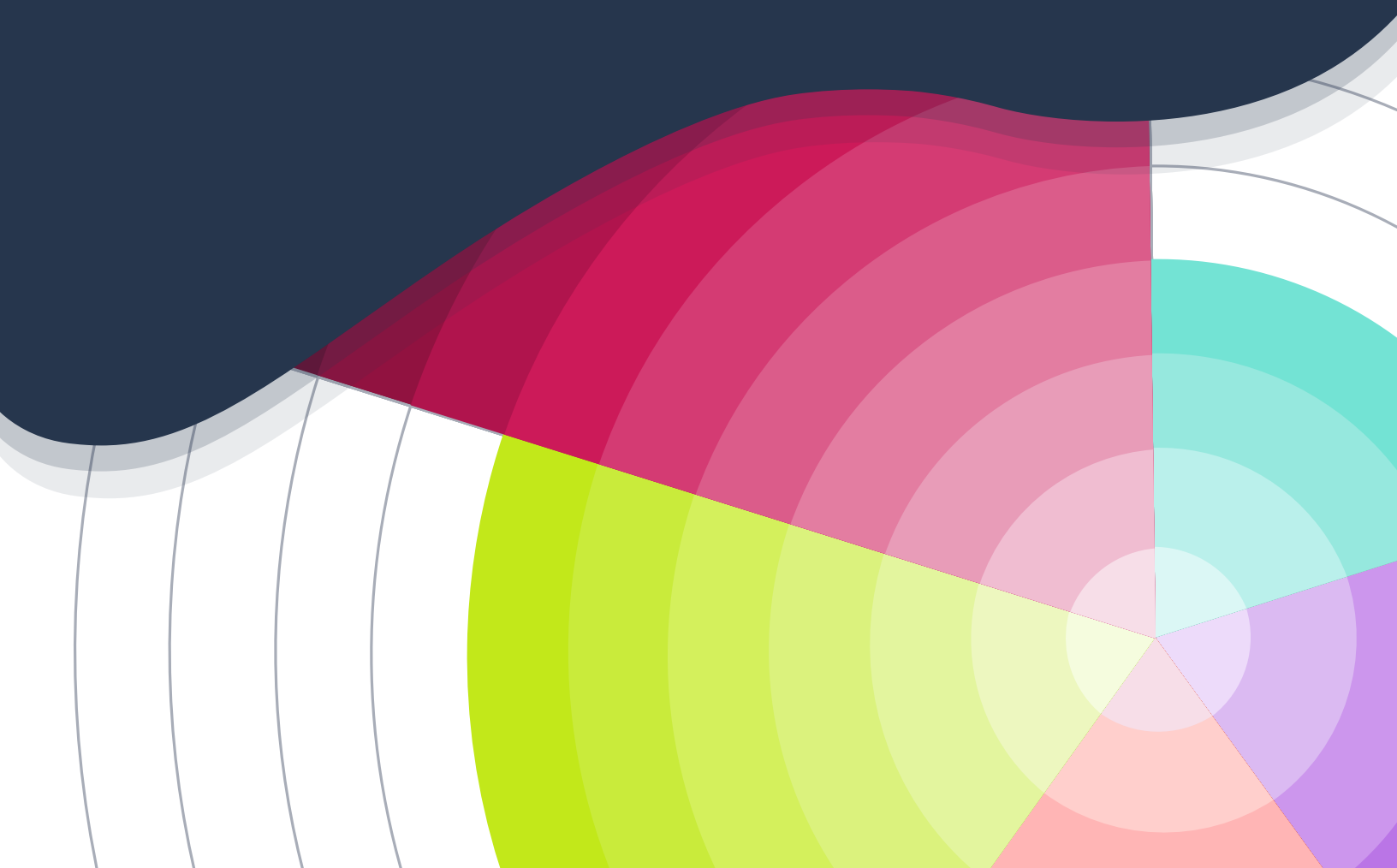




# The State of Educational Opportunity in Tennessee

A Survey of Tennessee Parents

October 2024



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Dear Friends,

Changing our world for the better starts by listening. By elevating the voices of parents across our state, we can ensure that we are focused on the problems most important to them and that the solutions we seek are grounded in their hopes and dreams for their children.

This parent focus is core to our mission at TennesseeCAN, and why I am so excited to share with you a new survey on the state of educational opportunity in Tennessee. Produced in partnership with 50CAN and Edge Research, this survey provides a unique window into the opportunities available to students in our state right now and allows us to compare those answers to other parents across our region and across the country.

The survey is organized into five categories of learning that families tell us are crucial for them and their children: 1) school quality and opportunity, 2) tutoring, summer and mental health, 3) out of school activities, 4) information and engagement, and 5) college and career readiness. A total of 407 parents and guardians of school-aged children in our state were surveyed between July 8 and August 22, 2024, as part of a nationwide research effort that reached more than 20,000 respondents.

