EDGE research

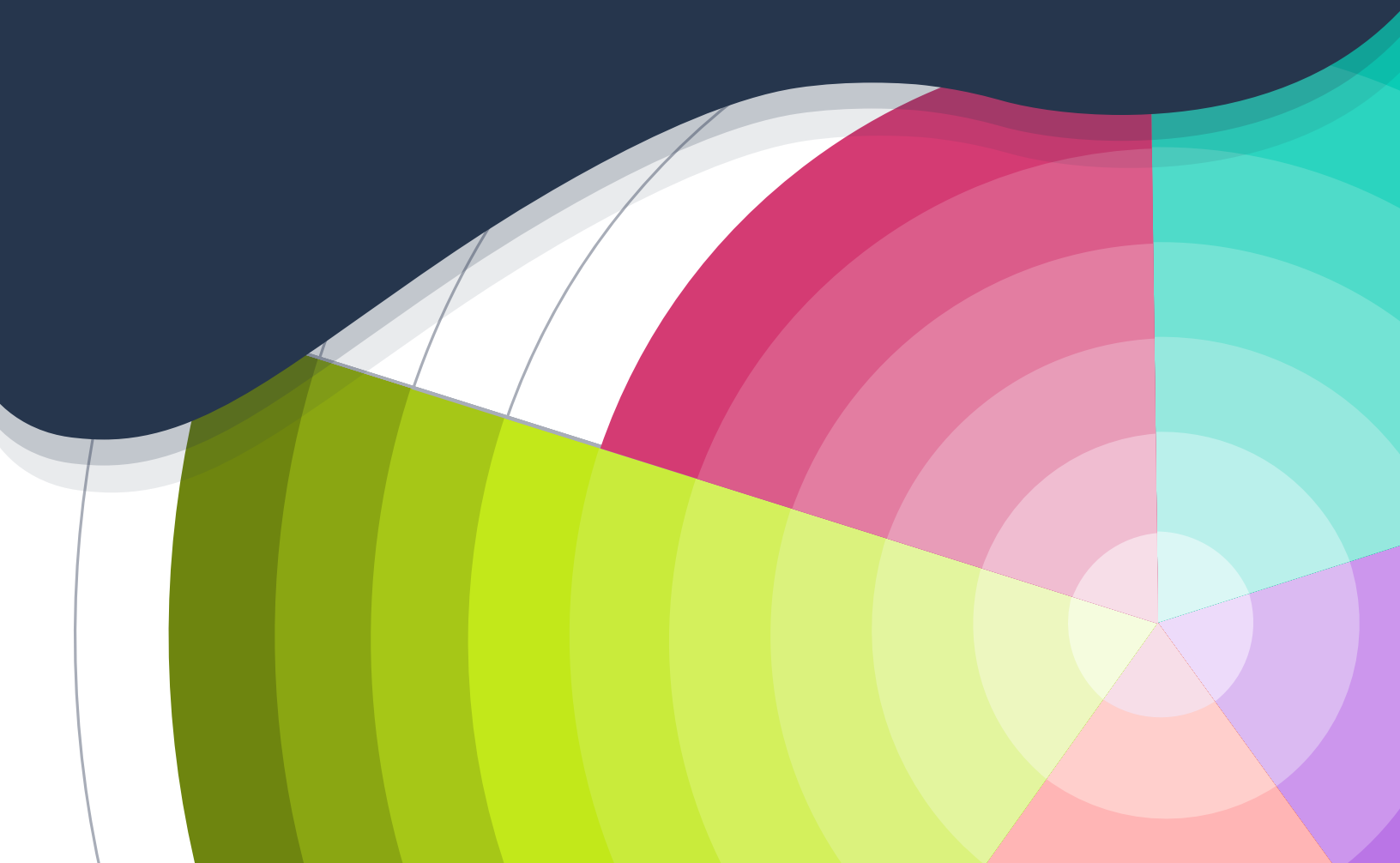
50CAN

ConnCAN

The State of Educational Opportunity in Connecticut

A Survey of Connecticut Parents

October 2024



The State of Educational Opportunity in Connecticut

A Survey of Connecticut Parents

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Letter	2
Methodology	3
How to Read the Results	5
Our State Summary	6
Connecticut in Context	8
About Us	13

Dear Friends,

The last four years have brought a renewed focus on the importance of family and community voice in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges. This holds true for the disruption that our children have experienced in educational access and opportunity, and the disconnect that students feel between the education schools provide and their future.

According to a recent Dalio Foundation report, "one in five of Connecticut's young people were either at-risk or disconnected. These are 119,000 young people who have either dropped out of school or are in danger of dropping out of school, and who are, for those aged 18 to 26, unemployed and in many cases unemployable." For many of our young people, school is no longer a good investment of time and hope.

Family and community voice is core to our mission, and this is why we are so eager to share with you a new survey on the state of educational opportunity in Connecticut. Produced in partnership with 50CAN and Edge Research, this survey provides a unique window into how parents and caregivers view the opportunities available to students in our state, and allows us to compare those answers to parents across our region and across the country.

The survey is organized into five categories that families tell us are crucial for their children: school quality and opportunity; tutoring, summer and mental health; out of school activities; information and engagement; and college and career readiness. A total of 412 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.

Here is what those parents told us:

Our parents track with the national average on low school satisfaction. While nearly 60 percent of our families felt like they had a choice in where to educate their children, and more than half report that if they could send their child to any school they would send their child to the school they go to today, less than half are very satisfied with their child's school.

CT families are not confident about their kids' workforce and college preparedness. Only one in three of our parents and guardians report they are extremely confident about their child's post-secondary prospects, suggesting our state has work to do in both career pathways and college preparation. In Connecticut, while our parents hope that their kids achieve postsecondary success, hope is outpacing results.

Parents have very little information against which to measure their school confidence. Less than 1 in 5 parents in the state reported having reviewed school performance or spending.

The gap in access to tutoring and summer programming between low- and mid/high-income children is stark. While both low- and mid/high-income parents know that high dosage tutoring and summer programming are key to academic improvement, mid/high-income parents are taking advantage of these opportunities at a rate significantly higher than low-income parents.

