

Summary of 2019 Teacher Walkout Survey Results

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Below, I summarize results from the 2019 Teacher Walkout Survey, which polled 4,468 respondents in the six states in which teachers staged walkouts or strikes in 2018. This project was conducted jointly with Suresh Naidu and Adam Reich, also at Columbia University. Major descriptive results of the survey include the following:

- In both closed- and open-response items, a large proportion of respondents still remembered the teacher walkouts and found them highly salient as they were thinking about unions.
- Most respondents learned about the walkouts through television as well as social media. About half of respondents said that there were strikes or walkout activities in their local communities. Just under 40% of parents said that their children's schools were affected by the strikes or walkouts.
- Most respondents felt that the walkouts achieved at least some of their objectives, with only a small minority of respondents feeling the strikes were unsuccessful. Nearly two-thirds of respondents thought the strikes would carry positive outcomes for teachers, and about four out of ten respondents thought that the strikes would be positive for students and their community as a whole. Respondents generally correctly identified the state-specific aspects of the strikes, including the emphasis on retirement benefits in Kentucky and on health insurance in West Virginia.
- Support for the walkouts was very high, with two-thirds of respondents indicating that they personally supported the effort. Support for the walkouts was highest among individuals who had walkouts or strikes in their own communities; among older respondents; among Democrats and liberals; and among those with personal ties (family or friends) in the labor movement or who were teachers. Around half of conservatives and Republicans said that they personally supported the walkouts. More than two-thirds of all respondents also said that they would support future teacher strikes over pay, benefits, and especially school spending.
- Individuals who learned about the walkouts from teachers or unions directly or through social media tended to be most positive toward the strikes. Support for the walkouts was also higher among individuals who perceived teachers as demanding higher spending on education or better classroom resources.
- Around 6% of respondents indicated that they participated in the walkouts or strikes themselves. Participants tended to be current or past union members, as well as those with personal ties to the labor movement or to teachers; parents with children enrolled in school; political liberals; Hispanics; and individuals who frequently participated in politics in other ways.

Survey Methodology

We commissioned the survey sample from Qualtrics, which provided us with 4,468 respondents from their opt-in survey pool that matched the 2017-2018 Current Population Survey distributions of adults living in the six walkout states (AZ, CO, KY, TN, OK, and WV) on gender, age (in five bins), race (in five bins), education (in four bins), and whether they had a child in the household. We gave Qualtrics the demographic targets for these characteristics within each of the six states. We deliberately over-sampled parents, including 2,968 parents and 1,500 non-parents in the final sample. We estimated raked survey weights using the *anesrake* R package to match the overall distribution of these characteristics across all six walkout states but the results do not change much with or without these weights applied.

Table 1 summarizes the distribution of demographic targets and survey respondents, with and without raked survey weights applied. The sample is slightly more female, less Hispanic, younger, more white, and less educated than the CPS targets. Comparing our results to the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey, we find that our sample is very closely matched to the distribution of partisans across the six states, as well as to average levels of political engagement and activity.

