

A photograph of three children sitting at a white table in a room, each using a laptop. They are wearing large, colorful headphones. The room has a patterned rug and a bookshelf in the background.

Starting the new school year

Findings from a survey of K-12 parents and caregivers in Massachusetts

November 19, 2020

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This project was sponsored by the Barr Foundation

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Survey Background

- Results based on a statewide survey of 1,549 parents of school-age children in Massachusetts, including oversamples of Black, Latino, and Asian parents.
- Continues series of polls that began in May/June of this year, with 2 more waves to come this school year.
- Conducted October 16 – November 1, 2020 via live telephone and online interviewing in English and Spanish.
- Data was weighted to represent each race / ethnic group as well as the population of K-12 parents on age, gender, race, education, and geography.
- Sponsored by The Barr Foundation with major project input and assistance from The Education Trust.

Key findings

- The large majority of parents say their children are either learning in a hybrid model or fully remote, with major differences by race and socioeconomic factors.
- More in-person time is not a clear preference. Ratings for hybrid are the lowest of all, even lower than remote, which is consistent with other polls.
- Health and safety is the number one factor parents mention in considering options for year.
- By a wide margin, parents are more likely to view the impacts of the school year as negative than positive.

Key findings

- Supplementing with a pod, tutor, or changing schools seems to be linked to greater perceptions of positive outcomes.
- Pods are less common than attention to them would suggest.
- Compared to last survey wave (May / June, 2020):
 - Since June, more and more parents see their children as behind grade level, across race and socioeconomic groupings.
 - More parents of IEP or ELL students now have access to services compared to last year. Looking at the shift, more now see ELL services as adequate, while satisfaction with IEP services have slipped.
 - Device access has improved somewhat in key demographic groups, while access to sufficient internet has not made gains.

Please keep in mind

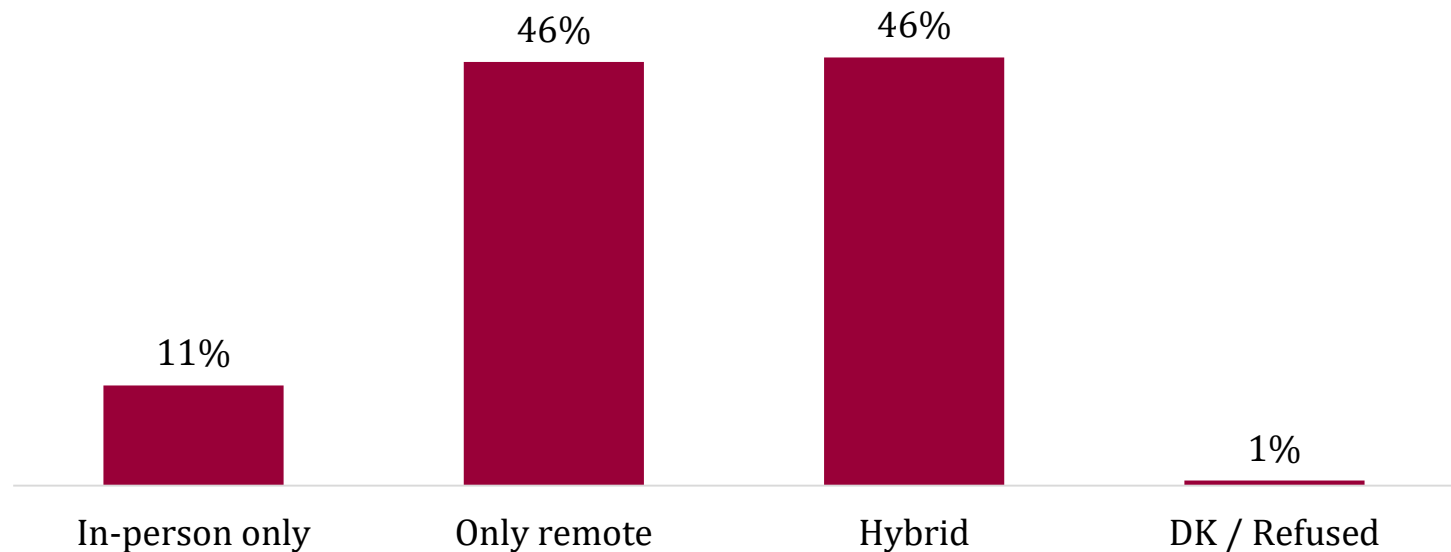
- This survey data reflects perceptions and expectations rather than assessments or achievement data. It is very possible assessments data will show something different.
- With parents and schools employing so many new ideas and formats, there are nearly infinite shades of gray on many of the format questions.
- The upheaval before (changing schools, choosing formats) and during (changing formats) the school year adds to the complexity of this data.

Most students are remote/hybrid

- Parents are split between remote and hybrid, with few (11%) saying their children are doing fully in-person.

Parents evenly split between remote / hybrid school format*

% of parents who say their child(ren)'s school format is...



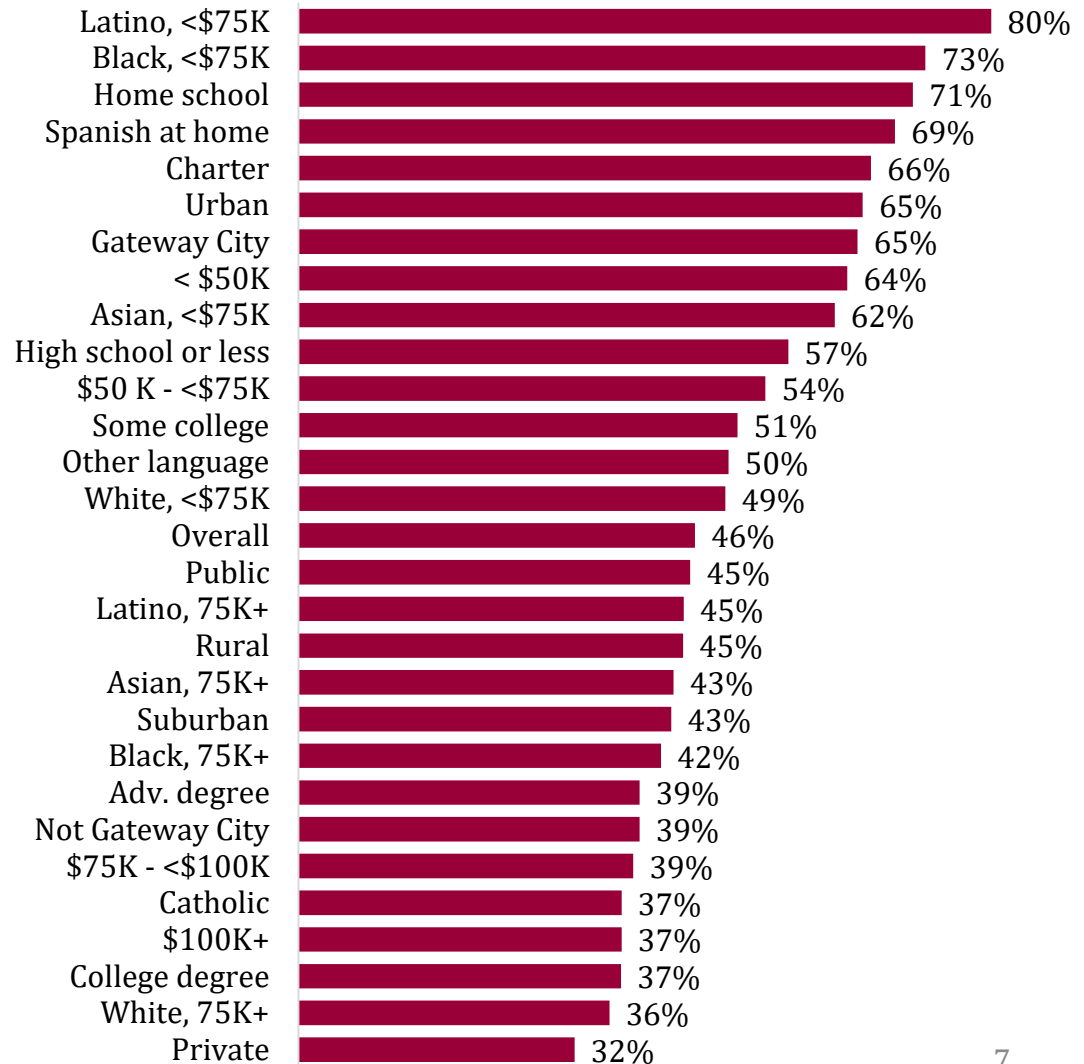
** Note: Totals add up to more than 100% since some parents have children in more than 1 format.*

Who is doing all-remote school?

- There are major demographic differences in who is doing fully remote school this year.
- Black, Latino, and lower income parents are FAR more likely to report fully remote school.
- This strongly echoes other national and state polls done elsewhere.