CT's low-income students are missing out on "Olympic Opportunities." With a large disparity in access to organized sports, Connecticut's wealthiest families have significantly greater access to sports, a vital contributor to college applications and post-secondary opportunities.

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 Connecticut.
- **Maps** of how Connecticut compares to the rest of the nation on important questions.

A digital copy of this report is available at **conncan.org**. Visit our partners at **50can.org** to view the nationwide report, the survey questionnaire and the full data set.

Sincerely,

Steven Hernández, Esq.
Executive Director
Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now (ConnCAN)

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 Connecticut, 412 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[1] and National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)[2] 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 Connecticut 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
20%	61%	10%	6%	0.1%	–	0.6%	2%

INCOME DISTRIBUTION

Low Income	Middle Income	High Income
27%	56%	17%

[1] Annual Social and Economic Supplements, United States Census, Annual Social and Economic Supplements (census.gov)
[2] Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Index (ed.gov)

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
5%	8%	7%	7%	8%	10%	8%	8%	8%	7%	9%	8%	8%

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
70%	12%	4%	8%	1%	0.5%	3%	0.2%	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"[3] 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.

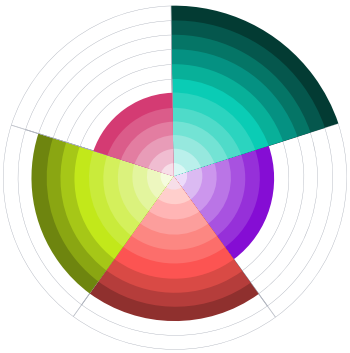
Edge Research follows the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) Code of Professional Ethics and Practices[4] to maintain the highest standards of competence, integrity, accountability, and transparency in public opinion and survey research work.

[3] Kochhar, Rakesh, "The State of the American Middle Class," Pew Research Center, 5/31/24
[4] 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 others 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.

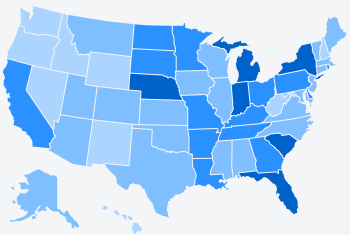
We also provide a way to view our state's **relative strengths and weaknesses through a circle with five wedges**, one for each of the five categories of the survey: 1) School quality and opportunity (**pink**), 2) Tutoring, summer, and mental health (**green**), 3) Out of school activities (**teal**),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

OUR STATE IN CONTEXT

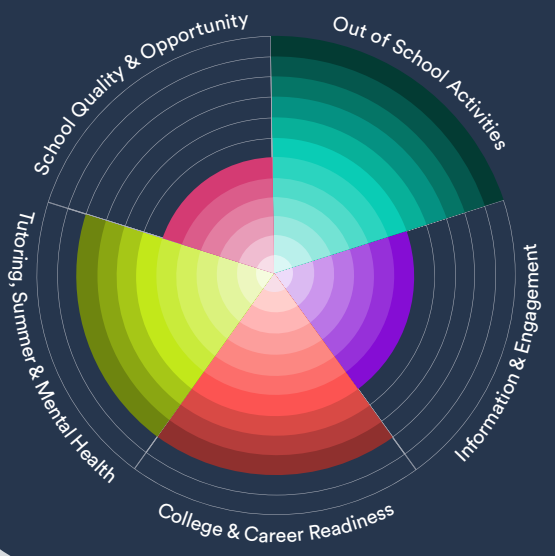
The second section of this report provides the results **for all 50 states plus D.C.**, one question at a time.



For 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.

CONNECTICUT

Surveyed July 8-August 22, 2024
Sample size (N) = 412 parents and guardians



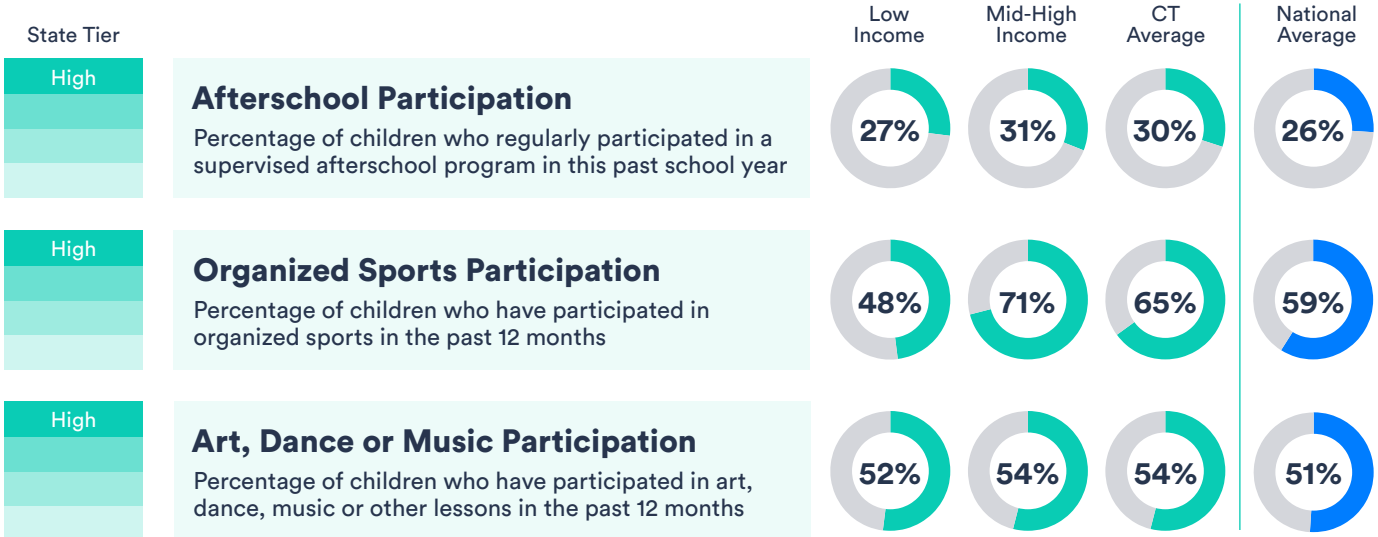
SCHOOL QUALITY AND OPPORTUNITY

State Tier		Low Income	Mid-High Income	CT Average	National Average
Medium-Low	**School Satisfaction** Percentage answering they are very satisfied with their child's school	48%	42%	43%	45%
Medium-Low	**Would Make the Same Choice** Percentage answering that they would send their child to the school they go to today	63%	62%	62%	64%
Medium-Low	**Feel They Have a Choice** Percentage answering they feel like they have a choice in what school their child attends	57%	60%	59%	65%