Table 1: Survey Balance over Demographics

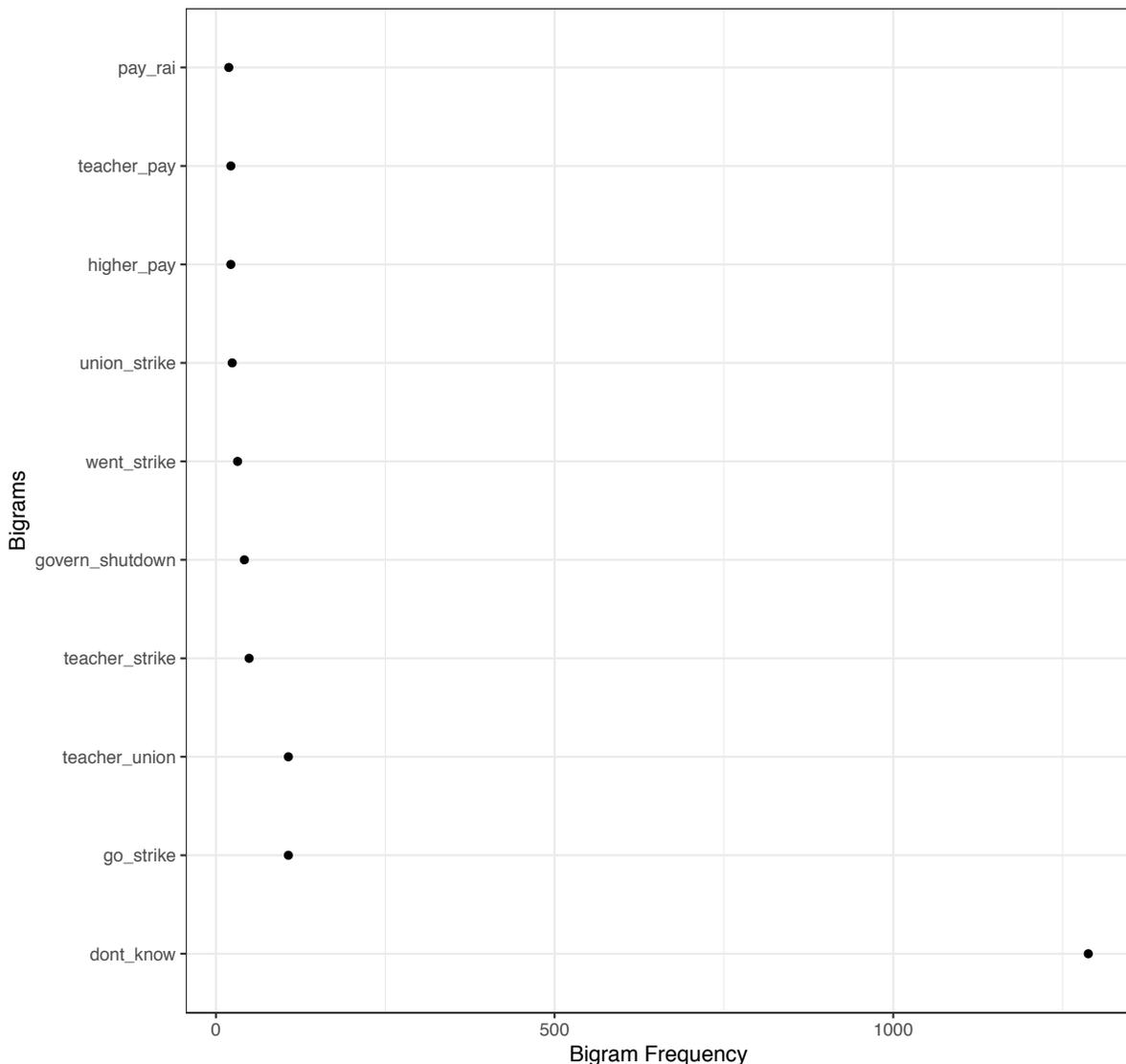
| Characteristic | Survey % | Weighted Survey % | CPS % |
|----------------|----------|-------------------|-------|
| Female | 58% | 52% | 52% |
| Hispanic | 12% | 14% | 14% |
| 18-29 | 19% | 21% | 21% |
| 30-41 | 27% | 20% | 20% |
| 42-53 | 22% | 20% | 20% |
| 54-64 | 18% | 19% | 19% |
| 65+ | 13% | 21% | 21% |
| White | 82% | 82% | 82% |
| Black | 11% | 10% | 10% |
| Am. Indian | 3% | 3% | 3% |
| Asian | 4% | 3% | 3% |
| HS or Less | 37% | 40% | 40% |
| Some College | 31% | 29% | 29% |
| College | 20% | 20% | 20% |
| More than BA | 11% | 10% | 10% |
| AZ | 21% | 21% | 21% |
| CO | 17% | 18% | 17% |
| KY | 13% | 13% | 13% |
| NC | 31% | 30% | 31% |
| OK | 12% | 12% | 12% |
| WV | 6% | 6% | 6% |

Topline Survey Results

Were the Walkouts Top of Mind for Respondents When Thinking About Unions? Before we gave items about the walkouts specifically, we asked respondents “In just a few words, what do you remember a union doing recently?” Respondents could then provide a short answer in a text box. Although the most common bi-grams involved variants on “don’t know”, a significant proportion of respondents indicated that they were thinking about the teacher strikes in LA or in their state in the previous year as shown in Figure 1. Some respondents also pointed to the government shutdown and labor actions by federal employees, including TSA security officers and air traffic controllers. We interpret these responses as indicating that for a large number of respondents in the walkout states, the strikes remained highly salient and top of mind as they were thinking about unions and the labor movement.

Figure 1: What Respondents Remembered Unions Doing Recently

Most Common Bi-Grams in "What Do You Remember Unions Doing" Free Response Item



Did Respondents Recall the Walkouts? In a closed-response item that followed the open-response text box described above, eighty percent of respondents recalled hearing or experiencing the walkouts, though this ranged from 93% in Oklahoma to 70% in North Carolina, as we summarize in Table 2.¹

Table 2: Recall of Walkouts

| State | % Recalling Walkouts |
|--------------|-----------------------------|
| OK | 93% |
| AZ | 90% |
| WV | 89% |
| CO | 76% |
| KY | 74% |
| NC | 70% |
| Overall | 80% |

Notes: N=4,468.