Black, Latino, low-income parents have children in remote-only school

% of parents who say their child(ren) are learning remotely

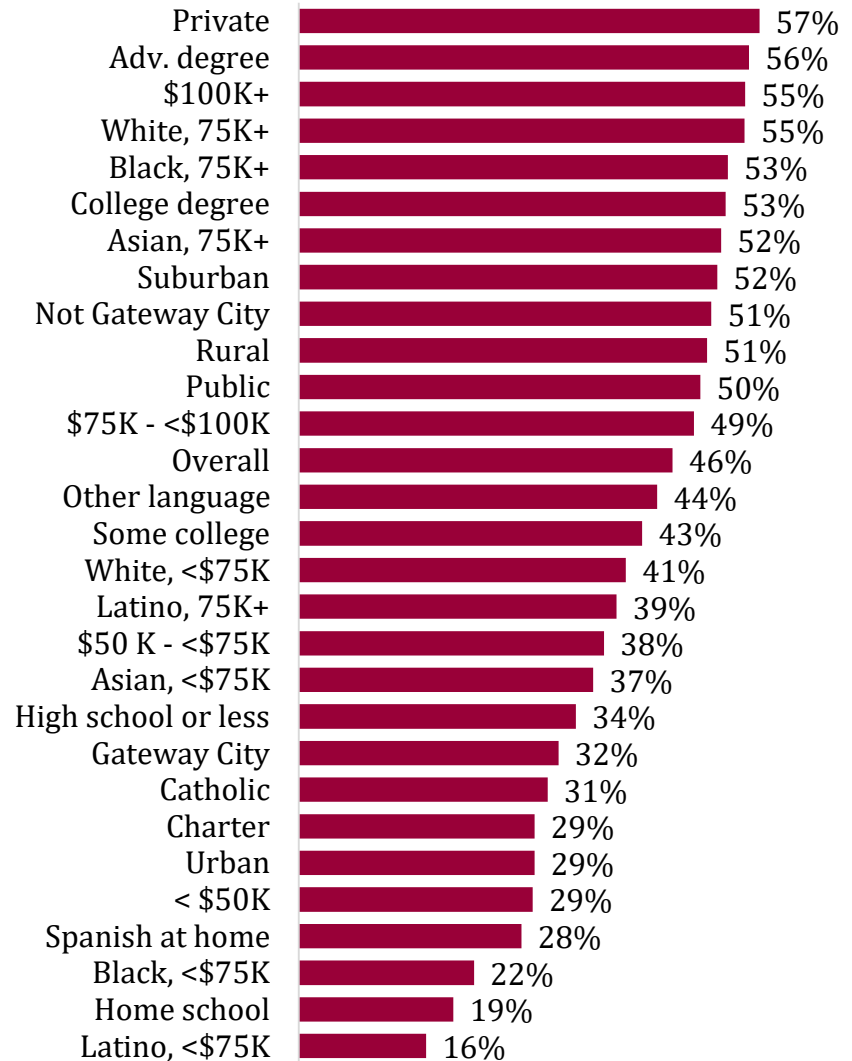


Q: As of today, which best describes the school format for your child(ren)?

Who is in a hybrid model?

- High-income and private school parents more likely to have children in a hybrid model with both online and in-person learning.
- Concentrations of COVID-19 cases are closely related to which districts offer in-person vs hybrid.

Hybrid model more common among high-income
% of parents who say their child(ren) are learning in a hybrid model

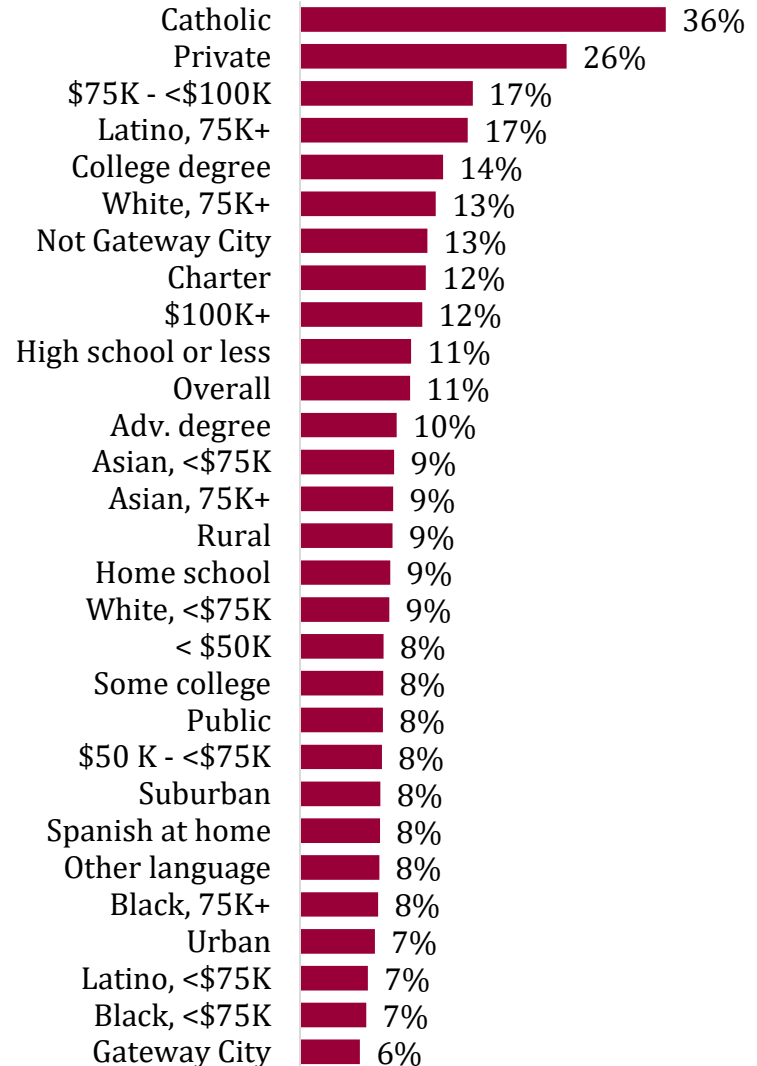


Q: As of today, which best describes the school format for your child(ren)?

Who is learning in-person?

- Catholic, private school, high-income parents more likely to have children attending school in-person.
- Many districts offer in-person to a limited group by age or high needs status.

School type plays role in in-person learning *% of parents who say their child(ren) are learning in-person*



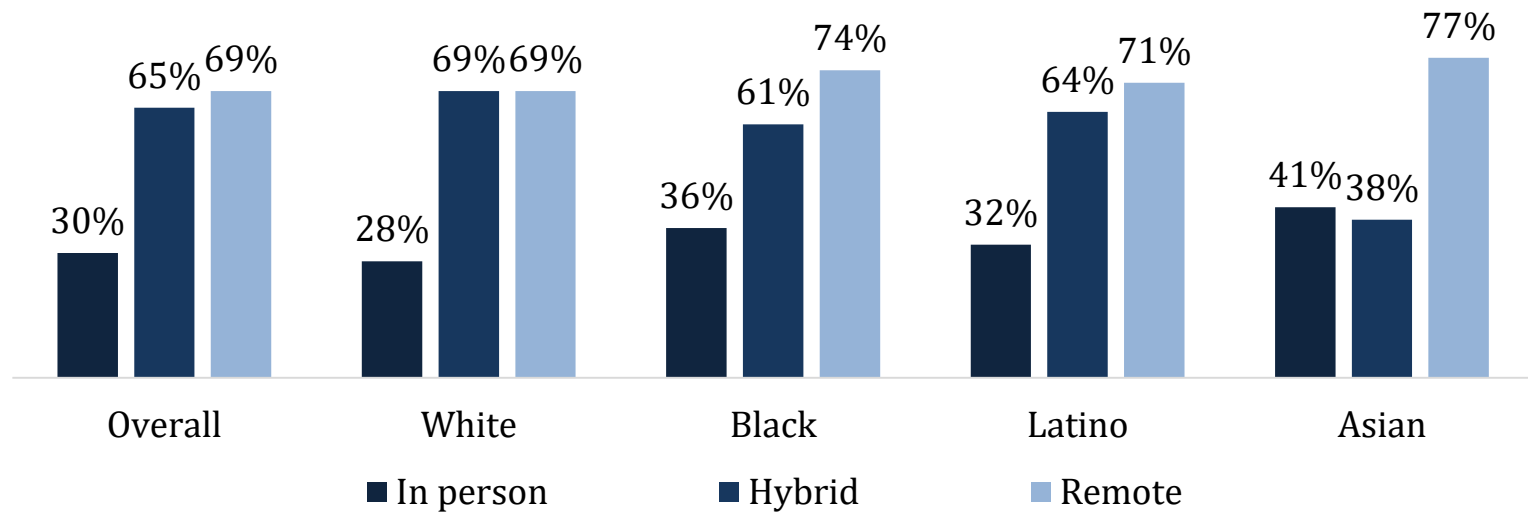
Q: As of today, which best describes the school format for your child(ren)?

Many prefer remote schooling

- In a national Ed Choice survey*, parents of color were most supportive of remote schooling.
- In the current Massachusetts survey (as we will see), hybrid is not rated more highly than remote schooling.