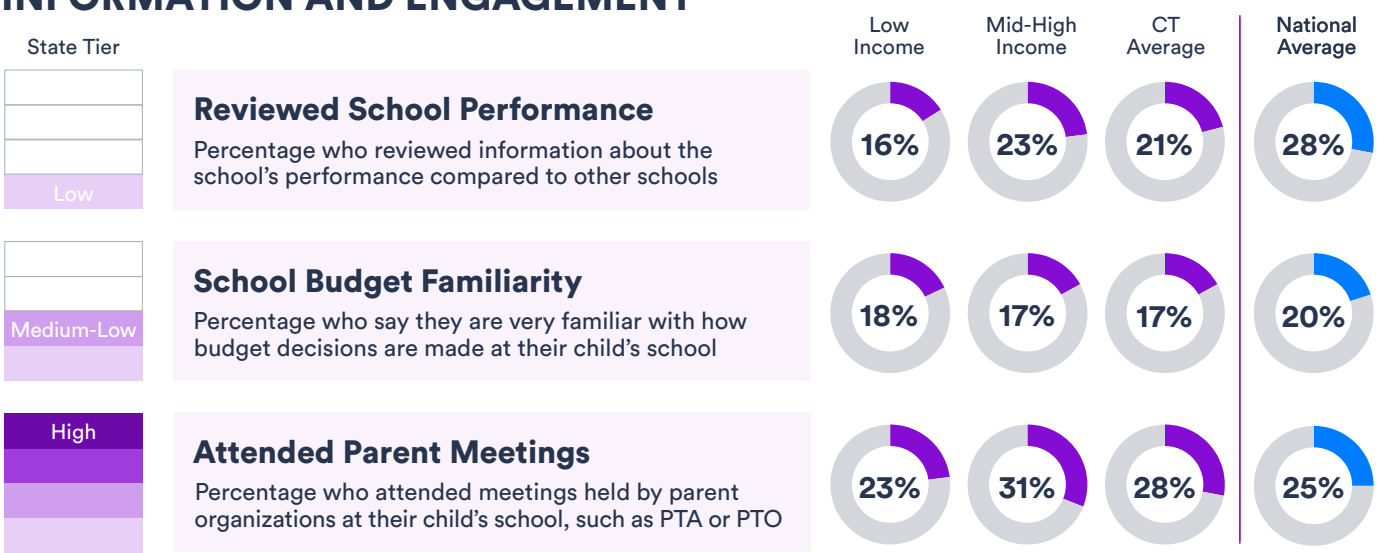
TUTORING, SUMMER AND MENTAL HEALTH

State Tier		Low Income	Mid-High Income	CT Average	National Average
Medium-High	**Tutoring Participation** Percentage of children who have received academic tutoring in this past school year	14%	21%	19%	19%
High	**Summer Program Participation** Percentage of children who participated in a supervised summer program	39%	56%	51%	41%
Medium-High	**Mental Health Satisfaction** Percentage answering they are very satisfied with how the school supports their child's mental health needs	38%	37%	37%	37%