How Did Respondents Learn About the Walkouts? Among those who recalled the walkouts, the most common way that respondents learned about the strikes was from local television coverage (64% of respondents), followed by national television (51%), social media (44%; the most common source was Facebook), and local newspaper coverage (27%).² Still, about 23% of respondents who recalled the walkouts said that they learned about the efforts directly from the teachers and unions themselves, and about a fifth heard from a friend or from a family member. Table 3 summarizes these sources of information about the walkouts across all six states, indicating important variation by state. In particular, the walkouts in Oklahoma, West Virginia, Arizona, and Kentucky seemed to have attracted much more attention through social networks than the walkouts in Colorado or North Carolina. This was especially true for the walkouts in Oklahoma, where a large share of respondents reported hearing about the walkouts from family members, friends, co-workers, or churches/religious groups.

¹ Question text: “As you might remember, in 2018 teachers across several states walked out of work in large protests and rallies. This was also called “Red 4 Ed”, or the teacher strikes. We’d like to ask you a few questions about those teacher protests. Do you remember hearing or reading about the 2018 teacher walkouts and protests?”

² Question text: “What were the ways that you learned about the 2018 teacher walkouts and protests? Please check all the options that apply.”

Table 3: How Respondents Learned About the Walkouts

| | WV | OK | NC | KY | CO | AZ | Overall |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| Family | 24% | 31% | 15% | 22% | 15% | 24% | 21% |
| Friend | 25% | 27% | 16% | 21% | 16% | 24% | 21% |
| Coworker | 7% | 15% | 8% | 9% | 8% | 10% | 9% |
| Church | 3% | 6% | 2% | 2% | 1% | 1% | 2% |
| Non-profit Group | 2% | 3% | 2% | 4% | 2% | 3% | 3% |
| Teachers/Union | 31% | 31% | 15% | 25% | 16% | 29% | 23% |
| Local TV | 68% | 76% | 57% | 63% | 57% | 68% | 64% |
| National TV | 49% | 48% | 51% | 52% | 51% | 50% | 51% |
| Local Newspaper | 36% | 35% | 18% | 29% | 24% | 29% | 27% |
| National Newspaper | 15% | 15% | 10% | 18% | 18% | 14% | 14% |
| Radio | 20% | 24% | 13% | 20% | 17% | 27% | 20% |
| Social Media | 40% | 52% | 40% | 51% | 41% | 45% | 44% |
| Other Online Site | 5% | 14% | 12% | 13% | 15% | 13% | 13% |

Notes: N=3,632 (among all respondents recalling walkouts).

About half (48%) of all respondents said that there were walkouts or strikes in their local community schools.³ Among parents, about 39% said that they recalled walkouts at their children’s schools.⁴ We summarize variation across the states in Table 4, indicating that among parents the strikes reached much further in West Virginia and Oklahoma than in Kentucky, Colorado, or North Carolina.

Table 4: Were There Walkouts in Local Community Schools or Child’s Schools?

| State | Walkout in Local Community Schools? | Walkout in Child's Schools? (Among Parents) |
|----------------|--|--|
| WV | 79% | 76% |
| OK | 79% | 64% |
| AZ | 65% | 58% |
| KY | 40% | 31% |
| CO | 33% | 23% |
| NC | 28% | 23% |
| Overall | 48% | 39% |

³ Question text: “As best as you can recall, did any teachers in your community walk out or protest last year?”

⁴ Question text: “As best as you can recall, did any of your children's teachers walk out or protest last year?”

Notes: N=4,468 (among all respondents); N=1,798 (among parents).

Did Respondents Participate in the Walkouts? We also asked if respondents had participated in the walkouts themselves.⁵ Across all respondents, about 6% of them said that they had done so personally, including 7% of parents. Table 5 summarizes this variation across states and indicates that participation was most widespread in Oklahoma and West Virginia.

Table 5: Participated in Walkout?

| State | Participated in Walkout? |
|--------------|---------------------------------|
| OK | 9% |
| WV | 8% |
| AZ | 7% |
| KY | 6% |
| CO | 4% |
| NC | 4% |
| Overall | 6% |

Notes: N=4,468 (among all respondents).