Parents are mostly not looking for full in-person school, many prefer remote

% of parents who support each mode in a national survey by EdChoice, Oct 12-29, 2020



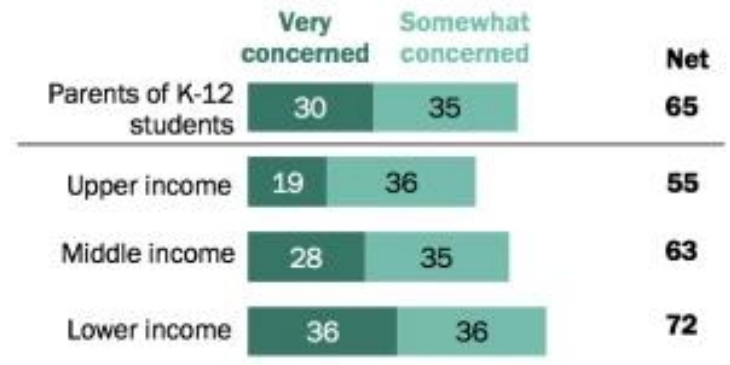
Hybrid / Remote

- A recent Pew study also found hybrid parents more concerned than remote parents about their children falling behind.
- The ordering of reactions to hybrid vs remote is one of the most striking and consistent findings across the surveys that exist so far.

Source: [Pew Research Center national survey, Oct 13-19, 2020](#)

Lower-income parents of K-12 students are the most concerned about their children falling behind in school

% of parents of K-12 students saying they are ___ about their children falling behind in school as a result of any disruptions caused by the coronavirus outbreak



Among those whose children are getting ...



Note: Based on parents with children in elementary, middle or high school in their household who are not being home-schooled and are all getting the same type of instruction (among those with more than one child in K-12 schools). Figures may not add to subtotals due to rounding. Family income tiers are based on adjusted 2019 earnings. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 13-19, 2020.

"Most Parents of K-12 Students Learning Online Worry About Them Falling Behind"

What other choices parents had

- Parents were mostly choosing between remote and hybrid, more only had 1 of the 2 available. Few had in-person available.

Most parents only had remote, hybrid, or both available to them

% of parents doing each format who say they also had _____ available to them

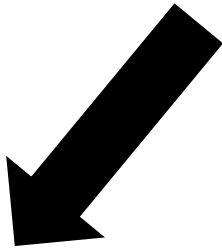
	Doing in-person (11%)	Doing remote (46%)	Doing hybrid (46%)
In person only	NA	10%	19%
Only remote	53%	NA	61%
Hybrid	34%	48%	NA
No other options	19%	41%	28%
DK / Refused	2%	4%	6%

Also had the option of ...

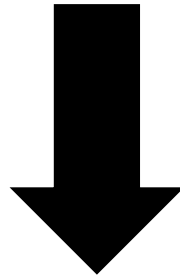
Upheaval: who has changed already?

22% of parents say their child's school format has changed since the beginning of the year.

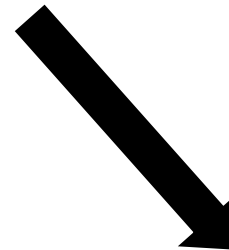
Among this group...



35% say their child moved to in-person.



52% say their child moved to remote-only.



13% say their child moved to a hybrid model.

What mattered to parents?

- Health and safety was the number one factor for parents when considering their options for the year.

Health and safety was the most important consideration for parents

% of parents who cited each factor as important in considering their options this school year

Reason Cited	%
Health and safety	50%
Academic / learning opportunities	38%
What the school / district offered	27%
Opportunity for kids to socialize	25%
Work schedules	15%
Child care	12%
Special learning needs	12%
Household budget	9%
<i>Other</i>	8%
<i>DK / Refused</i>	3%

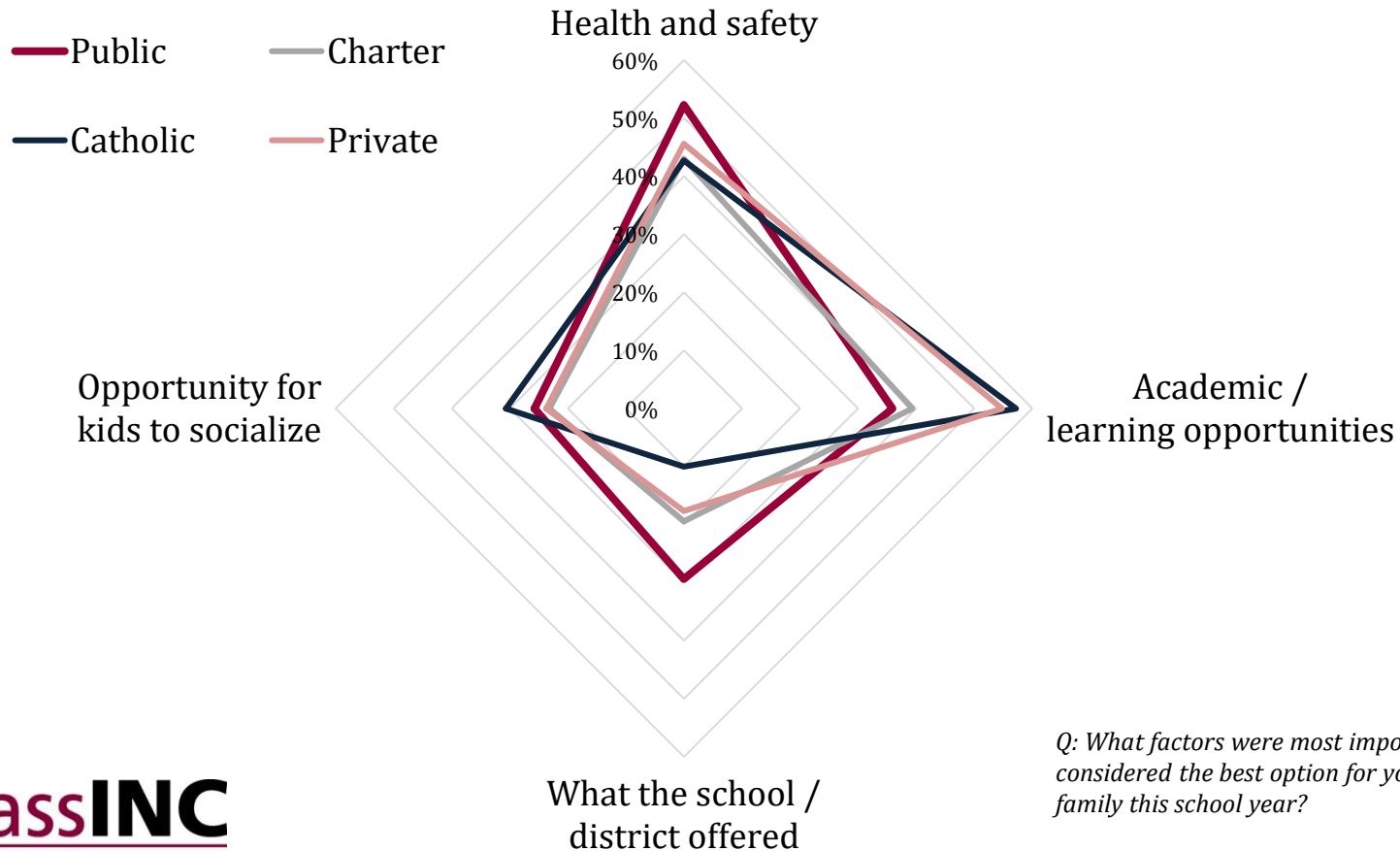
** Note: Totals add up to more than 100% since respondents can choose more than one.*

What mattered by school type

- The top factors parents considered were closely tied to the type of school their children attend.

Parents with children in different school types cited different factors as most important

% of parents with children in each school type who cited each factor as important in considering their options



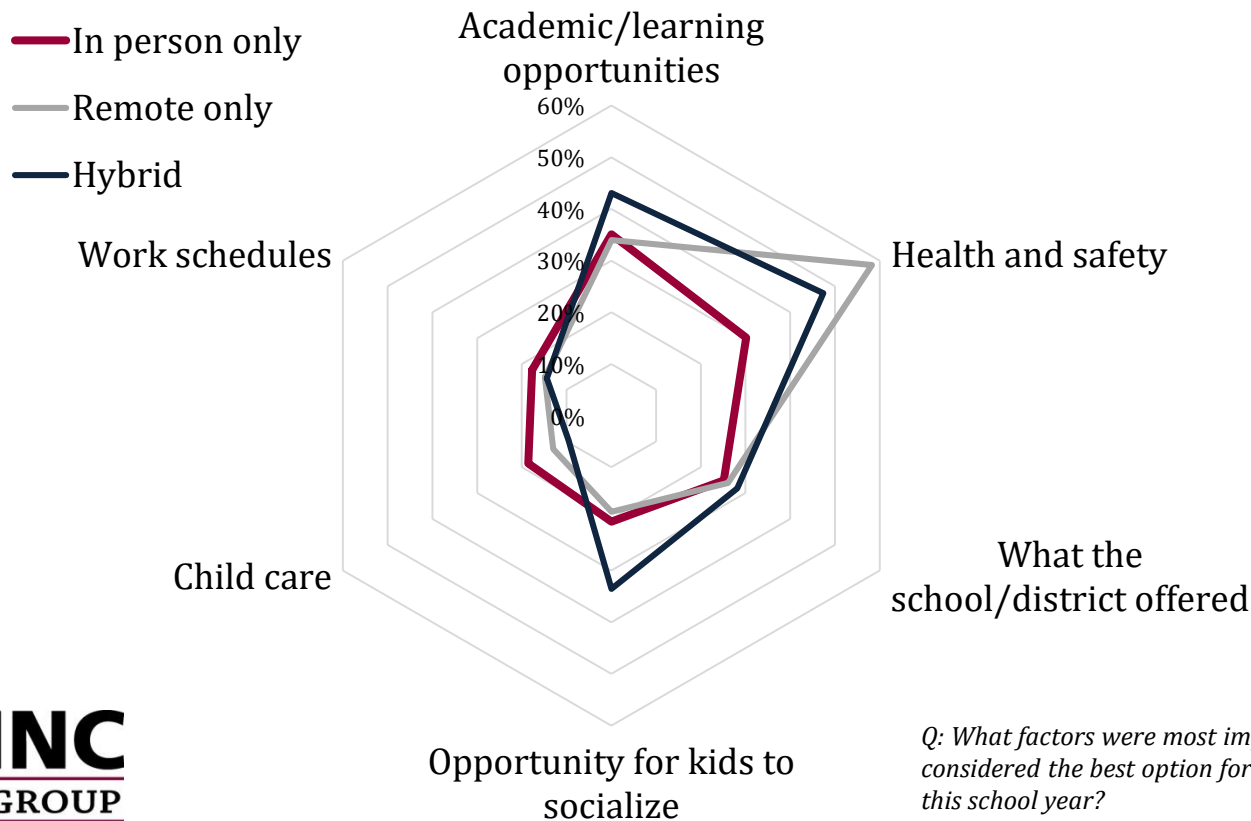
Q: What factors were most important to you as you considered the best option for your child(ren) and family this school year?

