

Voters Oppose Book Bans in Libraries

Polling Shows Voters Oppose Efforts to Remove Books from Libraries and Have Confidence in Libraries to Make Good Decisions About Their Collections



Large majorities of voters (71%) oppose efforts to have books removed from their local public libraries, including a majority of Democrats (75%), independents (58%), and Republicans (70%). Most voters and parents hold librarians in high regard, have confidence in their local libraries to make good decisions about what books to include in their collections, and agree that libraries in their communities do a good job offering books that represent a variety of viewpoints.

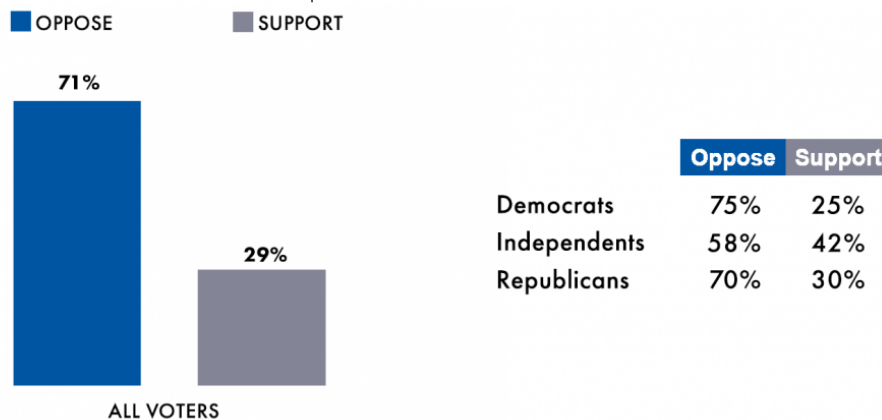
Key Findings

1) More than seven in 10 voters (71%) oppose efforts to remove books from public libraries, with majorities of voters across party lines opposed.

- By a substantial 42-point margin, voters oppose efforts to have books removed from their local public libraries because some people find them offensive or inappropriate and do not think young people should be exposed to them: 71% oppose, 29% support. Majorities of Democrats (75%), independents (58%), and Republicans (70%) are opposed.
- Parents also oppose efforts to remove books from their local public libraries by a significant 20-point margin: 60% oppose, 40% support.

Strong Opposition to Removing Books from Public Libraries

Would you support or oppose efforts to remove books from local public libraries because some people find them offensive or inappropriate and do not think young people should be exposed to them?



These key findings are from a survey conducted by Hart Research Associates and North Star Opinion Research on behalf of the American Library Association among 1,000 voters and 472 parents of children in public school. The survey was conducted March 1 to 6, 2022, and the sample is demographically and geographically representative of U.S. voters and parents.

2) Large majorities oppose book removals in school libraries after hearing arguments from both sides.

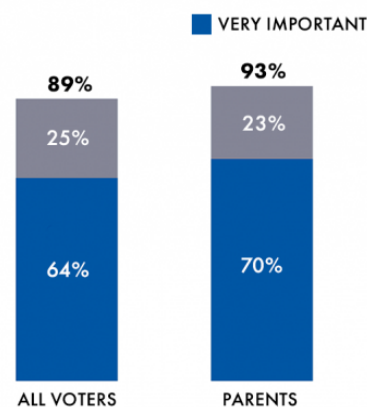
- After hearing reasons to both support and oppose efforts to remove books from school libraries because some parents find them offensive or inappropriate, voters oppose efforts to remove books from school libraries by a 34-point margin (67% oppose, 33% support).
- Similarly, after hearing arguments on both sides, parents oppose efforts to remove books from school libraries by a 22-point margin (61% oppose, 39% support), and this view holds true for parents with children of all grade levels: 59% of parents with children in pre-K through 5th grade, 66% with middle schoolers, and 64% with high schoolers oppose book removals.

3) There is near-universal high regard for librarians and recognition of the important role that local public libraries and school libraries play in communities.

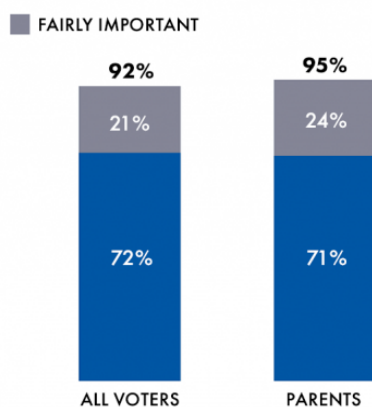
- Nine in 10 voters (90%) and parents (92%) have a favorable opinion of librarians who work in local public libraries and school libraries, including 66% of voters and 65% of parents who are very favorable toward librarians.
- The vast majority of voters (89%) and parents (93%) say local public libraries play an important role in communities across the country including their own, including 64% of voters and 70% of parents who believe they play a very important role.
- At even higher rates, voters (92% important, 72% very important) and parents (95% important, 71% very important) say school libraries play an important role in public elementary, middle, and high schools.
- Voters across the political spectrum have a keen sense of the importance of public libraries (95% of Democrats, 78% of independents, 87% of Republicans) and school libraries (96% of Democrats, 85% of independents, 91% of Republicans).

