

Student transitions and school recovery

Findings from a survey of K-12 parents in Massachusetts

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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 1,619 parents of school-age children in Massachusetts, including oversamples of Black, Latino, and Asian parents.
- Fourth in a series of polls with prior waves in May/June 2020, October 2020, and February/March 2021.
- Conducted April 23 – May 14, 2021 via live telephone and online interviewing in English and Spanish.
- Data was weighted to known population parameters by age, gender, race, education, and region.
- Sponsored by the Barr Foundation with major project input and assistance from the Education Trust.

Key Findings

- As more schools return to in-person instruction, the impact of the tumultuous year is coming into focus, with a majority of parents (55%) saying their child will need to catch up academically.
- To help catch up, the most popular interventions are in-person instruction, smaller class sizes, one-on-one or small group instruction, and individualized updates to parents.
- In terms of catching up, Black, Latino, and Asian parents are more likely than white parents to emphasize additional learning opportunities, including summer school, activities to do at home, and offering online instruction as an option.

Key Findings (continued)

- Many more parents now say their children are learning full-time in-person. Looking to next year, most parents would prefer in-person instruction, though a notable minority would like remote or hybrid options.
- With major funding available from COVID relief packages, parents support a broad range of proposals with tutoring and extra academic support topping the list.
- Looking at both strategies to catch up and at funding priorities, parents of color express stronger support across a broader range of proposals.

Key Findings (continued)

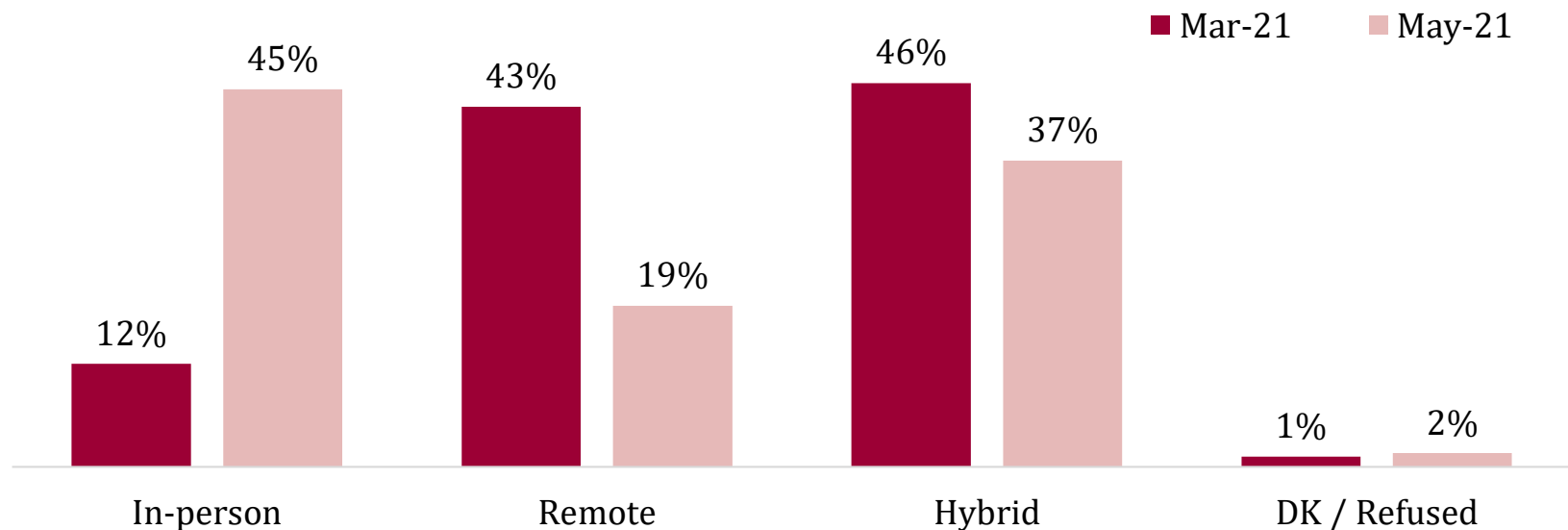
- The school year brought a decrease in school discipline events, and parents took note. Fewer said their child was involved in disciplinary action compared to past years.
- Black and Asian parents are still more likely to say their child was involved in disciplinary action this year, though frequency is lower than past years.
- Black parents are also the most likely to say their child has been treated unfairly at school because of their race or ethnicity.

