Penta Policy Insiders

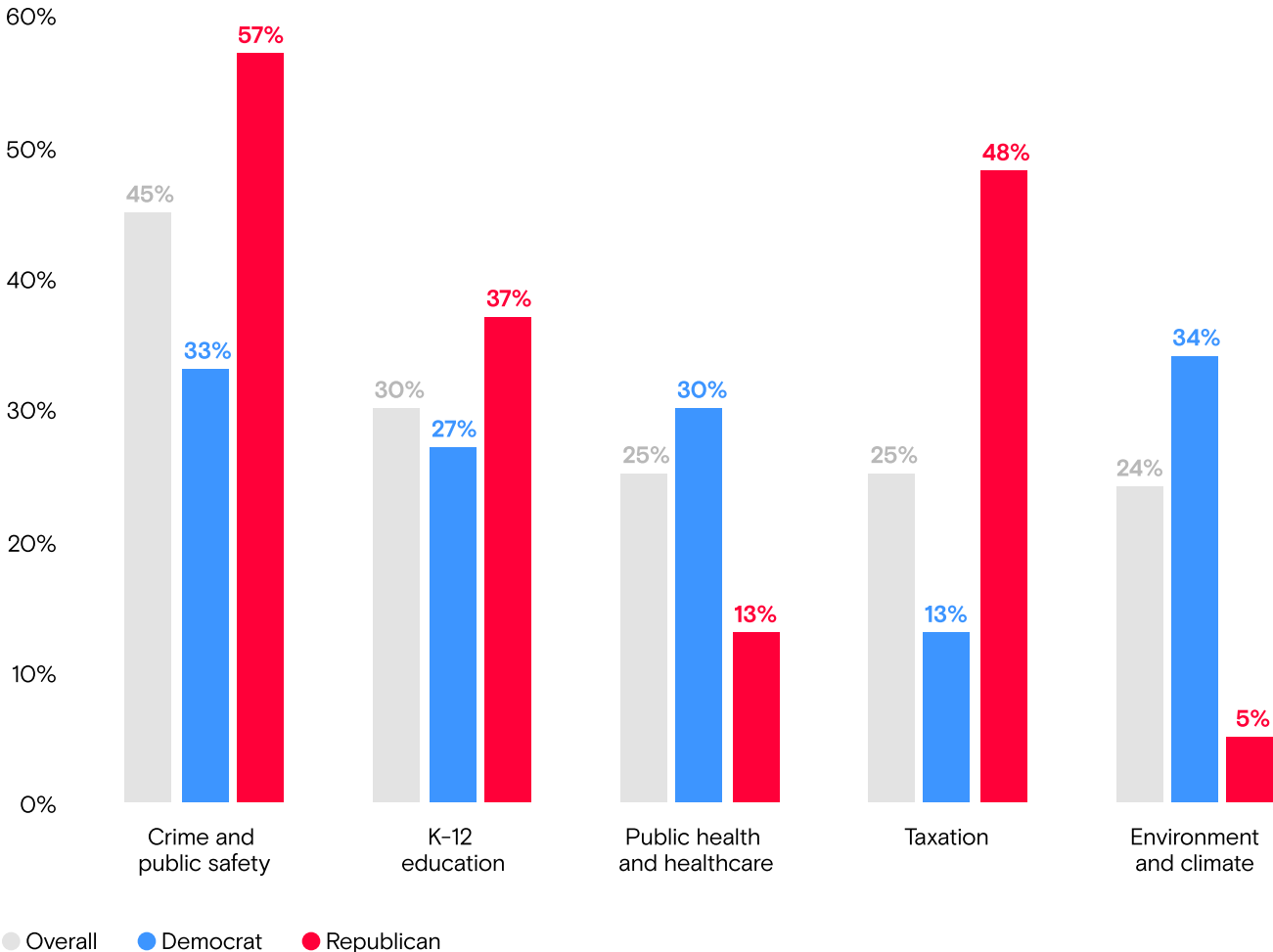# Minnesota Insights Review

K–12 Education

Executive summary

We are delighted to share our findings from this year's Minnesota Insights Review. From June to December 2022, we interviewed over 219 policymakers in Minnesota to find out what their top policy priorities are, as well as the main challenges communities are facing across the state.