What mattered by format

- Remote-only parents are most likely to cite health and safety. Hybrid parents also looked for learning opportunities and socialization. In-person parents express a range of reasons.

Parents with children in different modes cited different factors as important

% of parents who cited each factor as important in considering their options



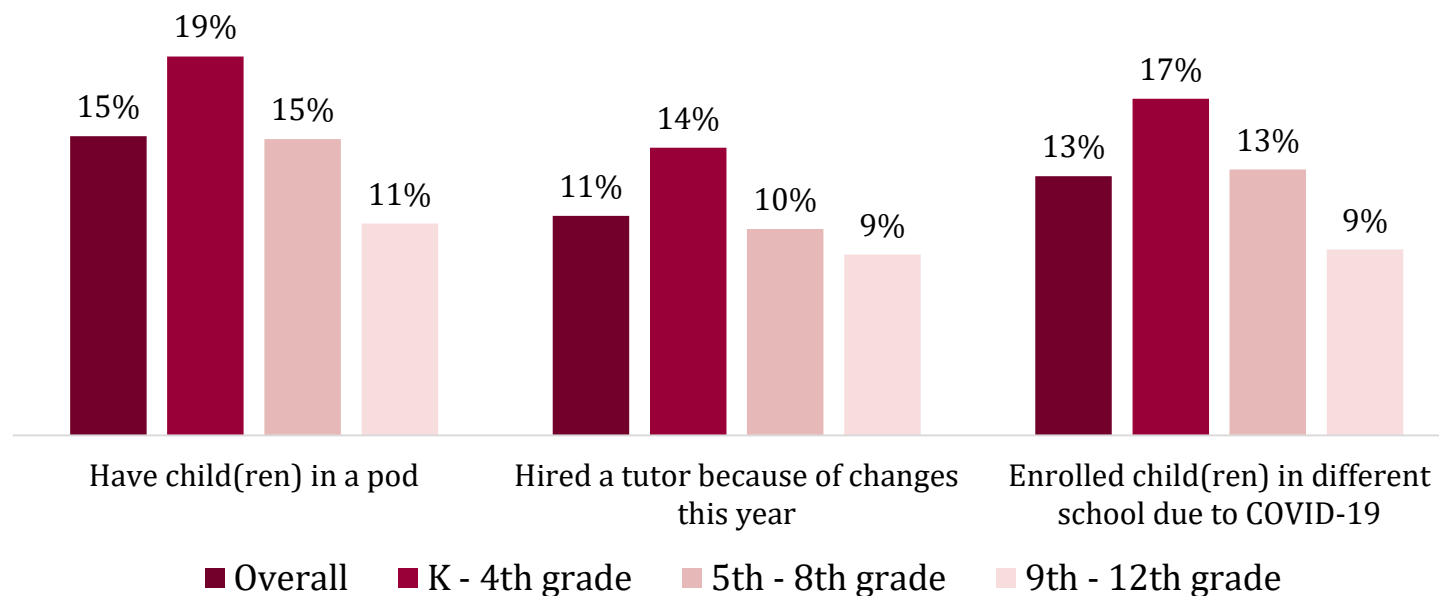
Q: What factors were most important to you as you considered the best option for your child(ren) and family this school year?

School alternatives & supplements

- Many parents have opted for alternatives or supplements to learning with pods, tutors, or even enrollment in a different school.
- Those with younger children are more likely to be using these approaches, somewhat flattening other typical differences by race or income.

Parents of younger children using school alternatives and supplements

% of parents who say they...



Pod participation

- Overall, few students in education pods this year relative to the media coverage they have received. National poll: 14% in a pod.*
- There is less demographic variation than expected than anticipated in education pods in Massachusetts.

Pod participation is unusual and not skewed by race or income

% of parents who say they are participating in a pod arrangement

Overall	White	Black	Latino	Asian
15%	15%	14%	13%	13%

< \$50K	\$50-\$75K	\$75- \$100K	\$100K+
15%	18%	16%	15%

How's it going?

- Parents express the most positive views of individual teachers.
- This matches a well established pattern in education polling, where things that are closer get higher ratings.

Parents give higher ratings to teachers than to schools or districts

% of parents who say districts, schools, teachers are _____

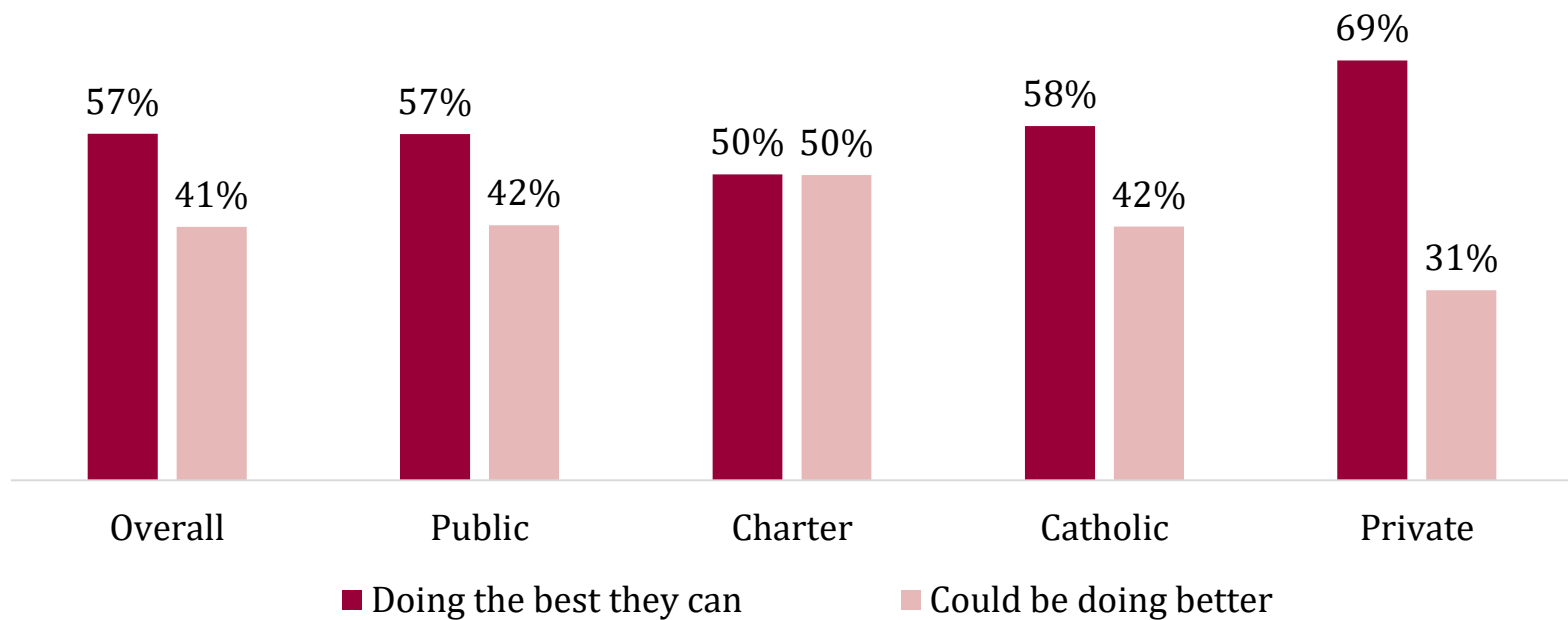
	The District	The School	The Teacher
Doing the best they can	50%	57%	67%
Could be doing much better	21%	17%	13%
Could be doing a little better	26%	24%	17%
<i>DK / Refused</i>	<i>3%</i>	<i>2%</i>	<i>3%</i>

Satisfaction and school type

- More than half of parents (57%) say their child's school is doing the best they can under the circumstances, but there are differences by school type.
- Parents with children at Catholic and private schools are more likely to say their child's school is doing the best they can.