What Did Respondents Think Teachers Were Demanding? Of those respondents who said that they had walkouts or strikes in their local community schools, we asked what they remembered about the teachers' demands.⁶ By far, respondents identified higher wages and salaries as the main demand of teachers (83% of respondents) but about half of respondents also pointed to demands for higher spending on education and better classroom resources and supports. We summarize the differences across the six states in Table 6. In general, the results suggest that the public was attuned to the state-specific demands that teachers were making – for instance, the specific emphasis on retirement benefits in Kentucky or on health insurance in West Virginia.

⁵ Question text: “Did you personally participate in any of the events surrounding the teacher walkouts or protests last year?”

⁶ Question text: “As best as you can recall, what were the teachers in your community asking for in their walkouts and protests?”

Table 6: Demands of Local Striking Teachers

| What Were Demands of Teachers? | WV | OK | NC | KY | CO | AZ | Overall |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| Higher Wages/Salary | 91% | 93% | 82% | 44% | 83% | 91% | 83% |
| Better Health Insurance | 70% | 10% | 12% | 17% | 15% | 10% | 18% |
| Better Retirement Benefits | 28% | 11% | 15% | 61% | 20% | 10% | 19% |
| Higher Education Spending | 19% | 66% | 47% | 21% | 48% | 56% | 48% |
| Better Classroom Resources | 20% | 67% | 58% | 25% | 50% | 56% | 51% |
| Protecting Tenure | 11% | 7% | 20% | 21% | 20% | 6% | 13% |
| Changing Teacher Evaluation | 8% | 11% | 22% | 4% | 18% | 8% | 12% |
| Giving Teachers Unions' More Rights | 8% | 8% | 9% | 8% | 17% | 7% | 9% |

Notes: N=2,287 (among respondents who recalled walkouts in local community).

What Did Respondents Think Teachers Got? Among respondents who identified walkouts or strikes in their local community schools, we also asked if they thought that the teachers succeeded in getting their demands met.⁷ Across all six states, about 7% of respondents said that they thought the teachers got all of their demands met, another 22% said that most of their demands were met, 40% said that some of their demands were met, and 9% said that none of their demands were met; another 23% were not sure. Perceptions of success varied across the states, however, and we summarize these differences in Table 7. The West Virginia strikes were viewed as most successful, followed by a distant second and third place for Oklahoma and Arizona. The strikes in North Carolina, Kentucky, and Colorado were viewed as least successful.

Table 7: Were Demands of Local Striking Teachers Met

| Were Teachers' Demands Met? | WV | OK | NC | KY | CO | AZ | Overall |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| All | 18% | 5% | 4% | 5% | 4% | 8% | 7% |
| Most | 44% | 27% | 12% | 10% | 13% | 27% | 22% |
| Some | 27% | 52% | 34% | 31% | 36% | 44% | 40% |
| None | 0% | 4% | 16% | 24% | 11% | 4% | 9% |
| Not Sure | 11% | 12% | 34% | 30% | 36% | 17% | 23% |
| All or Most | 61% | 31% | 16% | 15% | 17% | 35% | 29% |

Notes: N=2,287 (among respondents who recalled walkouts in local community).

What Effect Did Respondents Think the Walkouts Had on Schools? We next asked respondents what effect they thought the teacher walkouts had on students, teachers, and the community as a

⁷ Question text: “As best as you can recall, did the teachers in your community succeed in getting their demands met?”

whole.⁸ Table 8 summarizes what respondents thought about the effect of the walkouts on each of these groups, indicating that most respondents thought that the walkouts would have positive effects on teachers, and generally positive effects on students and communities as a whole. 64% of respondents said that they thought the walkouts would improve things for teachers; 43% said they thought things would improve for students; and 47% said the same about communities as a whole. The public viewed the strikes in Oklahoma as being most favorable to students and those in Kentucky as being least favorable.

Table 8: Effect of Walkouts on Students, Teachers, and Community

| | Effects on Students | Effect on Teachers | Effect on Community |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| A Lot Worse | 7% | 3% | 6% |
| Somewhat Worse | 14% | 8% | 12% |
| Neither Better Nor Worse | 36% | 24% | 34% |
| Somewhat Better | 27% | 43% | 30% |
| A Lot Better | 15% | 21% | 18% |
| A Lot or Somewhat Better | 43% | 64% | 47% |

Notes: N=3,322-3,340 (among respondents who recalled walkouts).

What Was Overall Support for the Walkouts? Another item about the walkouts asked respondents if they personally opposed or supported the walkouts.⁹ By far, most respondents indicated that they either strongly or somewhat supported the walkouts. 39% of respondents said that they strongly supported the walkouts, and another 27% said that they somewhat supported the walkouts. Only 15% of respondents said that they somewhat or strongly opposed the walkouts. Table 9 summarizes how support for the walkouts varied across the six walkout states. Strong support tended to be highest in Oklahoma and lowest in Colorado.