OUT OF SCHOOL ACTIVITIES



INFORMATION AND ENGAGEMENT

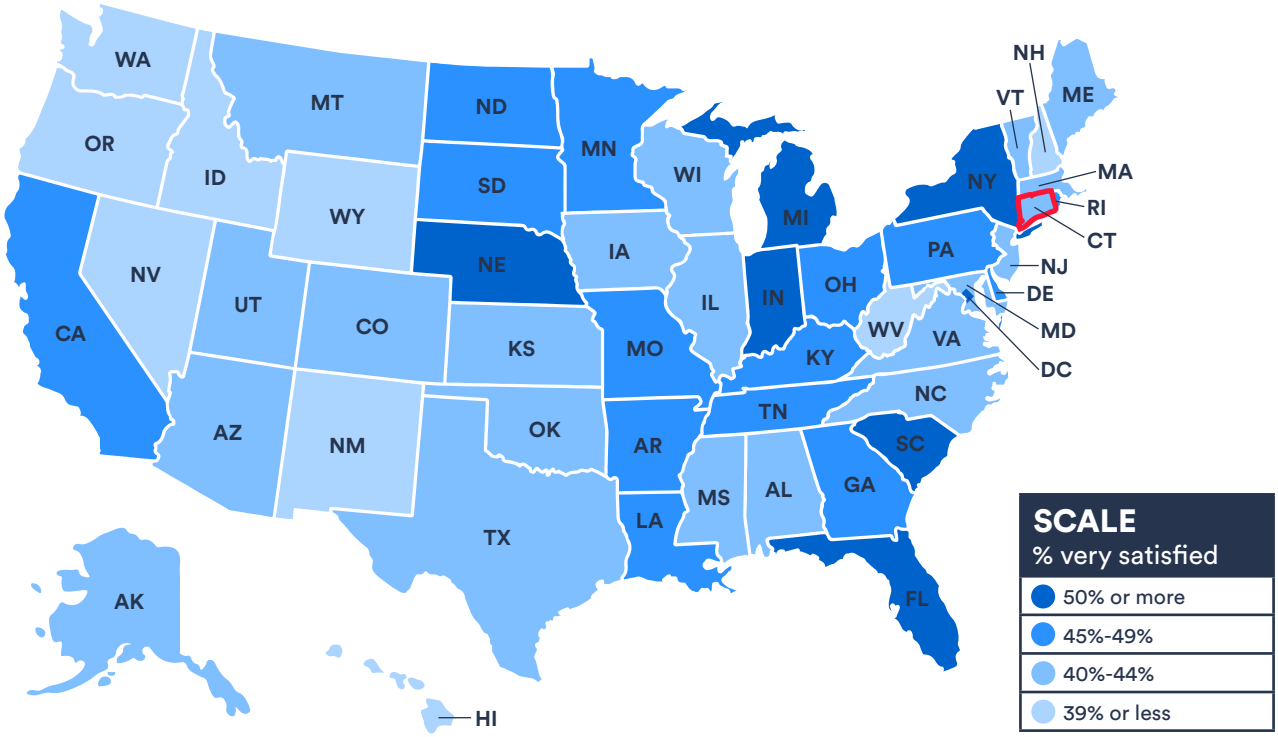


COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

Connecticut in Context: A 50-State Perspective

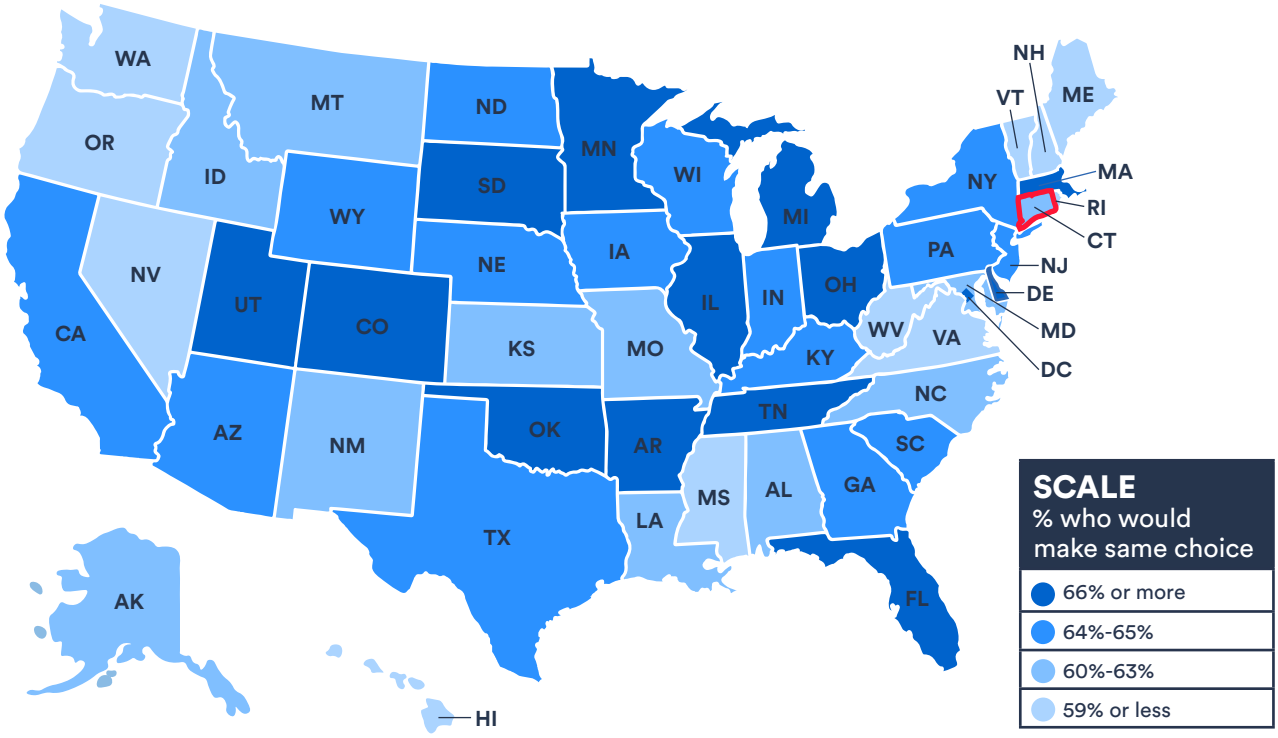
SCHOOL SATISFACTION BY STATE

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



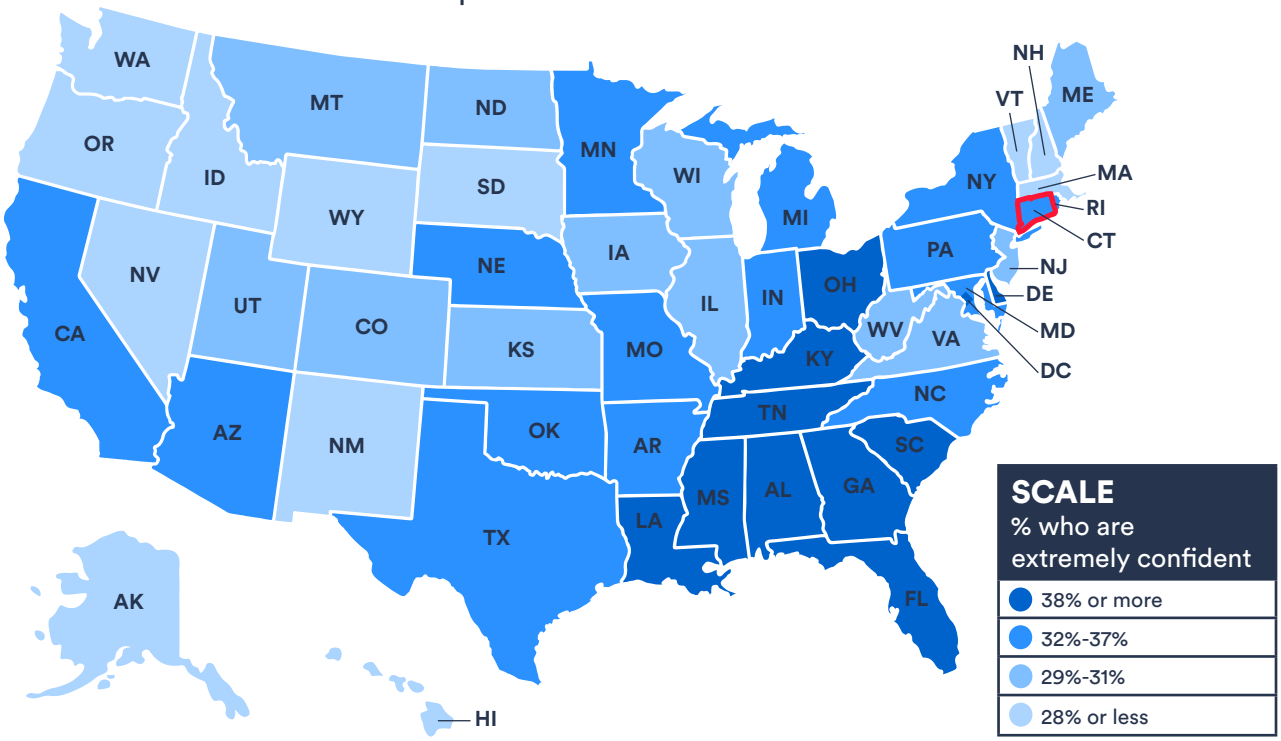
WOULD MAKE THE SAME CHOICE BY STATE

Percentage answering that if they could send their child to any school, they would send their child to the school they go to today