Catholic and private school parents more likely to say school doing its best

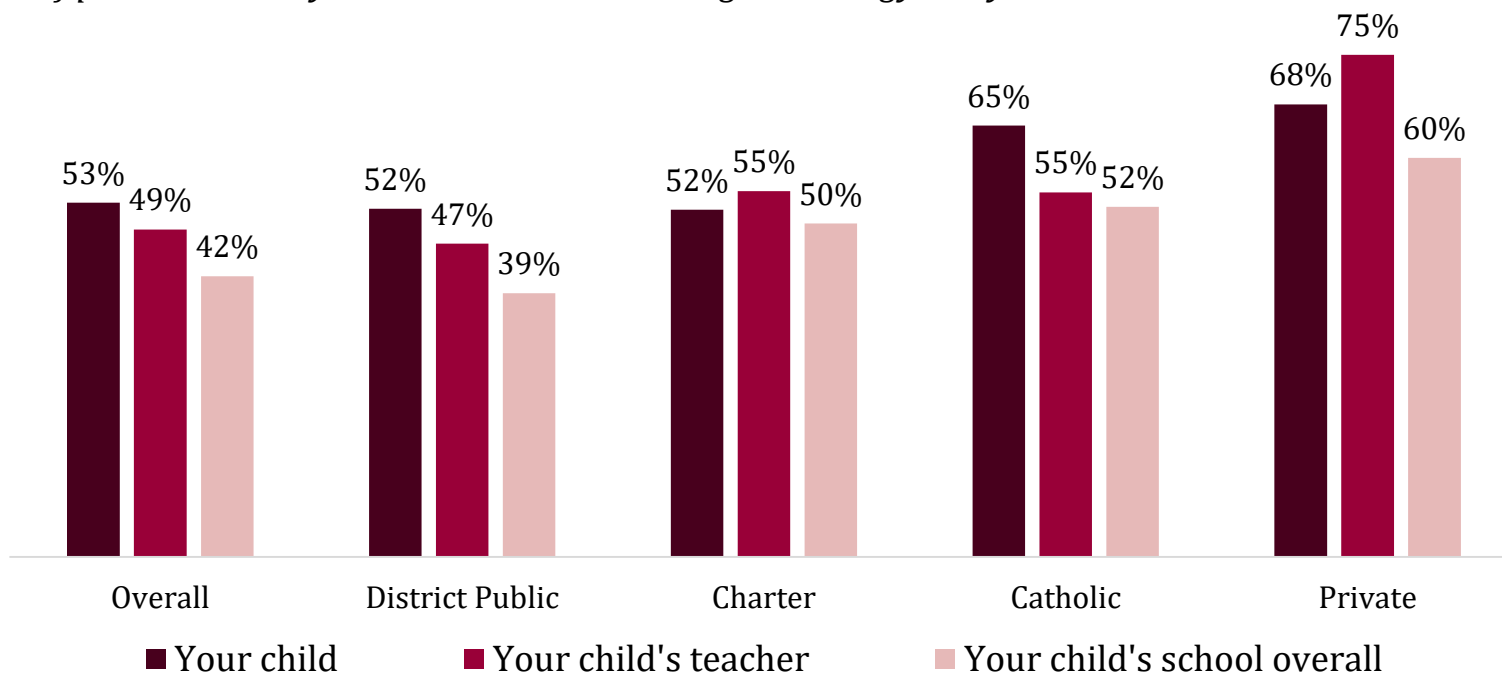
% of parents who say their child's school...



Middling marks on teacher/school tech use

- Overall, parents give their children the best marks for using remote learning technology, while less than half say their child's teacher or school uses it "very well."
- Catholic and private school parents rate their schools more highly.

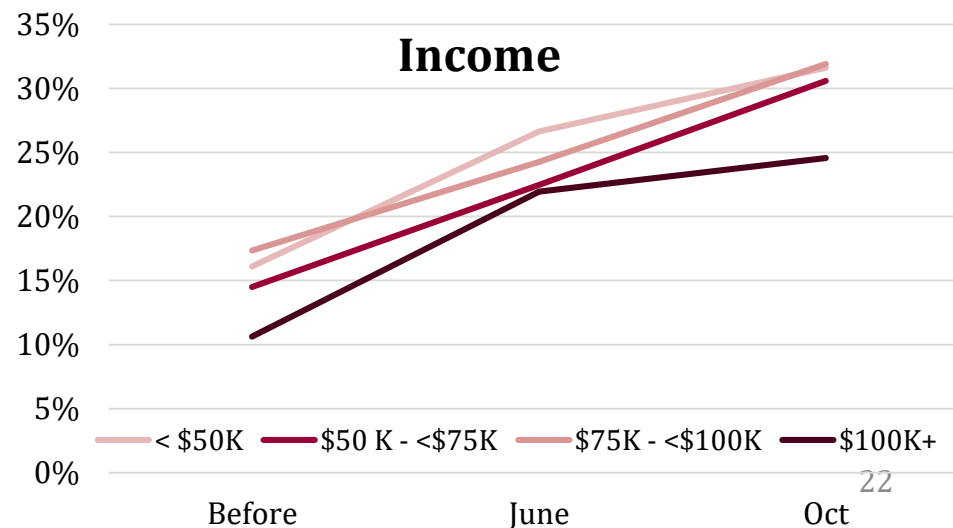
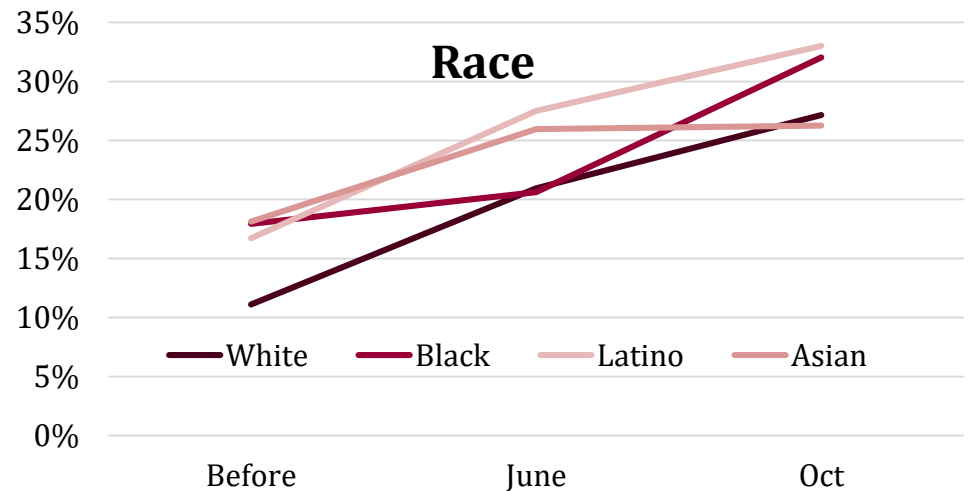
Tech usage varies by school type, with private, Catholic schools rated highest
% of parents who say ___ uses remote learning technology "very well"



More appear to fall behind

- More parents now say their children are behind grade level since the pandemic began.
- There remain gaps by race and income on these measures.
- So far, all we have is parental perception, not actual assessment data to back this up.

More parents say children behind grade level
% in each group who say children are behind grade level

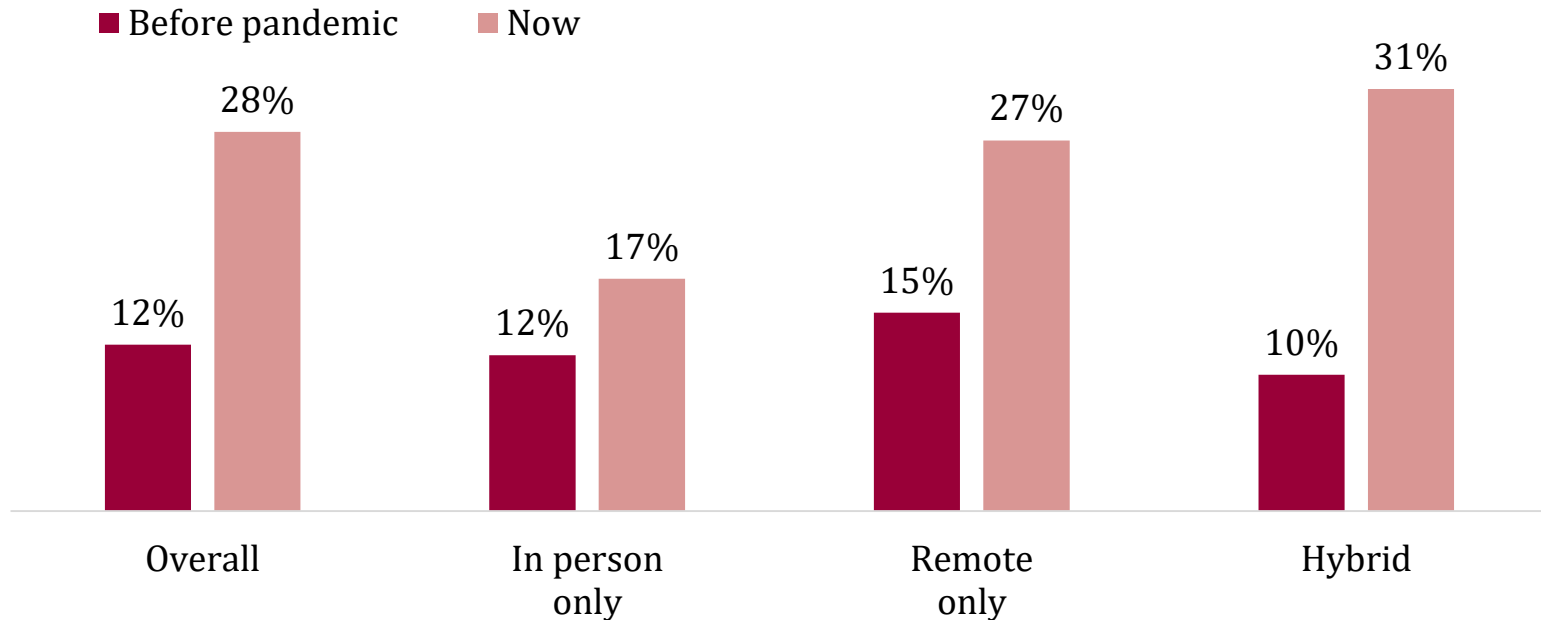


Q: Prior to the coronavirus crisis, do you think your **GRADE LEVEL** child's academics were at grade level, behind grade level, or ahead of grade level? How about now?