⁸ Question text: “In your own opinion, what effect do you think the teacher walkouts had on students, teachers, and your community as a whole? Will the walkouts make life for students, teachers, and the community as a whole ...”

⁹ Question text: “How much do you personally support or oppose the 2018 teacher walkouts and their demands?”

Table 9: Overall Support for Walkouts

| Support Walkouts? | WV | OK | NC | KY | CO | AZ | Overall |
|----------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|----------------|
| Strongly support | 41% | 47% | 40% | 43% | 32% | 37% | 39% |
| Somewhat support | 23% | 21% | 26% | 24% | 34% | 28% | 27% |
| Neither support nor oppose | 19% | 14% | 16% | 15% | 17% | 13% | 15% |
| Somewhat oppose | 7% | 10% | 8% | 7% | 9% | 8% | 8% |
| Strongly oppose | 6% | 8% | 7% | 7% | 7% | 11% | 8% |
| Not sure | 4% | 1% | 3% | 3% | 2% | 2% | 2% |
| Support | 64% | 67% | 66% | 68% | 66% | 66% | 66% |

Notes: N=3,632 (among respondents who recalled walkouts).

Support for the walkouts stretched across partisan lines. Although liberals and Democrats were substantially more likely to indicate that they personally supported the walkouts, about half of Republicans and conservatives still reported that they personally supported the walkouts.

Table 10: Support for Walkouts by Political Affiliation

| Support Walkouts? | Conser- vative | Moder- ate | Lib- eral | Demo- crat | Indepen- dent | Republi- can |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Strongly support | 23% | 35% | 61% | 59% | 30% | 25% |
| Somewhat support | 27% | 27% | 26% | 27% | 26% | 27% |
| Neither support/oppose | 17% | 22% | 7% | 9% | 24% | 16% |
| Somewhat oppose | 14% | 6% | 2% | 2% | 9% | 14% |
| Strongly oppose | 16% | 5% | 3% | 2% | 6% | 16% |
| Not sure | 2% | 4% | 1% | 1% | 5% | 2% |
| Support | 50% | 63% | 87% | 85% | 56% | 52% |

Notes: N=3,632 (among respondents who recalled walkouts).

In further analysis, we find that survey respondents who learned about the walkouts from teachers or unions firsthand were most likely to support the strikes, as were respondents who learned about the walkouts from social media posts. Respondents who reported learning about the walkouts from national media outlets (especially television) were also more likely to report personally supporting the walkouts, though less so than with respondents who engaged with the walkouts in person or on social media. This may reflect the sort of individuals who were more likely to seek out the teachers or unions in person or to engage with other supportive individuals on social media. But it may also reflect the fact that the presentation of the walkouts by teachers, on social media, and in national media coverage was itself more positive toward the walkouts than other media sources. We additionally find that individuals who learned about the walkouts from radio tended to be more negative toward the strikes, potentially indicating a role for conservative talk radio: more conservative individuals may have been more likely to listen to

these sources and the right-wing talk radio programs may have presented the walkouts in a less favorable light.

We additionally find that individuals who thought that the teachers were demanding better classroom resources and higher spending on education were substantially more likely to say that they personally supported the walkouts, indicating that the framing of the walkouts as supporting these groups may help build support in the mass public for the strikes.

Would Respondents Support Future Strikes? Lastly, we explored whether respondents said that they would support future strikes by the teachers over pay, benefits, and school spending.¹⁰ On the whole, respondents were very willing to support future strikes, with over 60% of respondents supporting each of the three strikes we described. Respondents voiced the strongest support for further strikes over school spending. Support was even higher among respondents who recalled the first round of walkouts.

Table 11: Support for Future Strikes

| Support Future Teacher Strikes? | Over Pay | Over Benefits | Over School Spending |
|--|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Strongly support | 36% | 35% | 40% |
| Somewhat support | 27% | 26% | 28% |
| Neither support/oppose | 21% | 27% | 22% |
| Somewhat oppose | 8% | 7% | 6% |
| Strongly oppose | 7% | 5% | 5% |
| Support | 63% | 61% | 68% |

Notes: N=4,467-4,468 (among all respondents).

In ongoing analysis, we plan to explore how direct exposure to the walkouts affected individuals’ perceptions of the strikes, support for teachers unions, and personal interest in joining a union and participating in labor actions.

¹⁰ Question text: “If teachers went on strike for [higher pay /better health and retirement benefits/more spending on students] in your community next year, would you support or oppose them?”