High Regard for Librarians and the Role Libraries Play in Communities and Schools

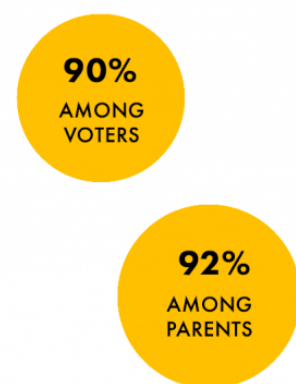
Role local public libraries play in communities



Role local school libraries play in elementary, middle, and high schools

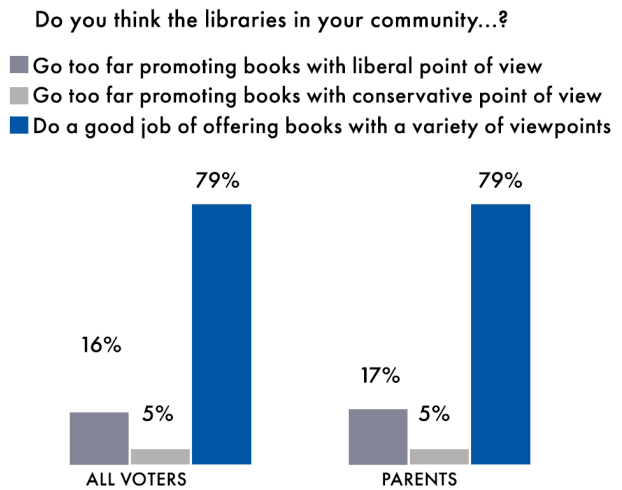


Favorability of local public and school librarians



4) Most voters are confident in local public libraries to make good decisions about their collections and think libraries do a good job representing a variety of viewpoints.

- Large majorities of voters (75%) and parents (80%) have quite a lot or a great deal of confidence in their local libraries to make good decisions about what books to include in their collections and make available in their communities.
- Nearly eight in 10 voters (79%) and parents (79%) say libraries in their community do a good job of offering books that represent a variety of viewpoints, a sentiment held by majorities of Democrats (89%), independents (77%) and Republicans (70%), and by majorities of voters across demographic backgrounds. Only small proportions think libraries go too far in promoting books that present a liberal (16% voters, 17% parents) or conservative (5% voters and parents) point of view.
- Fully 83% of voters and 86% of parents say that they are more likely to trust librarians when they hear that librarians are trained to not impose their own thoughts and opinions on which ideas are right but to make knowledge and ideas available so that people have the freedom to choose what to read.



Belief that Libraries Do a Good Job Offering Books with Variety of Viewpoints

Voters	Good job representing variety of viewpoints	Parents	Good job representing variety of viewpoints
All voters	79%	All parents	79%
Democrats	89%	Democratic parents	86%
Independents	77%	Independent parents	83%
Republicans	70%	Republican parents	70%
Men	74%	Child in Pre-K-5th grade	78%
Women	84%	Child in 6th-8th grade	80%
White voters	79%	Child in 9th-12th grade	79%
Black/African-American voters	83%	White parents	76%
Hispanic/Latino voters	75%	Parents of color	83%

5) Parents express a high degree of confidence in school libraries' decisions about their collections and very few think that school librarians ignore parents' concerns.

- Three in four parents (74%) have quite a lot or a great deal of confidence in public libraries in their local school district to make good decisions about what books to include in their collections.
- Only 12% of parents say librarians in their district's public school libraries ignore the concerns of parents. Majorities of parents (59%) say school librarians in their district generally listen to the concerns of parents and try to work with them if they have concerns; 29% of parents indicate that they do not know enough to say.

6) Voters and parents affirm the importance of giving young people access to books and not allowing individual parents to decide what books are available to other people's children.

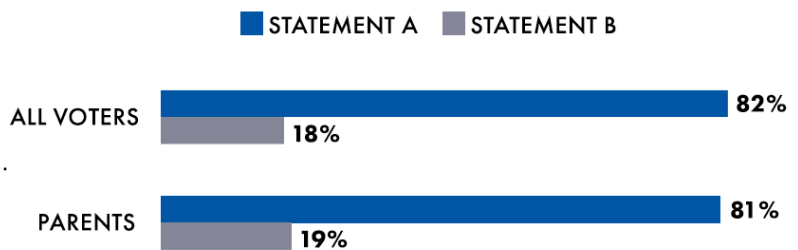
- When presented with pairs of statements that represent different viewpoints about removing books from libraries, voters and parents consistently align with opponents of these removals by large margins:

Agreement with Viewpoints Against Removing Books from Libraries

Please indicate which one of the following statements you agree with more.

STATEMENT A: We need to protect the ability of young people to have access to books from which they can learn about and understand different perspectives, and help them grow into adults who can think for themselves.

STATEMENT B: We need to protect young people from books they might find upsetting or that reflect ideologies and lifestyles that are out of the mainstream.



STATEMENT A: Individual parents can set rules for their own children, but they do not have the right to decide for other parents what books are available to their children.

STATEMENT B: Parents have a right not to have their children exposed to objectionable books at the library, and should be able to join with other parents in having those books removed.