Falling behind by format

- Parents are concerned their children are falling behind more and more, particularly those in hybrid formats.
- This is perception rather than based on assessments.

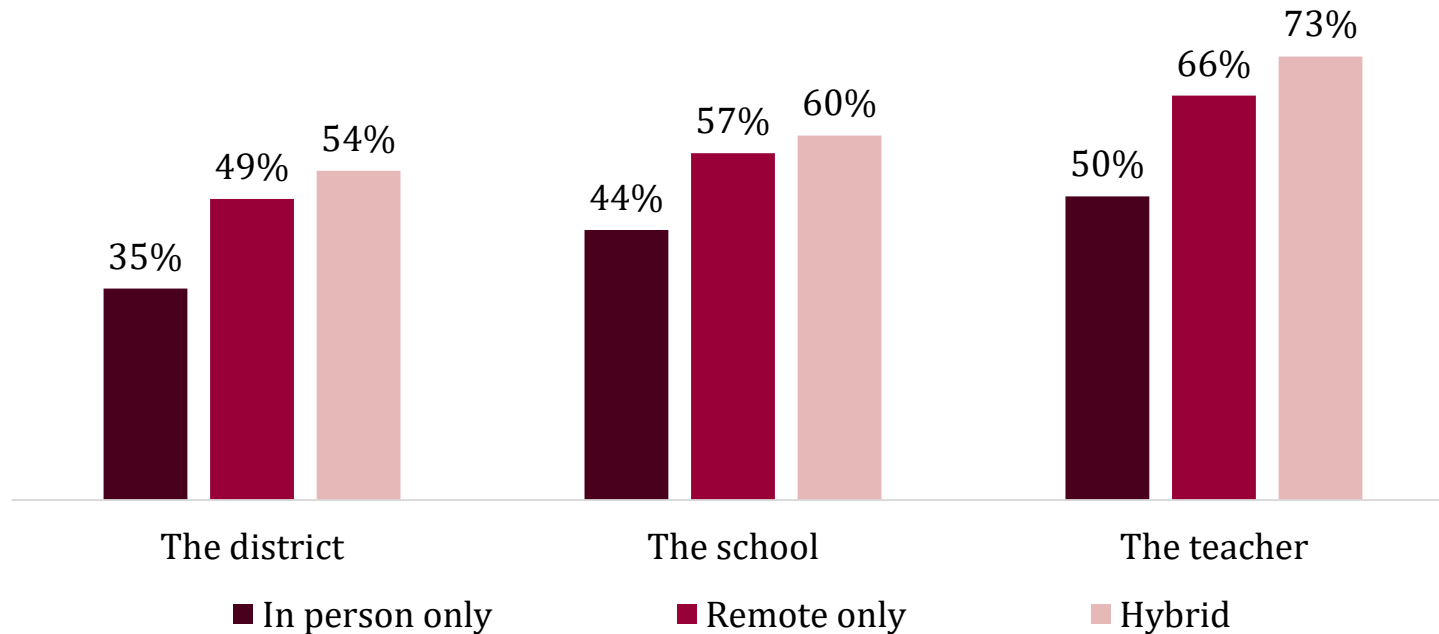
Hybrid parents show the biggest increase in students behind grade level
% of parents in each format who think their child is behind grade level



School ratings by format

- Remote and hybrid parents see schools and teachers as doing their best, even as they anticipate negative impacts on their kids.

Hybrid and remote parents offer higher ratings than in-person parents
% of parents in each format who say the school is “doing the best they can”

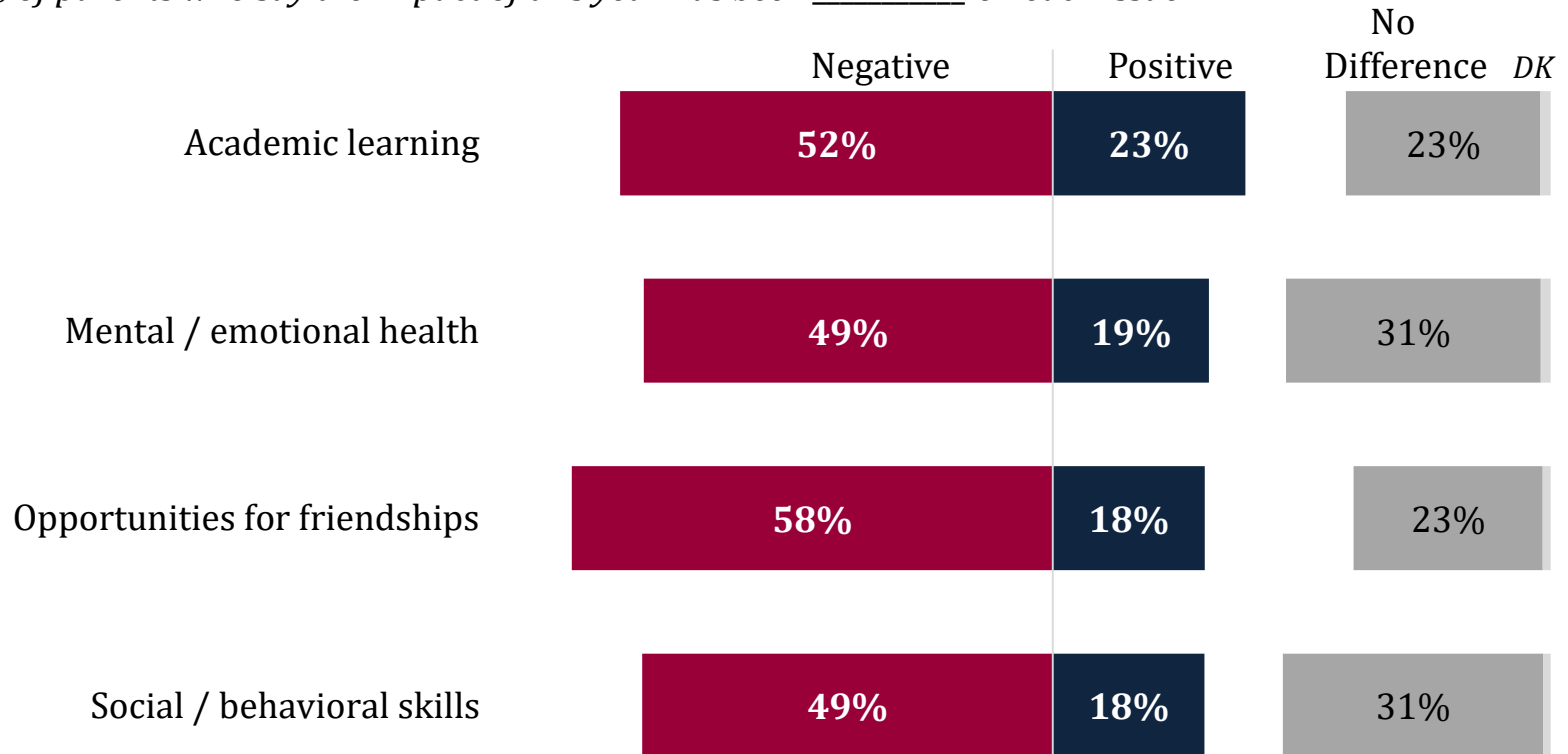


Positive / negative impacts

- Parents see a range of negative effects of this school year including social, emotional, and academic impacts.

Half or more parents see a range of negative impacts of the current school year

% of parents who say the impact of this year has been _____ on each issue



Impacts: race and income

- Higher income and white parents were most pessimistic about the impacts of this year on their children.

White and higher income parents more likely to perceive negative impacts

"Net impacts" in each area (% who said positive - % who said negative)

	Overall	White	Black	Latino	Asian	< \$50K	\$50- \$75K	\$75K- \$100K	\$100K+
Academic learning	-29%	-34%	-7%	-14%	-30%	-8%	-21%	-37%	-35%
Mental or emotional health	-30%	-35%	-11%	-15%	-25%	-13%	-31%	-32%	-35%
Social and behavioral skills	-31%	-36%	-20%	-15%	-26%	-18%	-24%	-33%	-38%
Opportunities to form or maintain friendships	-40%	-43%	-20%	-35%	-40%	-27%	-32%	-38%	-44%

Impacts: pods, help, new schools

- Pods, hiring help, and changing schools are all associated with less negative perceived impacts.