Importantly, the Tennessee parents who participated in our survey reflect the makeup of our state – giving us a reliable snapshot of how our parents are thinking about their child’s educational opportunities. Here’s what they told us:



**We love our schools, and we still want more for our children.** Tennessee has among the highest percentages of families who believe they have a choice in where they can send their children to school, and who responded that, if given the choice, they would send their child to the same school they attend today. Yet less than half of Tennessee families said they are “very satisfied” with their child’s school.



**Tennessee families demonstrate a willingness to engage in their child’s learning in meaningful ways.** Tennessee ranks above the national average for parents who say they understand academic achievement, are familiar with how budget decisions are made at their child’s school and rely on assignments or tests to gauge learning progress. However, this trend does not apply at the school level. With only 26 percent of families saying they reviewed school performance, Tennessee ranked well below the national average.



**Income level dictates different experiences for Tennessee families.** We see concerning gaps

between families of low-, middle- and high-income families in terms of student participation in learning opportunities like tutoring and summer camps as well as out of school activities, and in levels of confidence that children will be prepared for college and the workforce.

These responses reinforce a strong sense of optimism and aspiration that I have always known to be true in the Volunteer State: we believe in our kids, we believe in the value of K-12 education, and we are willing to do what it takes to ensure all our students can learn and achieve in school and beyond.

A digital copy of this report is available at [tn-can.org](https://tn-can.org). Visit our partners at [50can.org](https://50can.org) to view the nationwide report, the survey questionnaire and the full data set.

Sincerely,



**Chelsea Crawford**  
Executive Director  
TennesseeCAN

# Methodology

Edge Research conducted a nationwide survey of 20,090 U.S. parents and guardians of school-aged children (K-12th grade) in each of the 50 states plus the District of Columbia. **In Tennessee, 407 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 July 8 to August 22, 2024.

## 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 at least 300 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<sup>1</sup> and National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)<sup>2</sup> 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, race/ethnicity, school level, and school type within states.

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

RACE/ETHNICITY							
Hispanic/Latino of Any Race	White Alone	Black/African American Alone	Asian Alone	American Indian or Alaska Native Alone	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander Alone	Some Other Race Alone	Two or More Races
7%	73%	15%	3%	0.1%	–	0.2%	2%

INCOME DISTRIBUTION		
Low Income	Middle Income	High Income
45%	46%	9%

<sup>1</sup> Annual Social and Economic Supplements, United States Census, [Annual Social and Economic Supplements \(census.gov\)](https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2019/annsocsupp.html)

<sup>2</sup> Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), [Index \(ed.gov\)](https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/edgov/)

## SCHOOL LEVEL

K-5th	6th-8th	9th-12th
45%	24%	31%

## 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
7%	7%	9%	7%	8%	8%	7%	9%	7%	7%	9%	6%	9%

## 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
65%	6%	8%	9%	2%	2%	7%	–	0.6%

## 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 “The State of the American Middle Class”<sup>3</sup> 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 3-person household using the equivalence scales technique. Pulling from the U.S. Census 2023 Annual Social and Economic Supplements, they used the 3-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.

## 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<sup>4</sup> to maintain the highest standards of competence, integrity, accountability, and transparency in public opinion and survey research work.

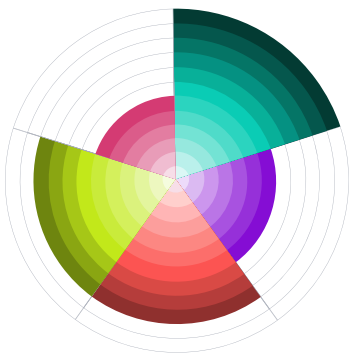
<sup>3</sup> Kochhar, Rakesh, “The State of the American Middle Class,” [Pew Research Center](#), 5/31/24

<sup>4</sup> Code of Professional Ethics and Practices, [American Association For Public Opinion Research \(AAPOR\)](#)

# 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



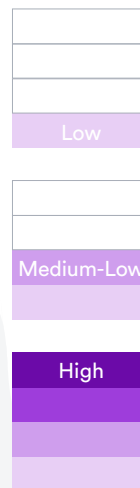
To help make it easier to look at our state's full results at a glance, we present the answers from our parents over two pages. At the top of the first page is the number of parents who participated in the survey.

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).

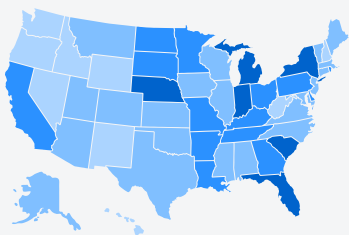
The state results for each question are presented in four circles: low-income, middle and high income, state average and national average. For yes/no questions, the results are presented as the percentage who said yes, rounded to the nearest whole number. For questions about parents' opinions and attitudes, 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.