Large shift to in-person learning

- The survey was conducted as many schools were switching to in-person format.
- Between in-person and hybrid parents, nearly 80% of parents say their child learns in person at least part-time.

More districts have moved to to in-person learning since March*

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



Shifts to in-person learning uneven

- The shifts toward in-person learning are not even across demographic groups.
- Public schools saw a major shift toward in-person learning around the poll's field period.

	March '21	May '21	Change from March to May
Overall	12%	45%	+33%
White	13%	49%	+35%
Black	10%	27%	+17%
Latino	6%	42%	+36%
Asian	11%	40%	+29%
<\$50K	11%	31%	+20%
\$50K - <\$75K	9%	39%	+30%
\$75K - <\$100K	15%	42%	+27%
\$100K+	14%	56%	+42%
White, <\$75K	12%	36%	+24%
White, 75K+	14%	55%	+41%
Black, <\$75K	8%	21%	+13%
Black, 75K+	13%	29%	+16%
Latino <\$75K	7%	41%	+34%
Latino, 75K+	8%	43%	+35%
Asian, <\$75K	5%	31%	+27%
Asian, 75K+	13%	41%	+28%
Public	7%	49%	+42%
Charter	22%	33%	+11%
Catholic	52%	40%	-11%
Private	48%	41%	-7%

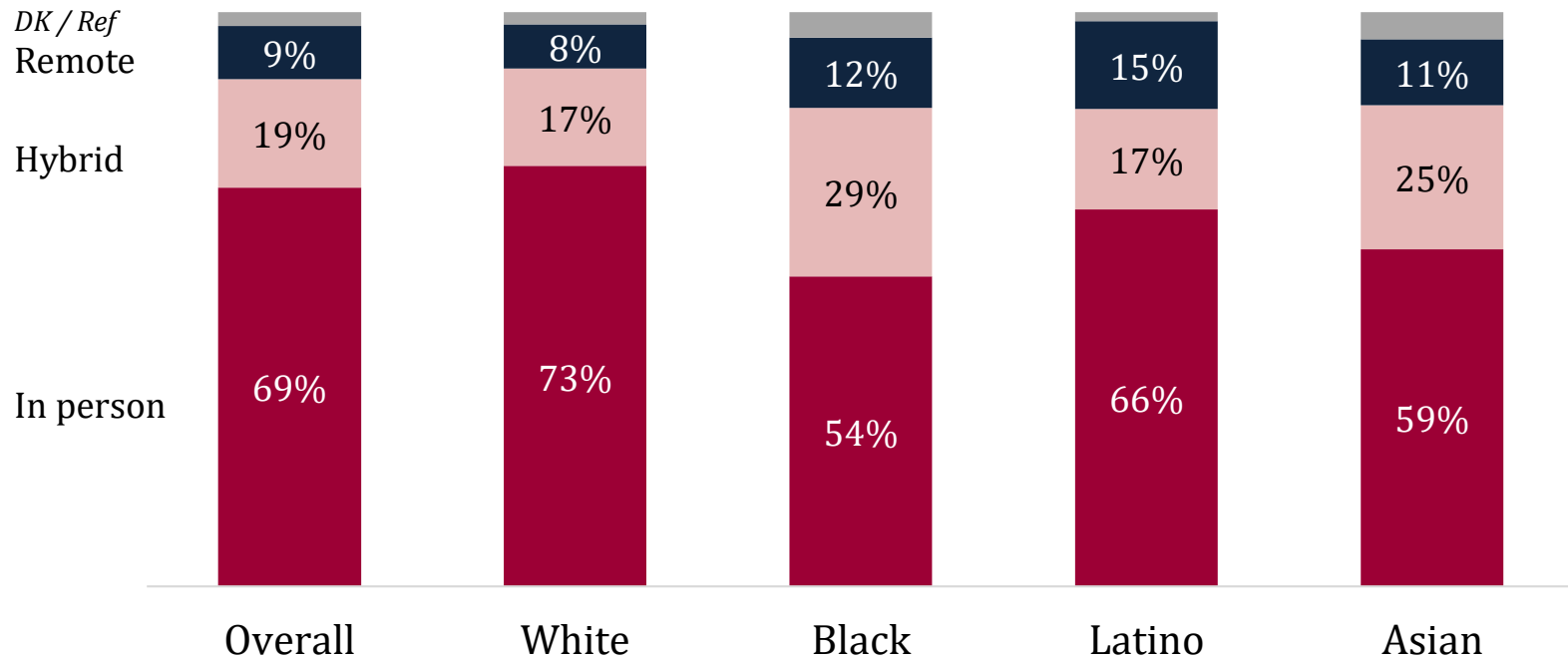
Q: As of today, which best describes the school format for your child(ren)?