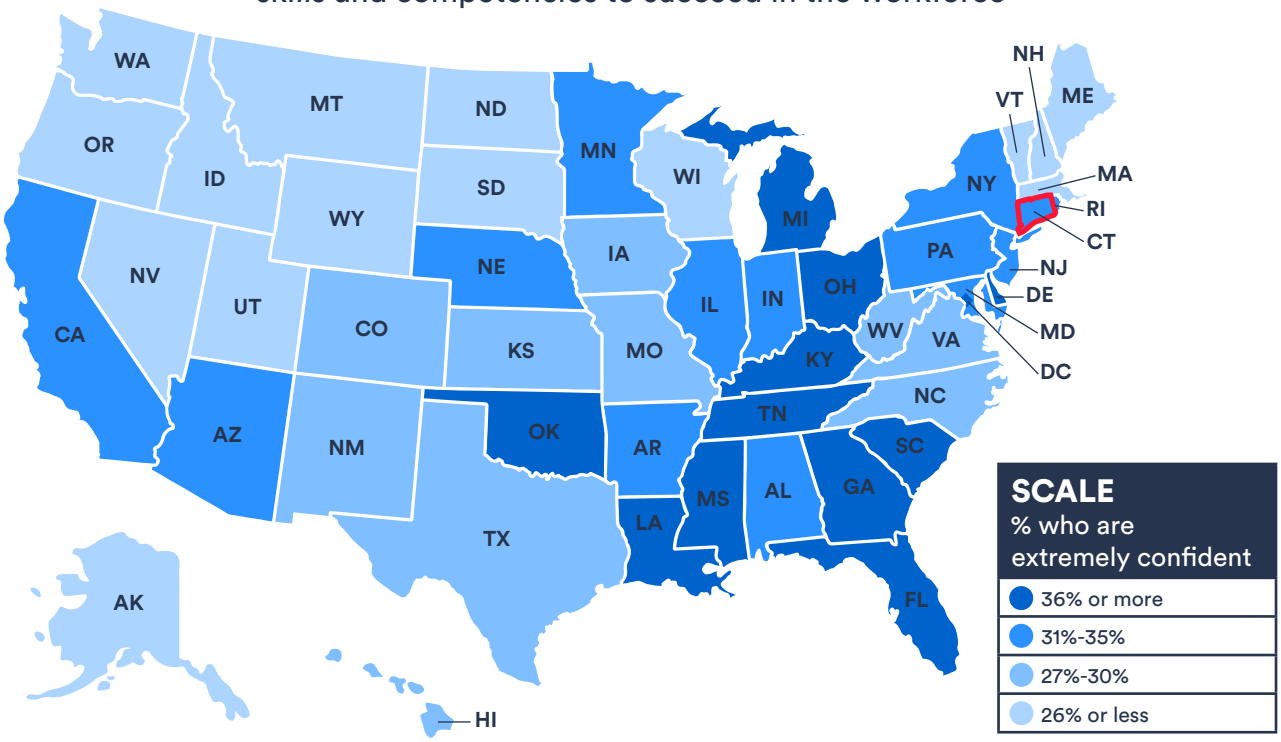
CONFIDENCE IN WORKFORCE PREPARATION BY STATE

Percentage who are extremely confident their child will be equipped with the knowledge, skills and competencies to succeed in the workforce



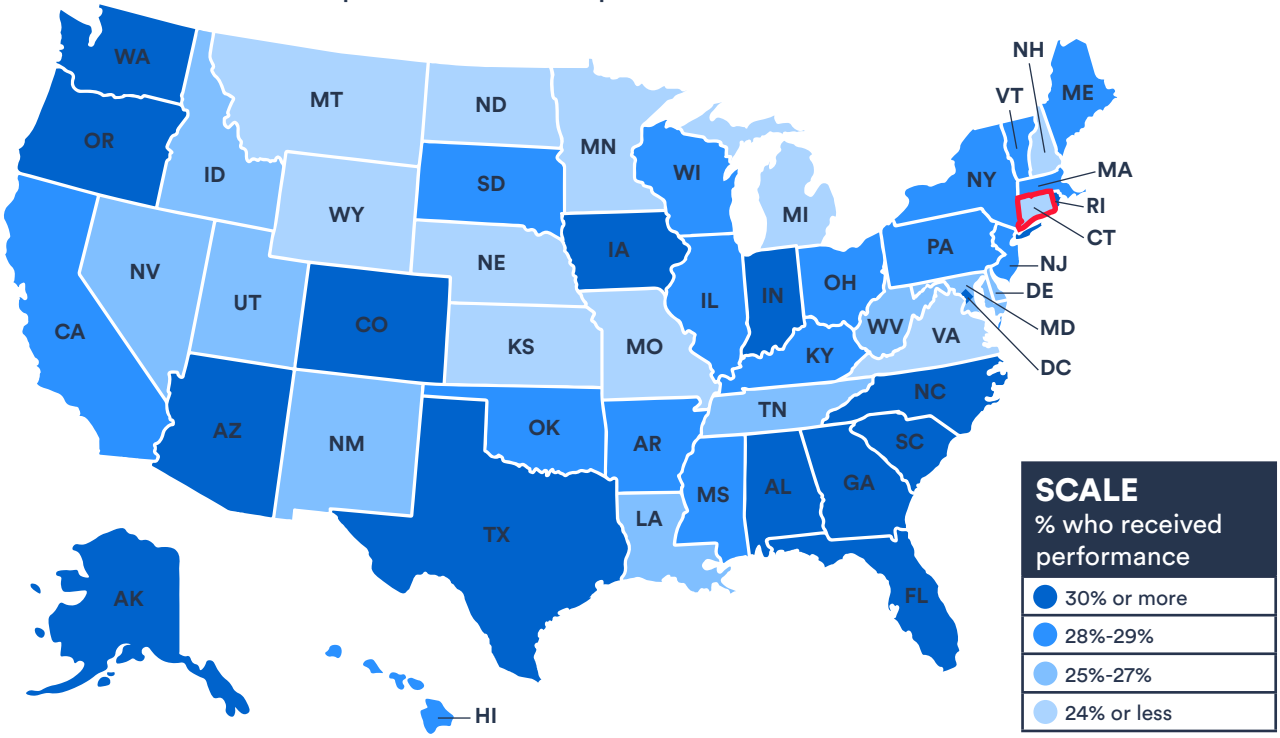
CONFIDENCE IN COLLEGE PREPARATION BY STATE