State Tier



## OUR STATE IN CONTEXT

The second section of this report provides the results **for all 50 states plus D.C.**, one question at a time. For each of the questions, we provide the results either in the form of a map or an ordered list of states.



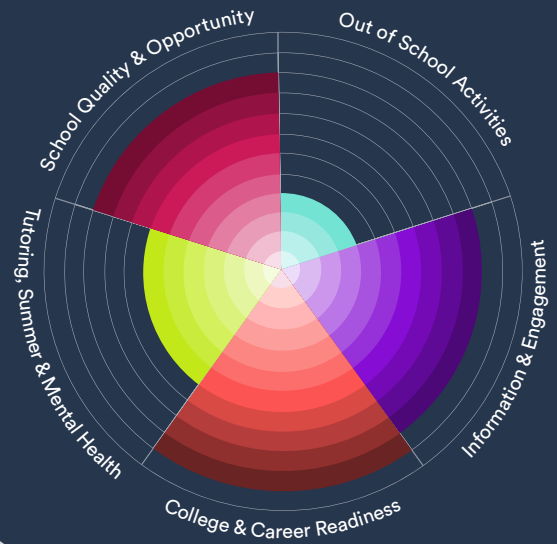
For the **maps**, a key provides the scale for the map and explains the numbers behind each of the four shades of blue. The darkest shade of blue is always the highest numbers and the lightest shade of blue is always the lowest numbers. Our state is outlined in red.

For the **list**, states are ordered from highest performing states at the top to lowest performing states at the bottom. This list shows the state average as a dark blue dot and the results for low-income families in a light shade of the section color and the results for middle- and high-income families as a darker shade of that color. Our state is identified with a red box to make it easier to spot.

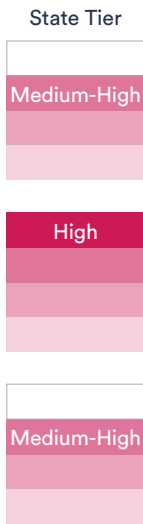
# TENNESSEE

Surveyed July 8-August 22, 2024

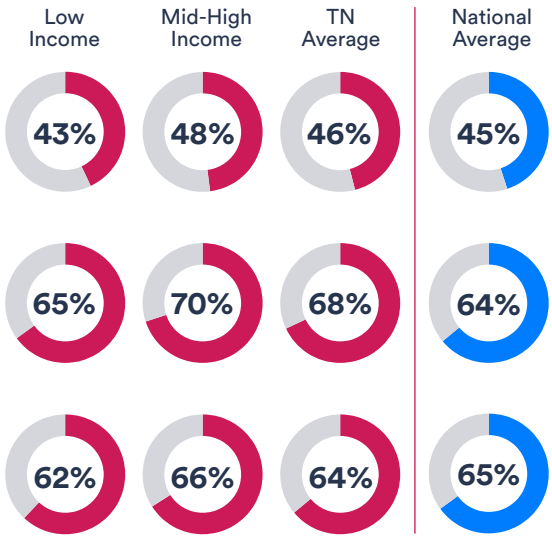
Sample size (N) = 407 parents and guardians



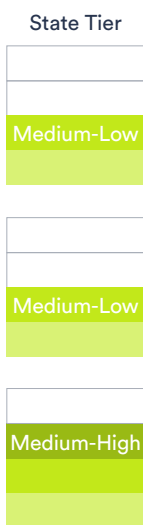
## SCHOOL QUALITY AND OPPORTUNITY



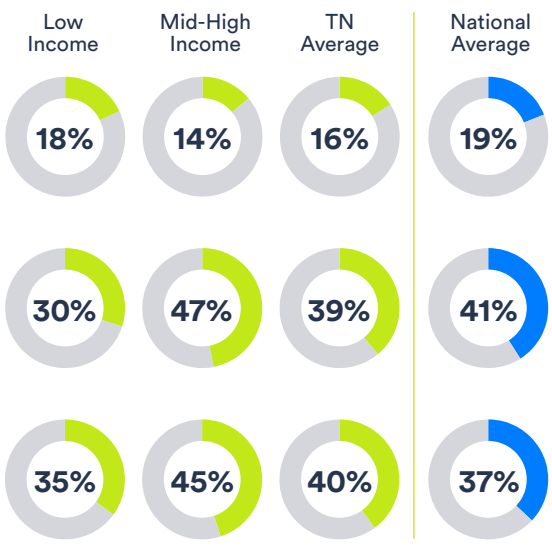
<p><b>School Satisfaction</b></p> <p>Percentage answering they are very satisfied with their child's school</p>
<p><b>Would Make the Same Choice</b></p> <p>Percentage answering that they would send their child to the school they go to today</p>
<p><b>Feel They Have a Choice</b></p> <p>Percentage answering they feel like they have a choice in what school their child attends</p>



