give A's or B's to local schools in their communities.

The Ask Alabama survey results are based on telephone interviews conducted with a stratified random sample of 639 adult householders July 6 -- 19, 2009. The sample's geographic, gender, race, and age distributions were weighted to be proportionate to the United States Census Bureau's data for Alabama's adult (18+ years of age) householders. Patrick Rose, Manager of the Center's Survey Research Laboratory that conducted the interviews, said that poll results based on the full statewide sample have a margin of error of ±4 percentage points.

The Ask Alabama Poll is to be conducted quarterly by the Center for Governmental Services, a unit of Auburn University Outreach that provides research, consulting and training to government agencies, not-for-profit associations, and private sector clients.

Prior releases from the current poll include:

August 3 – CONSUMER CONFIDENCE. Alabama residents have mixed views on the state of the economy.

August 10 – MANUFACTURING. Alabama residents see manufacturing leading economic recovery; The affluent sense a car-buying opportunity; Alabama-made autos drawing interest.

Future releases from the current poll include:

HUNGER. Hunger is an issue; many residents see Alabama families skipping meals to cope with economy.

NEWS MEDIA. Internet is a growing news source in Alabama; threatens to overtake newspapers.

STATE IMAGE. Alabama is seen as a friendly place to raise a family or retire; but don't consider starting a business or looking for a job.

JOBS. Better pay and benefits top of list of what Alabama job seekers want.

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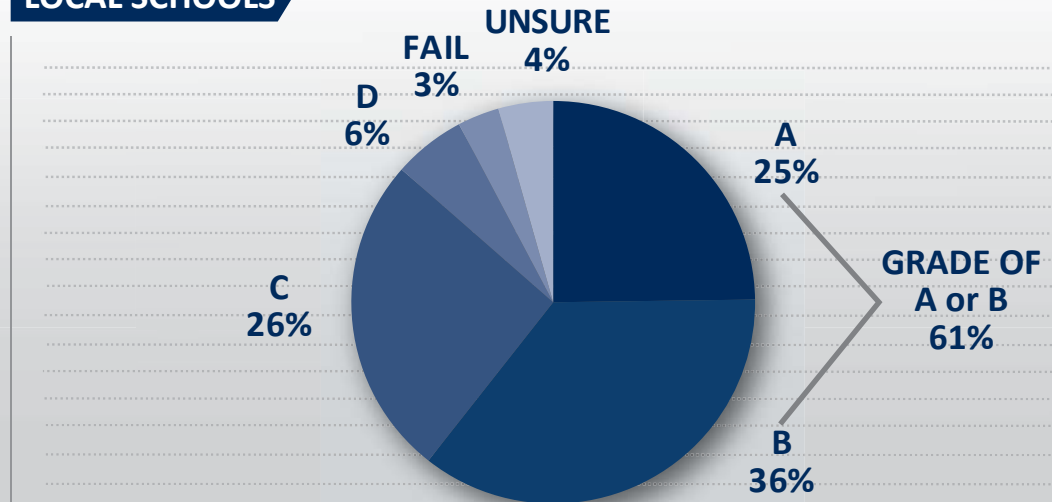
AUBURN
CENTER FOR GOVERNMENTAL SERVICES

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Question

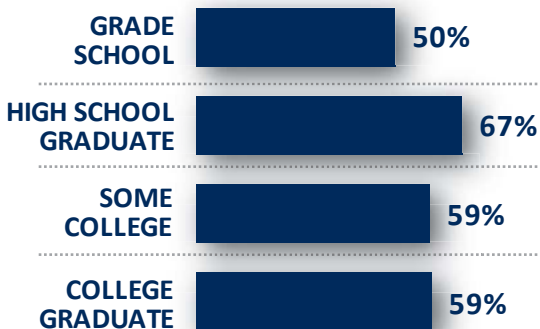
Students are often given the grades of A,B,C,D and Fail to rate the quality of their work at school. Suppose the public schools themselves were graded in the same way. What grade would you give schools in your own community?

LOCAL SCHOOLS



Percent "A" or "B" By Selected Characteristics of Respondents

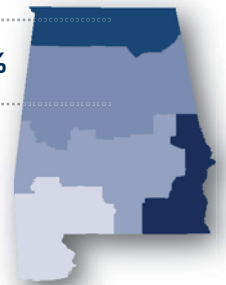
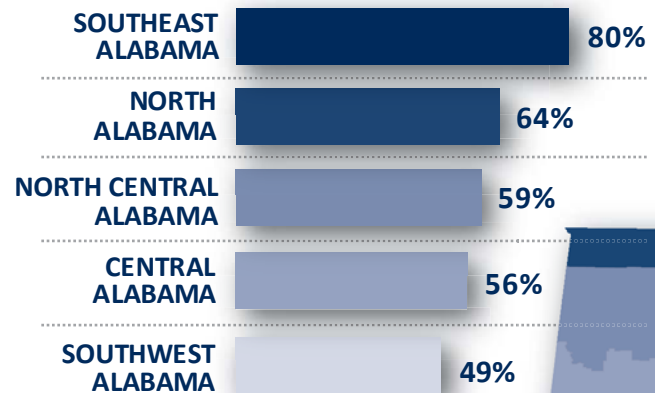
BY EDUCATION



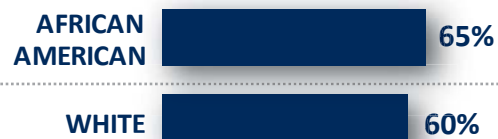
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BY GEOGRAPHY



BY RACE



The Ask Alabama survey results are based on telephone interviews conducted with a stratified random sample of 639 adult householders in Alabama from July 6 to July 19, 2009. The sample was chosen so as to ensure that each region of the state was represented in proportion to its population. The sample's geographic, gender, race, and age distributions were weighted to be proportionate to the United States Census Bureau's data for Alabama's adult (18+ years of age) householders. Results based on all 639 respondents have a margin of error of ±4 percentage points.