Preference for next year

- Majorities across racial/ethnic groups see in-person as the preferred approach for next year, though a sizable proportion still want other formats.

Most prefer in person next year while others look for a mixed approach

% of parents in each group who would prefer their child attend ____ school next year



Current format vs. future preferences

- The format children are in now is closely related to parent preferences for next year, with more remote and hybrid parents seeking a mix of options.

Remote, hybrid parents favor mix of options for next year

% of parents who would prefer _____ for next school year

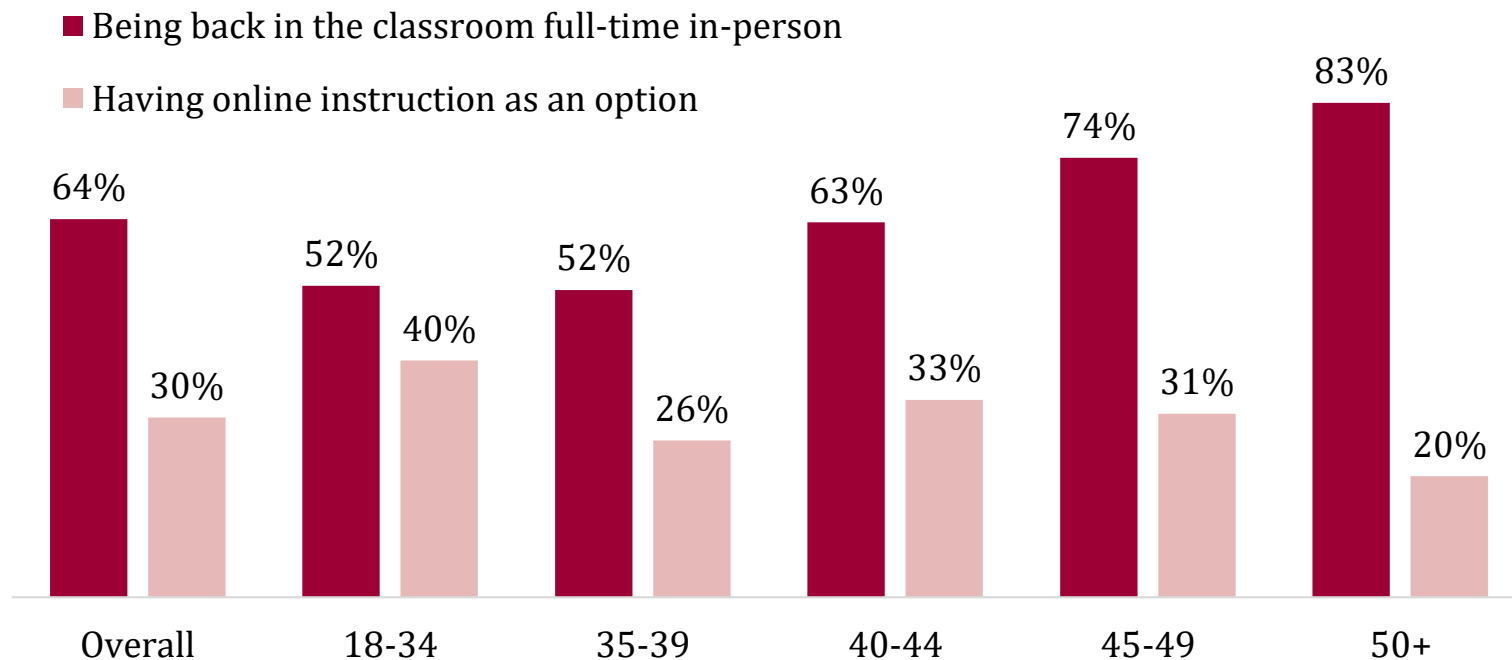
	Among those currently...			
	Overall	In person	Remote	Hybrid
Prefer in person	69%	91%	45%	56%
Prefer remote	9%	3%	29%	6%
Prefer hybrid	19%	5%	19%	36%

Younger parents open to online option

- Particularly younger parents see value in continuing to offer online instruction as an option.