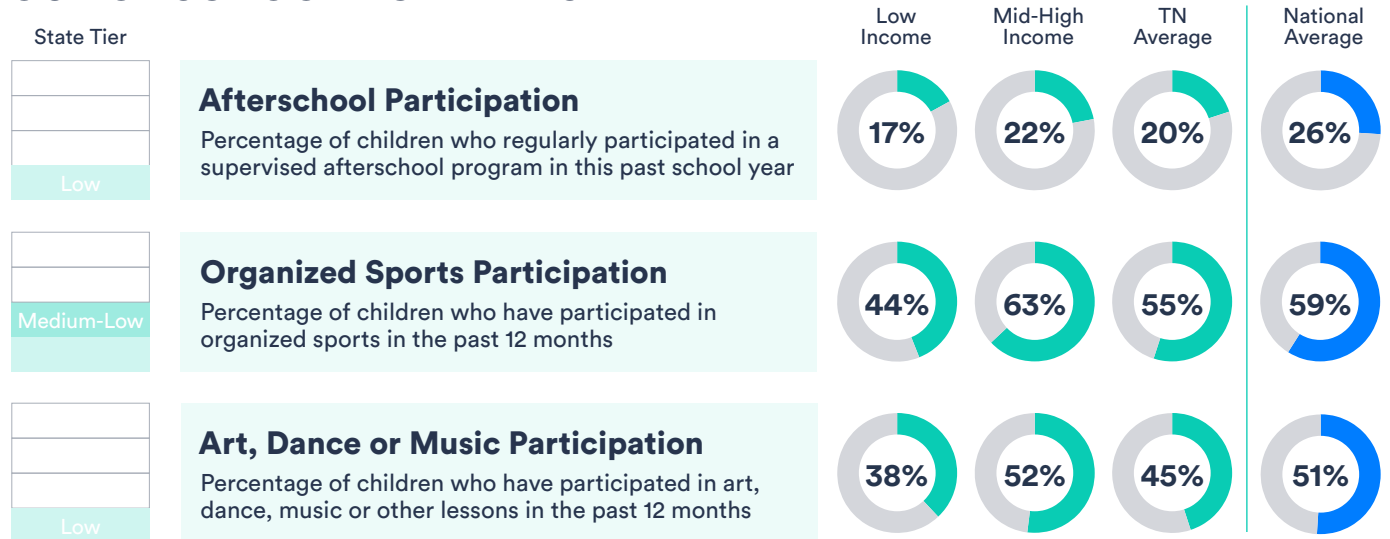
## TUTORING, SUMMER AND MENTAL HEALTH



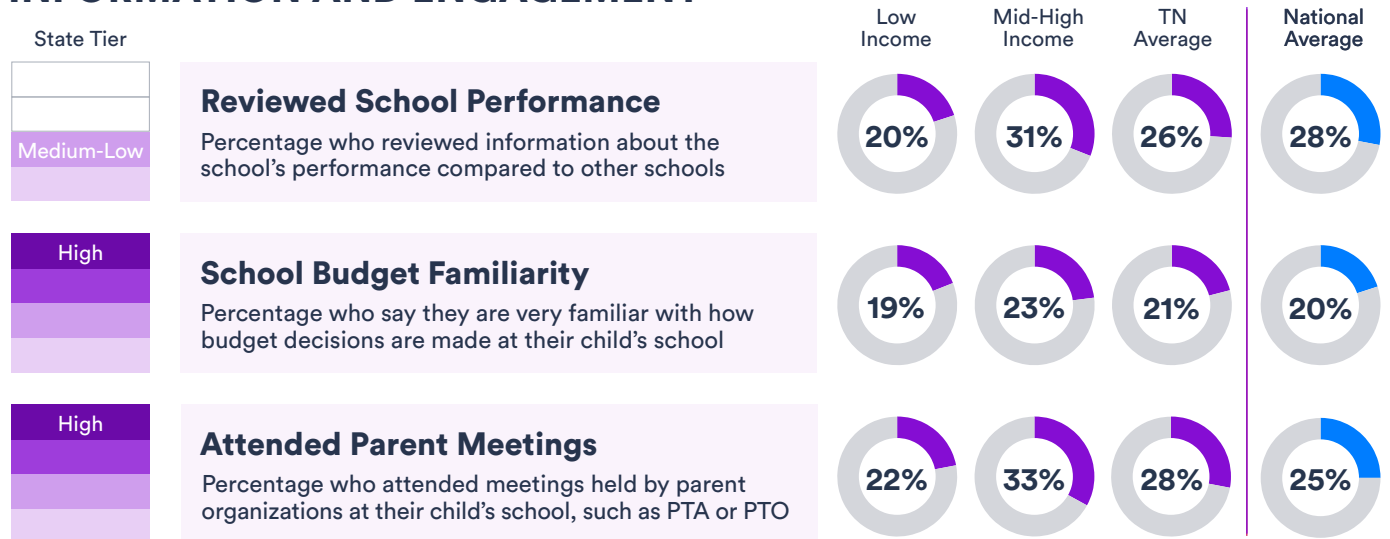
<p><b>Tutoring Participation</b></p> <p>Percentage of children who have received academic tutoring in this past school year</p>
<p><b>Summer Program Participation</b></p> <p>Percentage of children who participated in a supervised summer program</p>
<p><b>Mental Health Satisfaction</b></p> <p>Percentage answering they are very satisfied with how the school supports their child's mental health needs</p>