Pods, tutors, and changing schools seem to mitigate negative perceived impacts

"Net impacts" in each area (% who said positive - % who said negative)

	Overall	POD		HIRE HELP		CHANGE SCHOOL	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Academic learning	-29%	6%	-35%	9%	-40%	17%	-39%
Mental or emotional health	-30%	9%	-38%	7%	-41%	11%	-40%
Social and behavioral skills	-31%	2%	-38%	3%	-41%	12%	-41%
Opportunities to form or maintain friendships	-40%	4%	-48%	3%	-52%	13%	-51%

Impacts: school format

- In-person parents see more positive impacts.
- Across the board, hybrid parents are more pessimistic about the impact of this year than are remote parents. This holds even considering initial format differences by race.

Parents of children in hybrid school offered the most negative ratings

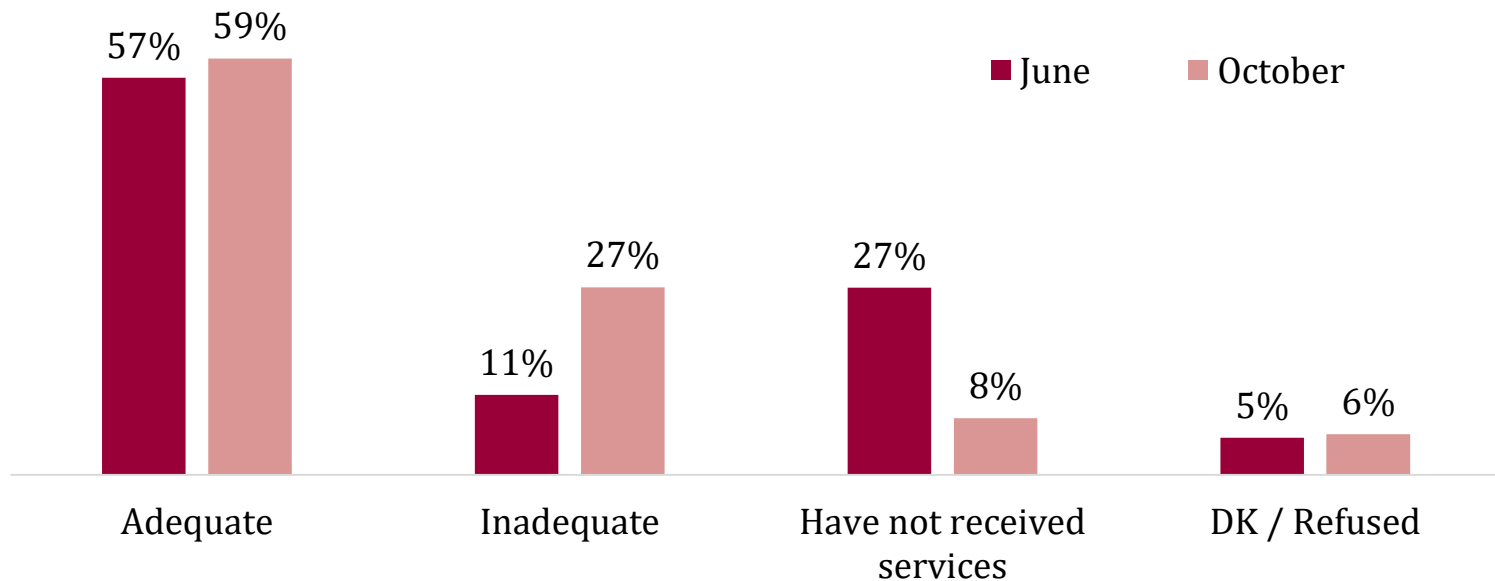
“Net impacts” in each area (% who said positive - % who said negative)

	In person only	Remote only	Hybrid	Remote, White	Hybrid, White	Remote, Latino	Hybrid, Latino	Remote, Black	Hybrid, Black	Remote, Asian	Hybrid, Asian
Academic learning	28%	-25%	-46%	-30%	-49%	-19%	-41%	-3%	-25%	-20%	-48%
Mental or emotional health	23%	-26%	-48%	-29%	-51%	-21%	-29%	-5%	-30%	-18%	-39%
Social and behavioral skills	23%	-28%	-46%	-33%	-49%	-11%	-57%	-18%	-32%	-30%	-30%
Opportunities to form or maintain friendships	22%	-41%	-52%	-44%	-54%	-40%	-50%	-22%	-27%	-37%	-50%

More now getting IEP services

- More students are receiving IEP services now, but more are finding them inadequate than in the May / June wave.

More parents now say IEP services are available, but many say inadequate.
% of parents of an IEP student who say IEP services are _____

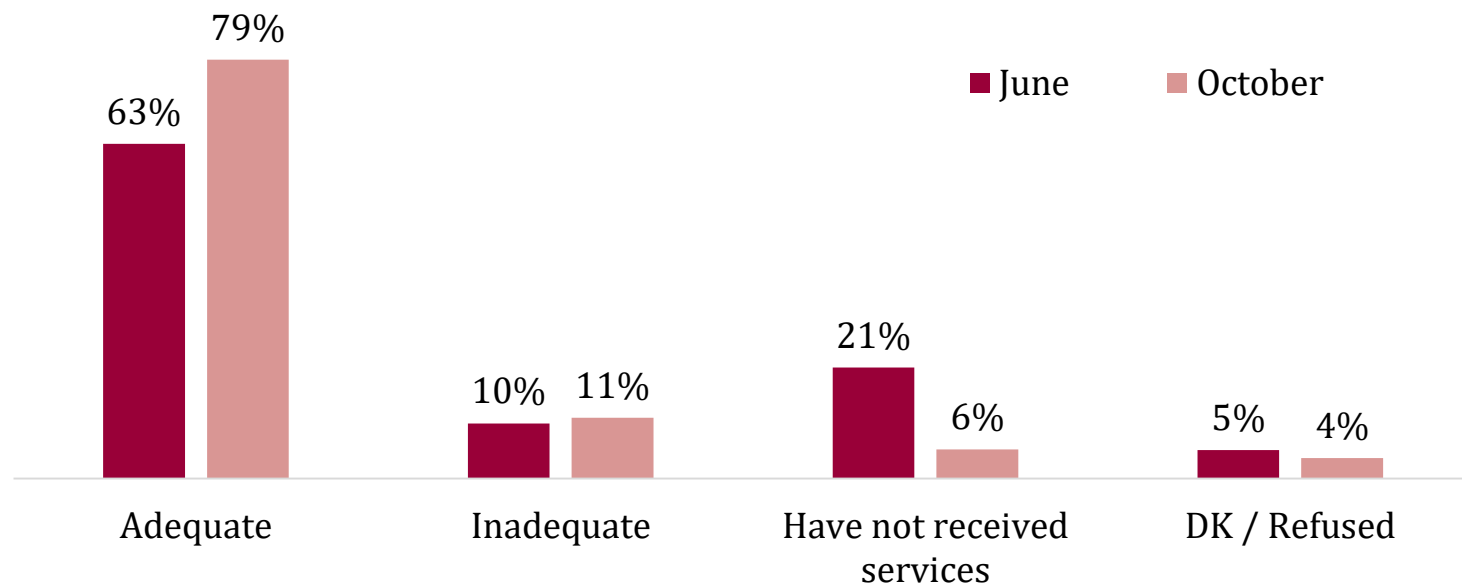


More now getting ELL services

- More parents now say ELL services are available and adequate compared to the end of last year.

Many more parents now say ELL services are adequate

% of parents of an ELL student who say ELL services are _____.