Fewer young parents prefer full-time in-person instruction for next year

% of parents in each group who think each will be "very helpful" in catching up academically



What to incorporate from this year

- In response to an open-ended question of what changes from this year are worthwhile to keep, the most common reply was a desire to go back to normal or “nothing”.
- Personalization appears again as a theme.
- COVID safety also valued.

Parents want to go back to normal, but keep some parts of the past year

% of parents who say the following changes from this year should be kept in place for next year

Nothing / go back to normal	43%
Nothing / none / NA	22%
Happy with way things were before COVID	21%
Keep remote learning as an option	21%
School safety / COVID protocols	10%
Personalization / 1:1 learning	5%
Keep technology resources	4%
Mental health resources / personal care	4%
Small class sizes	4%
Increased communication from teachers / school	3%
Miscellaneous suggested changes	5%
Other	8%

Note: Totals add up to more than 100% since respondents could mention more than 1 topic.

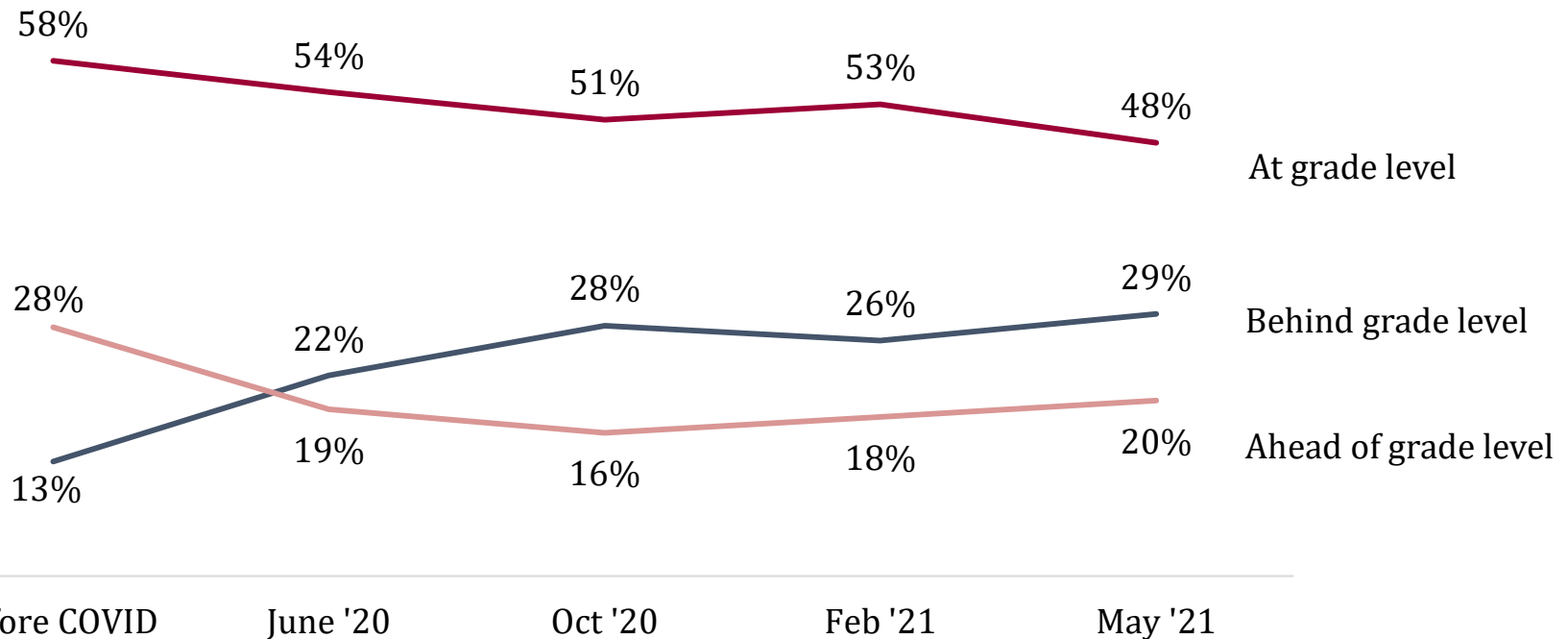
Q: What changes from this year, if any, do you think schools should keep in place for next year?