## OUT OF SCHOOL ACTIVITIES



## INFORMATION AND ENGAGEMENT



## COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

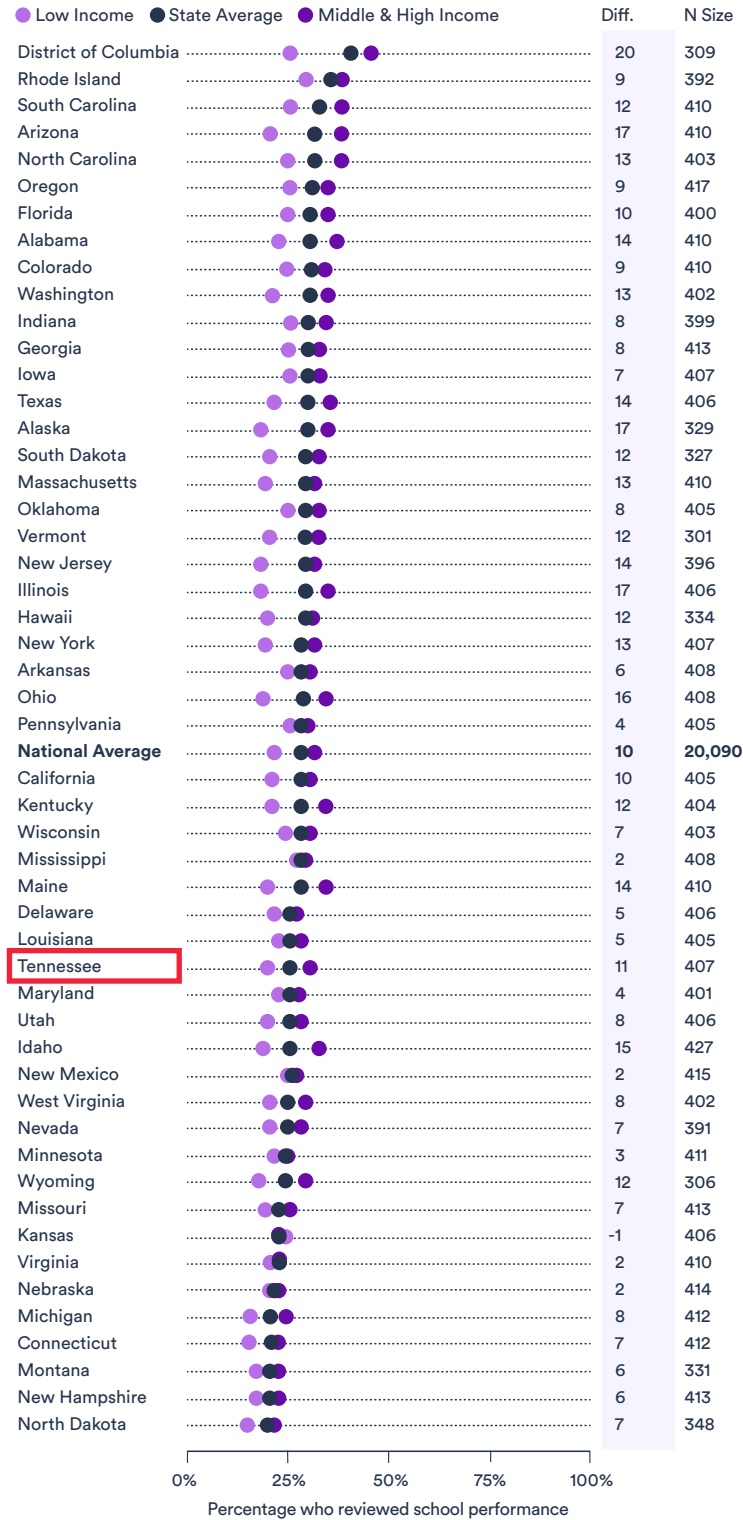




# Tennessee in Context: A 50-State Perspective

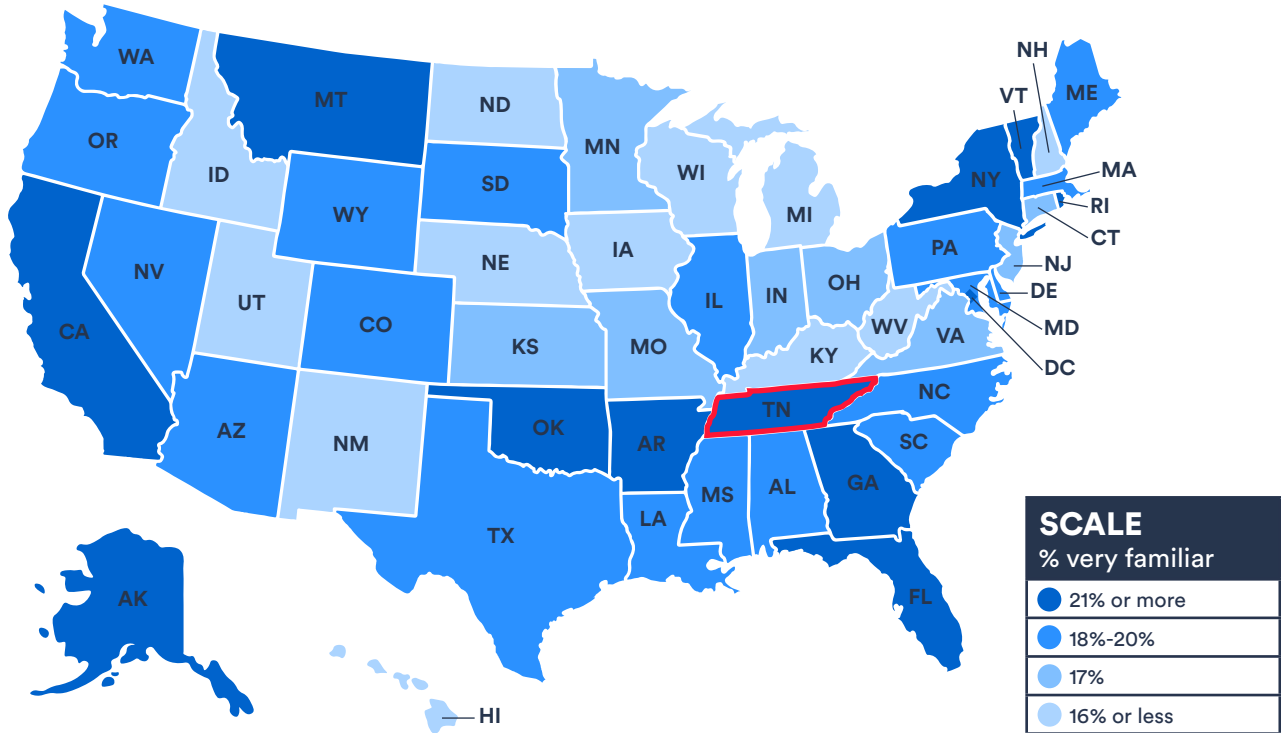
## REVIEWED SCHOOL PERFORMANCE BY STATE & INCOME

Percentage who in the most recent school year reviewed information about the school's performance compared to other schools