Percentage who are extremely confident their child will be equipped with the knowledge, skills and competencies to succeed in the workforce



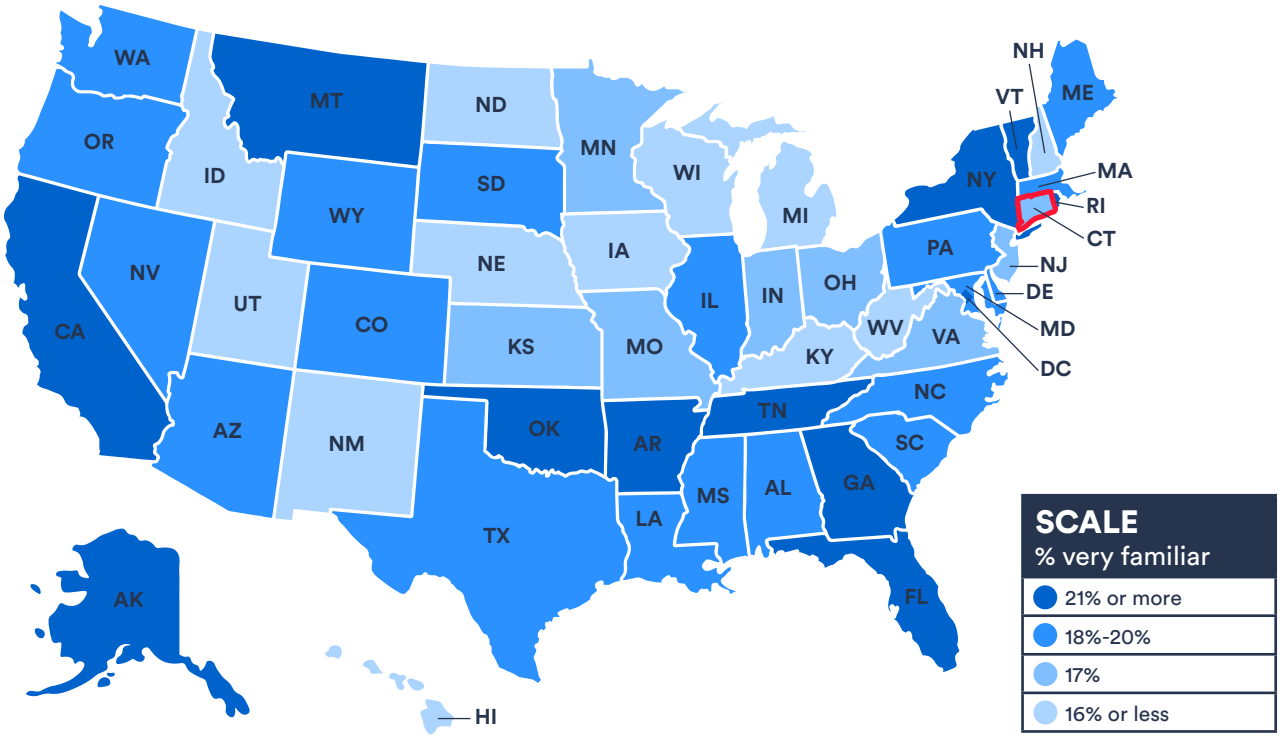
REVIEWED SCHOOL PERFORMANCE BY STATE

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



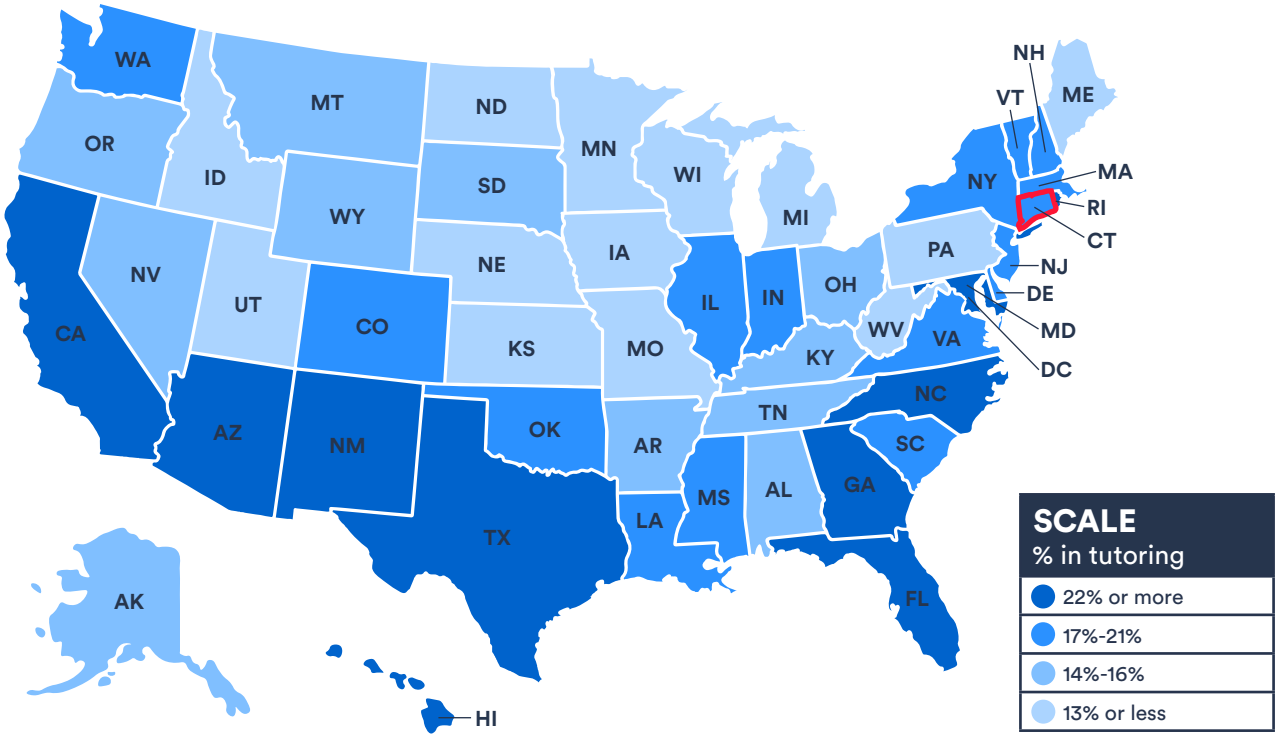
SCHOOL BUDGET FAMILIARITY BY STATE

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



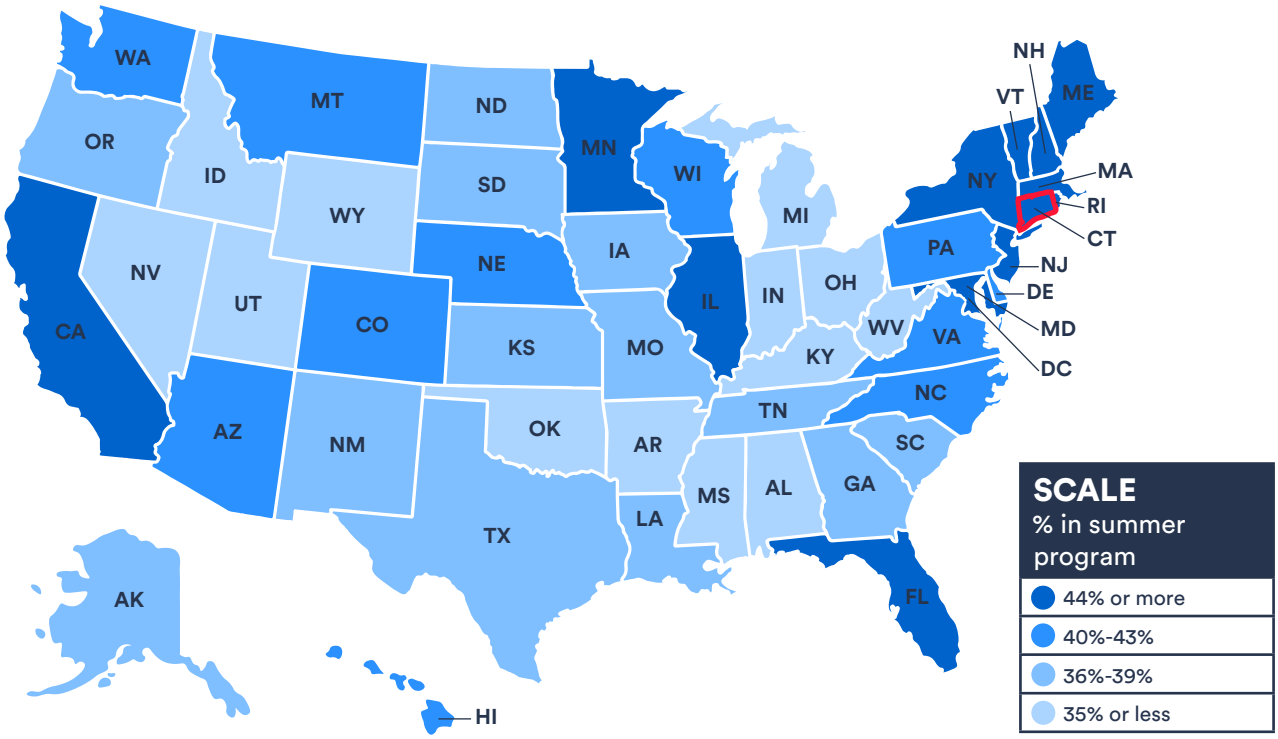
PARTICIPATION IN TUTORING BY STATE

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