Minnesota policymakers we spoke to detail a variety of challenges facing neighborhoods across the state including crime, K–12 education, public health, taxation, and the environment. At the top of policy leaders' minds are crime and public safety, with almost half of all policymakers – 45 percent – reporting these as their main concerns. This focus on public safety comes in spite of recent data showing a downward trend in violent crime in the state's largest city, Minneapolis.[1] The second highest–ranked priority for policy staff is K–12 education, with almost a third of policy staff across party lines citing issues such as teacher shortages and lack of funding to be hurdles for the state's public education system.

This report is the third in a series that examines Minnesota policymakers' top policy priorities for 2022. This review examines K–12 Education in the state.
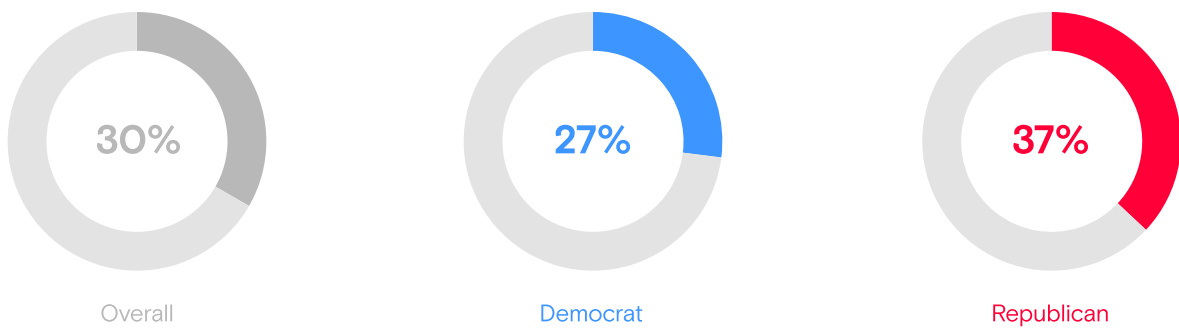
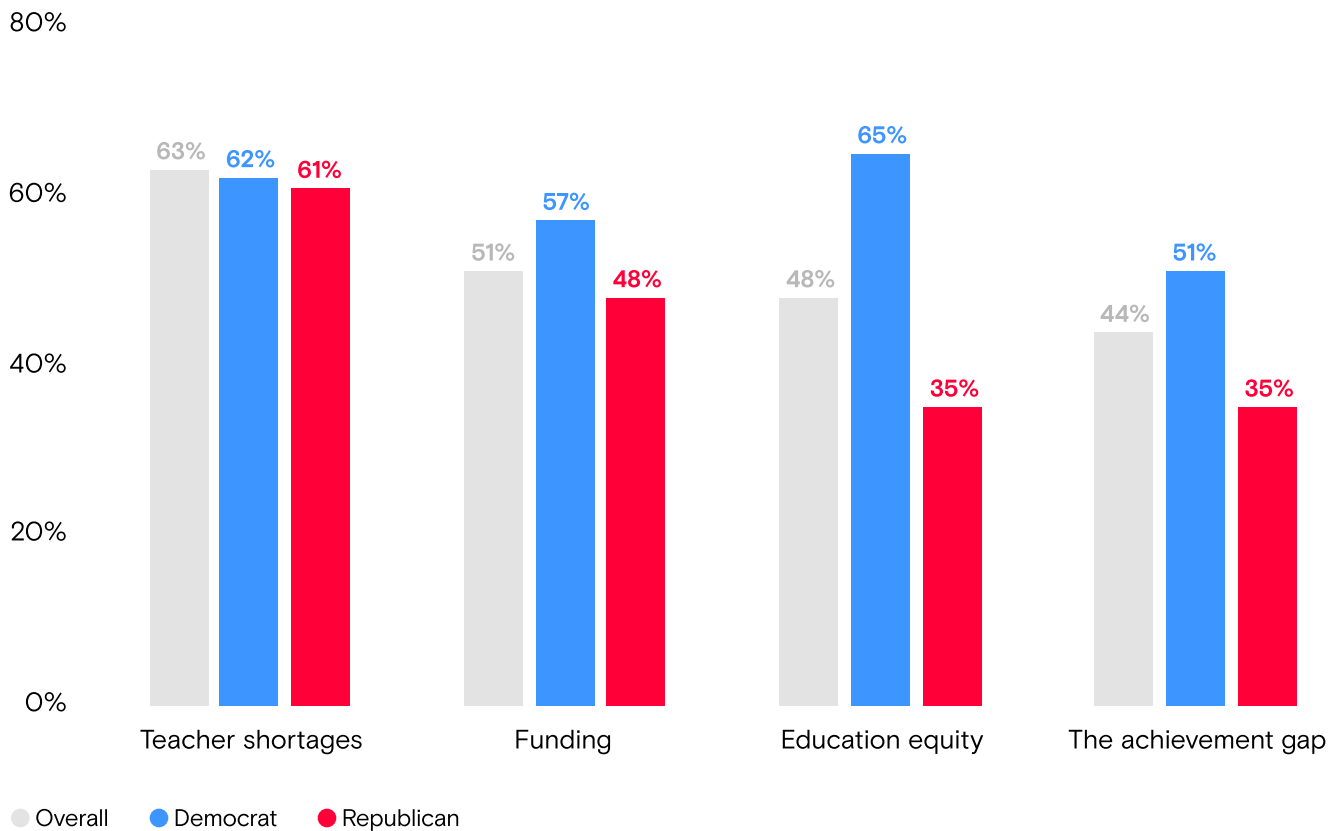**Top policy priorities in Minnesota**