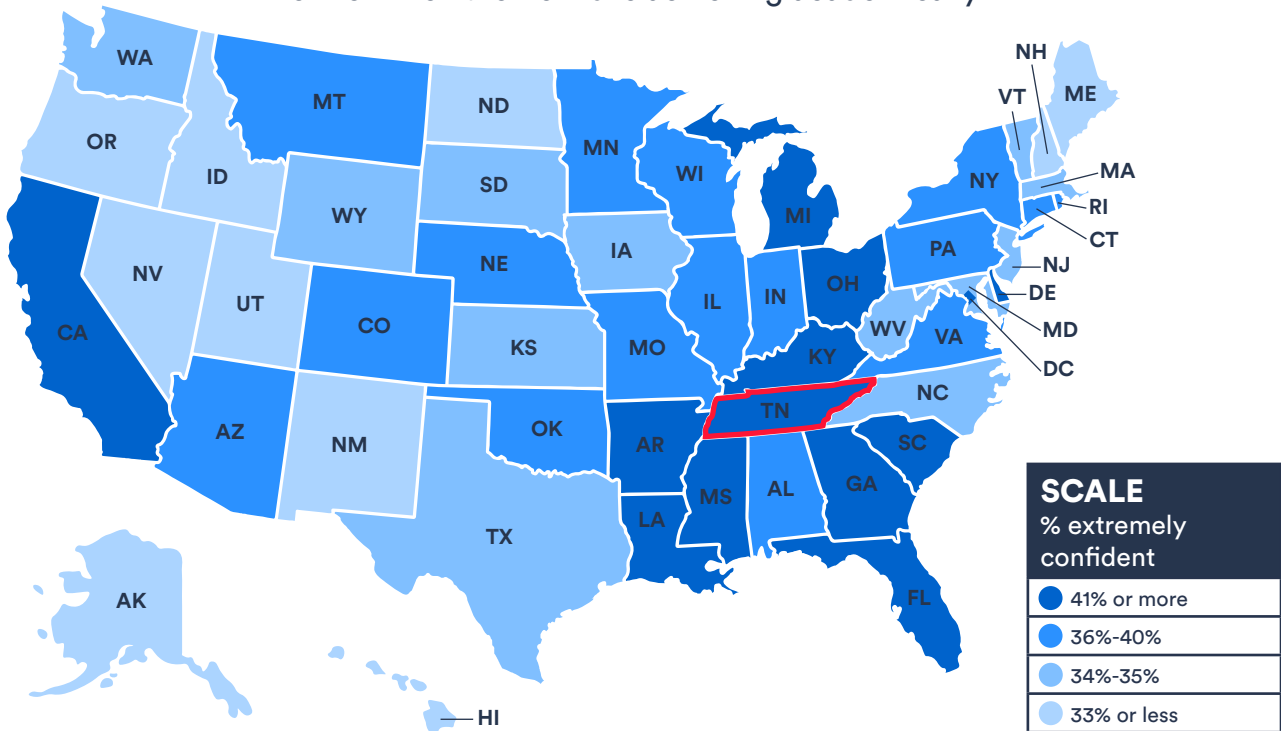
## SCHOOL BUDGET FAMILIARITY BY STATE

Percentage who say they are very familiar with how budget decisions are made at their child's school