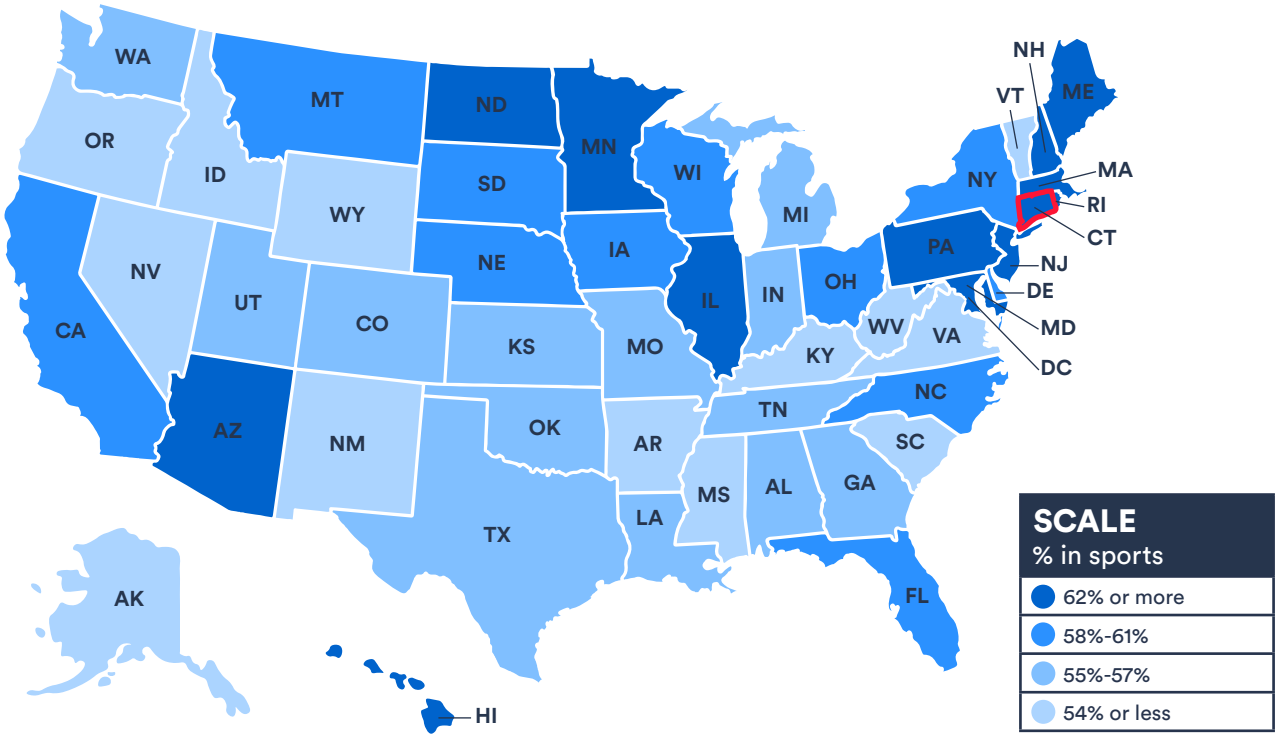
SUMMER PROGRAM PARTICIPATION BY STATE

Percentage of children who participated in a supervised summer programs



ORGANIZED SPORTS PARTICIPATION BY STATE

Percentage of children who have participated in organized sports in the past 12 months



ABOUT CONNCAN

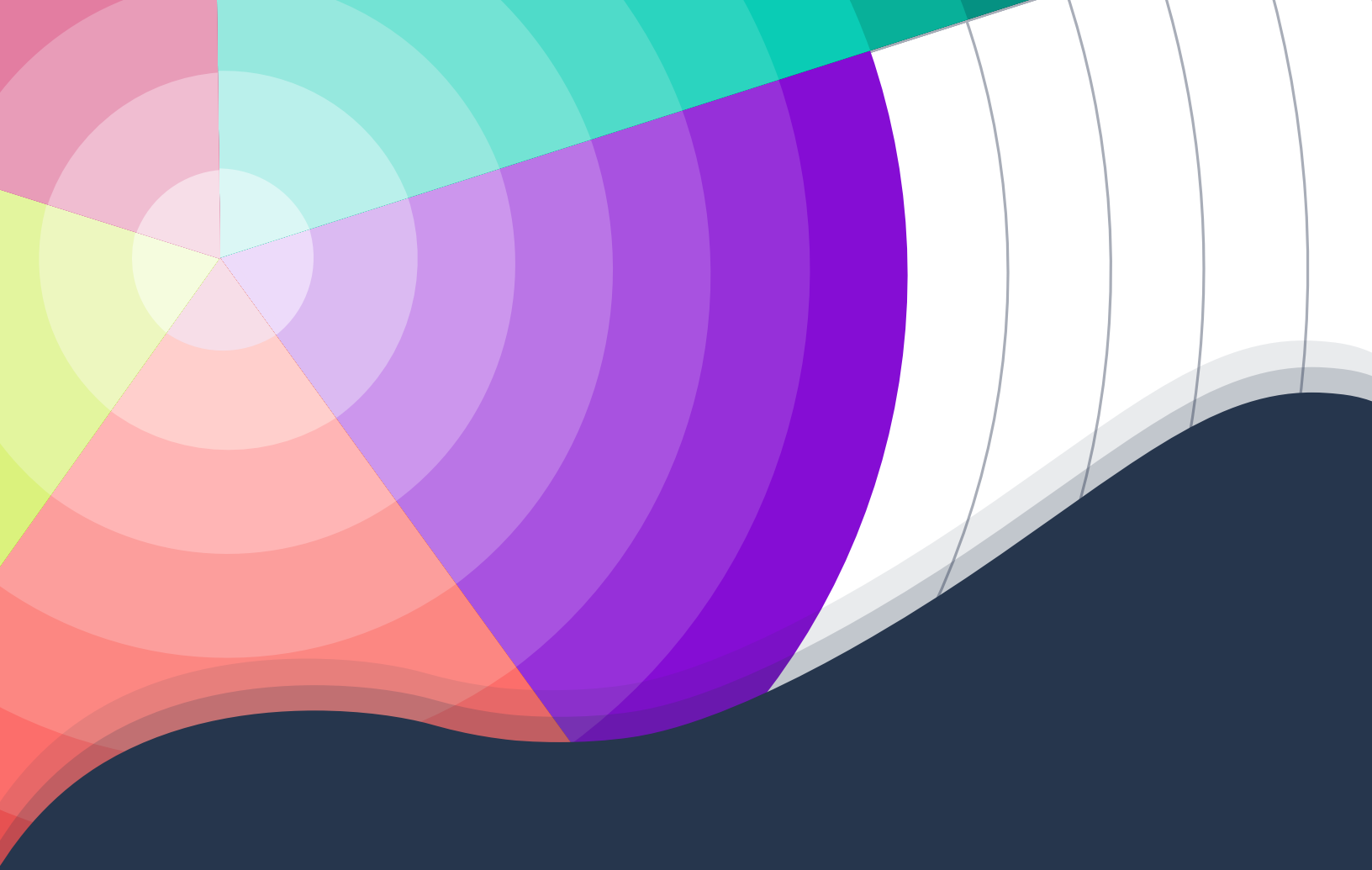
ConnCAN is a nonprofit advocacy organization committed to a vision of a Connecticut in which every student has access to a high-quality education, regardless of their address. Since 2005, it has united, empowered and mobilized community members–including policymakers, parents and educators–around a shared belief in our students' potential. This work to improve education in Connecticut springs from a belief in the immense potential found within every child and our responsibility as citizen advocates to do everything we can to ensure we have an education system that lives up to this potential.

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.



EDGE research

50CAN

ConnCAN