K-12 education

K–12 education is a top priority in Minnesota, with policymakers pointing out a number of concerns including teacher shortages, funding, education equity, and achievement gaps. Schools across the state are working to navigate various challenges, which include low standardized test scores and loss of learning from the Covid-19 pandemic.[2] Education is an important issue across both sides of the aisle, with Republicans most concerned about staff shortages, and Democrats focused on improving equity.

Policymakers who selected K–12 education as a top policy priority:

30%	27%	37%
Overall	Democrat	Republican

Top issues:

80%

	Teacher shortages	Funding	Education equity	The achievement gap
Overall	63%	51%	48%	44%
Democrat	62%	57%	65%	51%
Republican	61%	48%	35%	35%

● Overall ● Democrat ● Republican

Improving and investing in education

In 2022, only about 52 percent of students met or exceeded state proficiency standards in reading, and only 46 percent met or exceeded state proficiency standards in mathematics. Moreover, standardized test scores dropped significantly between 2019 and 2022, a trend that has been attributed in part to the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.[3] Policymakers are hoping to increase investment in education following the pandemic and teacher shortages. Policymakers believe prioritizing improvements in the education system is necessary to raise test scores and graduation rates, which will prepare students to enter the workforce and create a stronger foundation for communities across the state.

> I'm focused on fixing the educational system because when **you've got certain school districts in the state that have pitiful graduation rates, pitiful performance in reading, in math, and other skill bases,** that hurts the students' capability of getting a job. **If you're not capable of performing the job because your school district did a poor job of giving you the skills, you're at a disadvantage.**

Representative, Minnesota House of Representatives, R

> **I think for me, [a policy priority is] continued and expanded investment in education and improving the schools.** That's kind of what I care most about. It's just been a hard time for the schools with COVID, and then we had a big teacher strike.

Research Scientist, Minnesota Executive Branch, D

> **Many classes are being canceled, not being taught anymore because of lack of funds.** So I know that some money has been transferred recently to cover for education, but still I feel that a lot more should be given to education. **I strongly believe education is the foundation for the future.**

Staff, Minnesota Executive Branch, D

> **We are now falling below the national average and a lot of the nationwide testing scores.** And so in the future, **I would hope that we are able to reverse this** and restore Minnesota to its customary place of education excellence. That's my goal.

Representative, Minnesota House of Representatives, R

Conclusion

Policymakers detail several challenges when it comes to K-12 education, specifically regarding low test scores, teacher shortages, and lack of funding. Policy leaders want to hold the education system to a high standard and ensure students are gaining well-rounded skills in preparation for the professional world.

About Penta Policy Insiders

Penta Policy Insiders provides direct feedback from policymakers to government relations professionals, improving advocates' ability to understand, validate, and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their engagement.

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Citations

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3. https://www.mprnews.org/story/2022/08/25/math-and-reading-proficiency-continues-to-drop

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