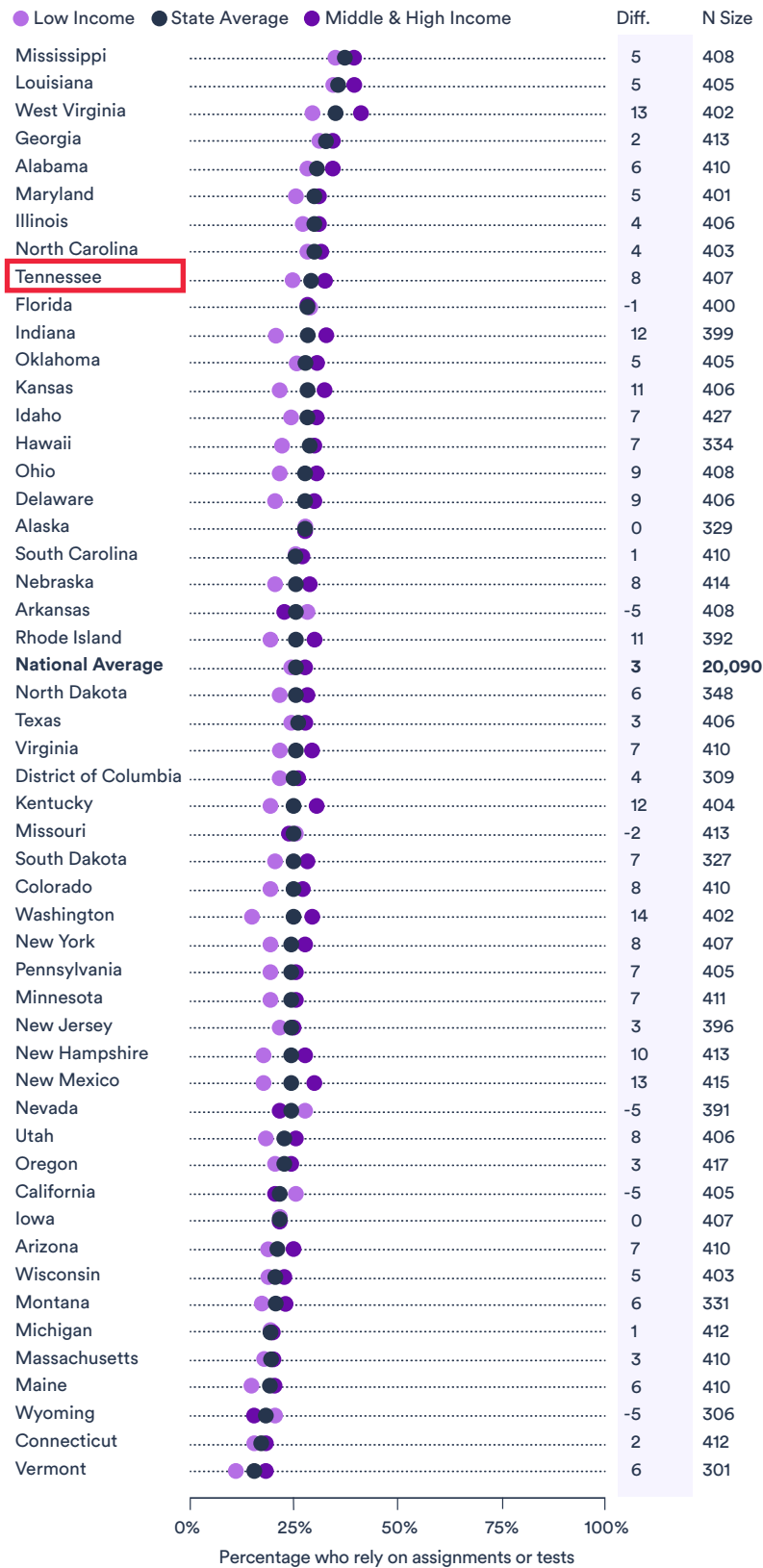
## CONFIDENCE IN UNDERSTANDING BY STATE

Percentage who are extremely confident they have a clear understanding of how well their child is achieving academically