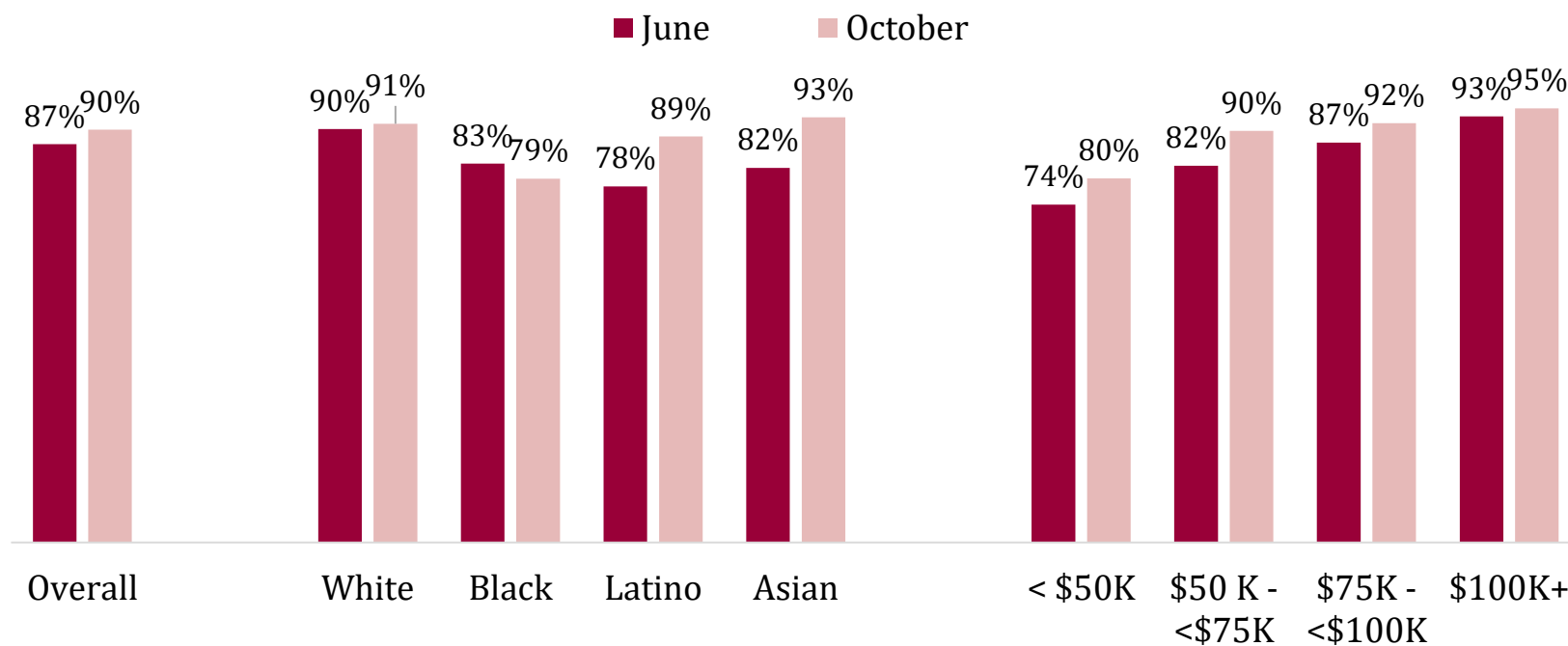


Device access has improved

- It appears efforts to improve access to sufficient devices has improved, though some work remains with lower income parents.

Improved access to sufficient devices in key demographic groups.

% of parents who say they have enough devices in their home for work and school

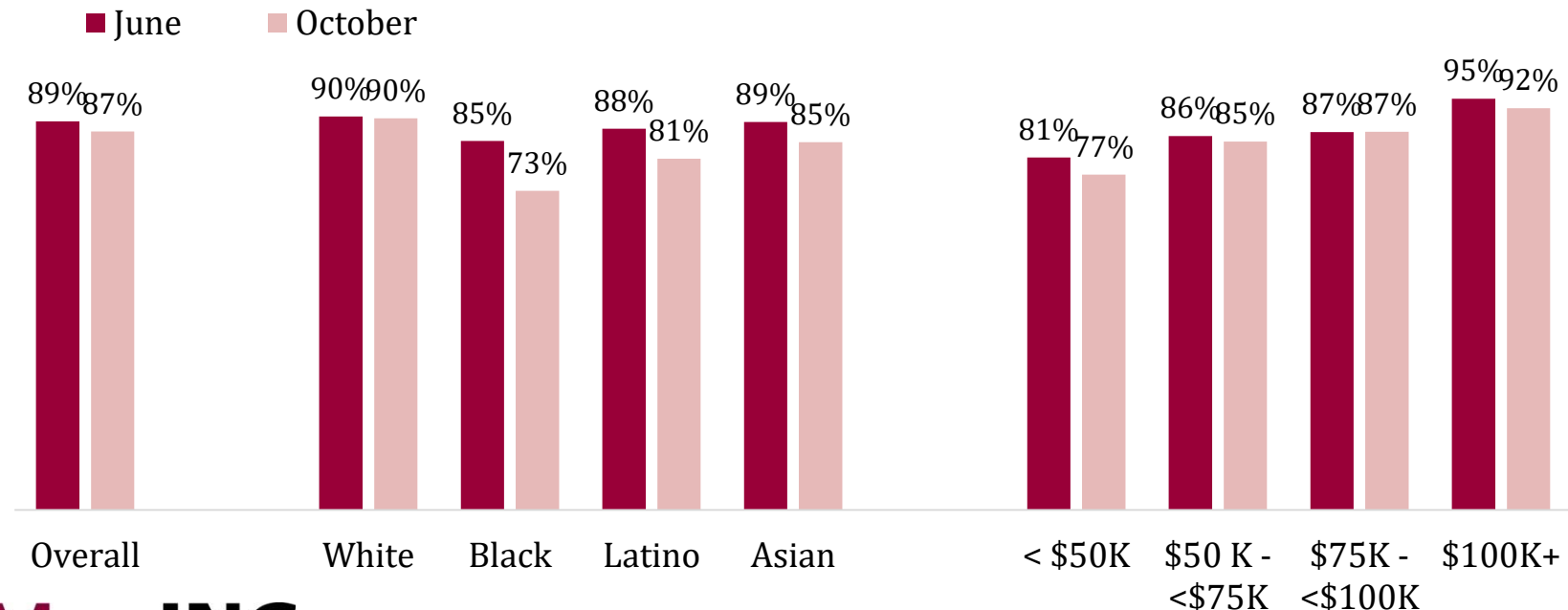


Internet access remains a challenge

- Unlike device access, access to *sufficient* internet has not grown since the May / June wave of this survey.
- “Sufficient” takes on new meanings as more are using streaming video and other higher demand formats for education.

Little change in overall internet access, declines among parents of color.

% of Massachusetts parents who say they have sufficient internet in their home for work and school.



Live online classes make up bulk of day

- A majority of remote and hybrid students spend at least 2 hours/day in live online classes, with many spending 4+.
- Pre-recorded material and offline coursework is still a key part of the overall academic day.

Live online classes are typical school day for many remote/hybrid students

% of parents who say their child spends ____ doing each of the following

		Remote only	Hybrid
Attend live online classes	Less than 2 hours/day	18%	29%
	2-4 hours/day	34%	34%
	4+ hours/day	44%	32%
Watch pre-recorded material	Less than 2 hours/day	51%	49%
	2-4 hours/day	15%	14%
	4+ hours/day	7%	3%
Work on offline coursework	Less than 2 hours/day	51%	50%
	2-4 hours/day	29%	31%
	4+ hours/day	9%	9%

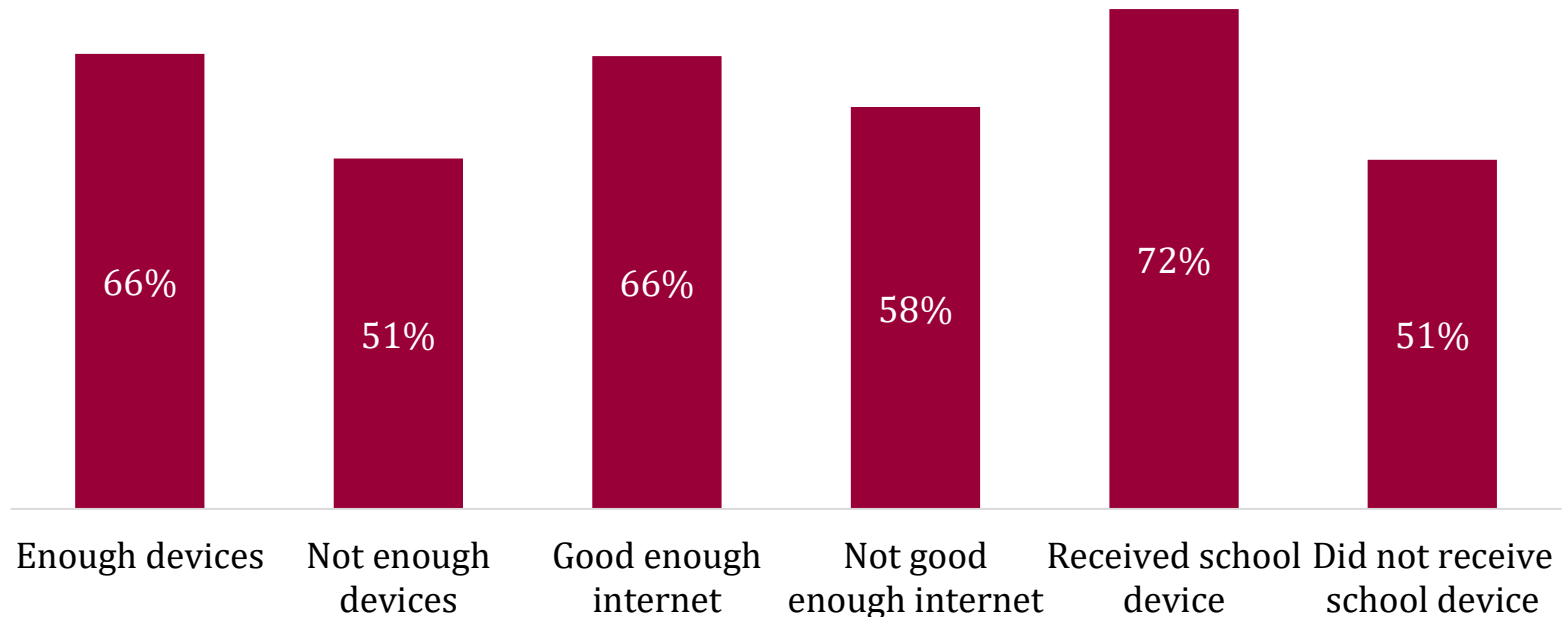
Note: "Not offered" and "Don't Know / Refused" results not included in this table. See crosstabs for full results.

Tech impact on live online learning

- Those without enough devices or good enough internet spend less time learning live online.
- But school intervention shows bright spot – those who received a device from school spend more time learning live online.

Tech access, devices enable expanded live online learning at home

% of parents in each group who say their child spends 2+ hours a day attending live online classes





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