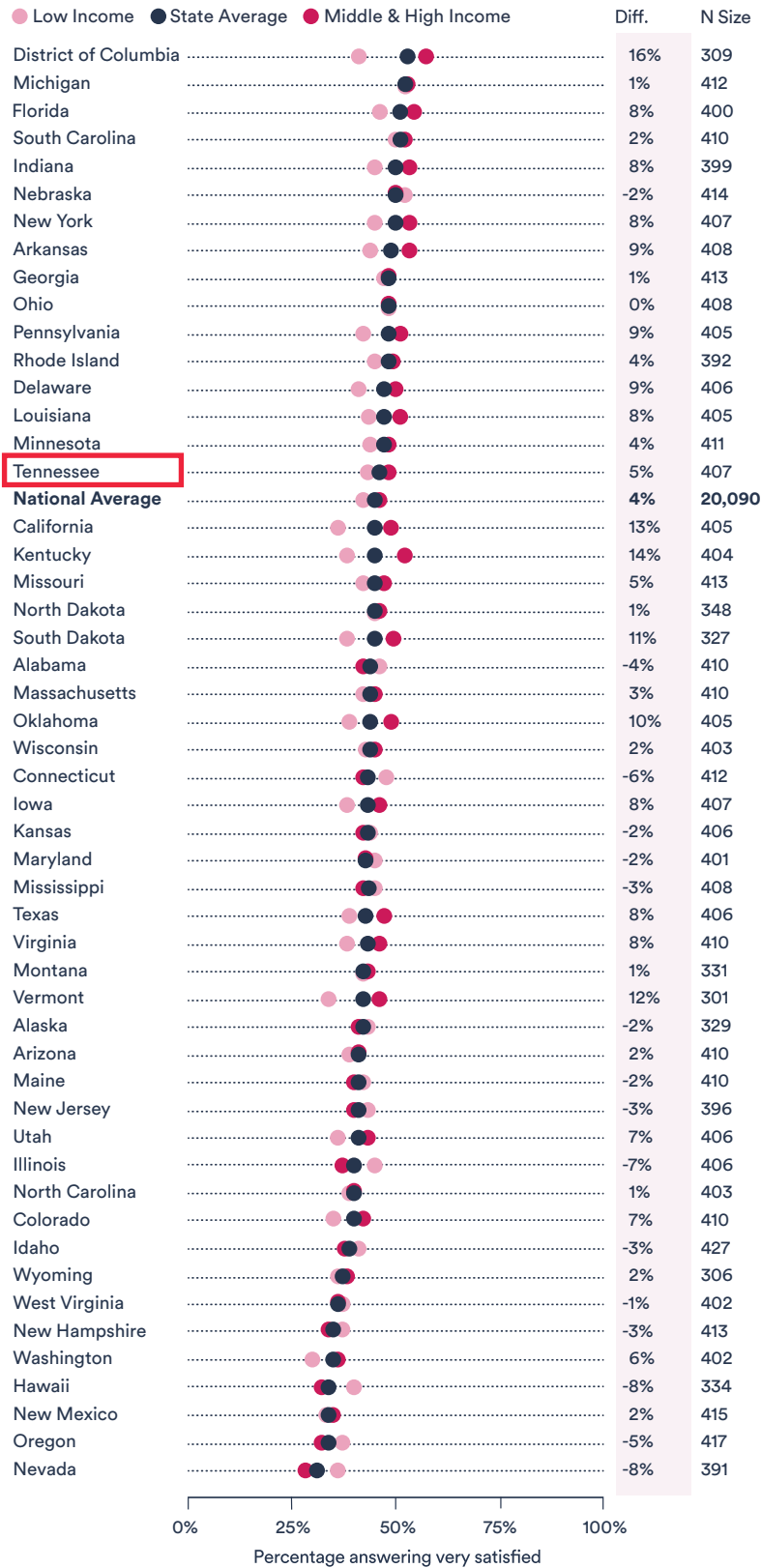
# RELY ON ASSIGNMENTS OR TESTS BY STATE & INCOME

Percentage who say they rely on graded assignments or standardized tests to determine if their child is on grade level



# SCHOOL SATISFACTION BY STATE & INCOME

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



## ABOUT TENNESSEECAN

**TennesseeCAN** advocates for the success of every Tennessee student by supporting access to great schools and great teachers. We work with local stakeholders– from parents and community members to policymakers– to identify and advance common-sense policies that put the needs of students first. Core to our work is our belief that students and their families deserve equitable access to high-quality educational options, opportunities and resources.

## 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 250 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.