Achievement perceptions level off

- Since early this year, the percentage of parents who see their child as behind grade level has stayed mostly steady.
- This is perception data, and is based on expectations and comparisons parents bring to the topic.

Many parents see their child as behind grade level this year

% of parents who say their child is...

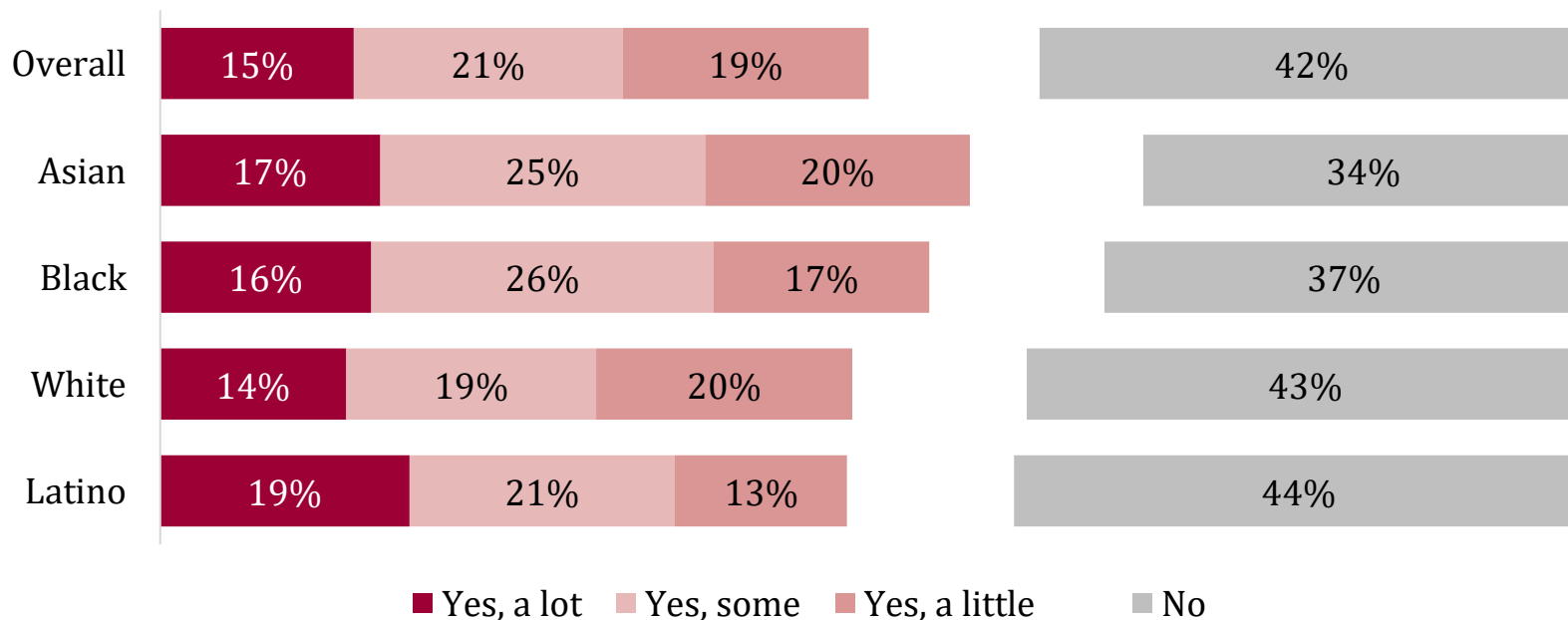


Catching up on academics

- This is another measure based on parent perception.
- Across racial and ethnic groups, a majority of parents think their child needs to catch up. Asian and Black parents are somewhat more likely to say so.

A majority of parents say their child needs to catch up academically

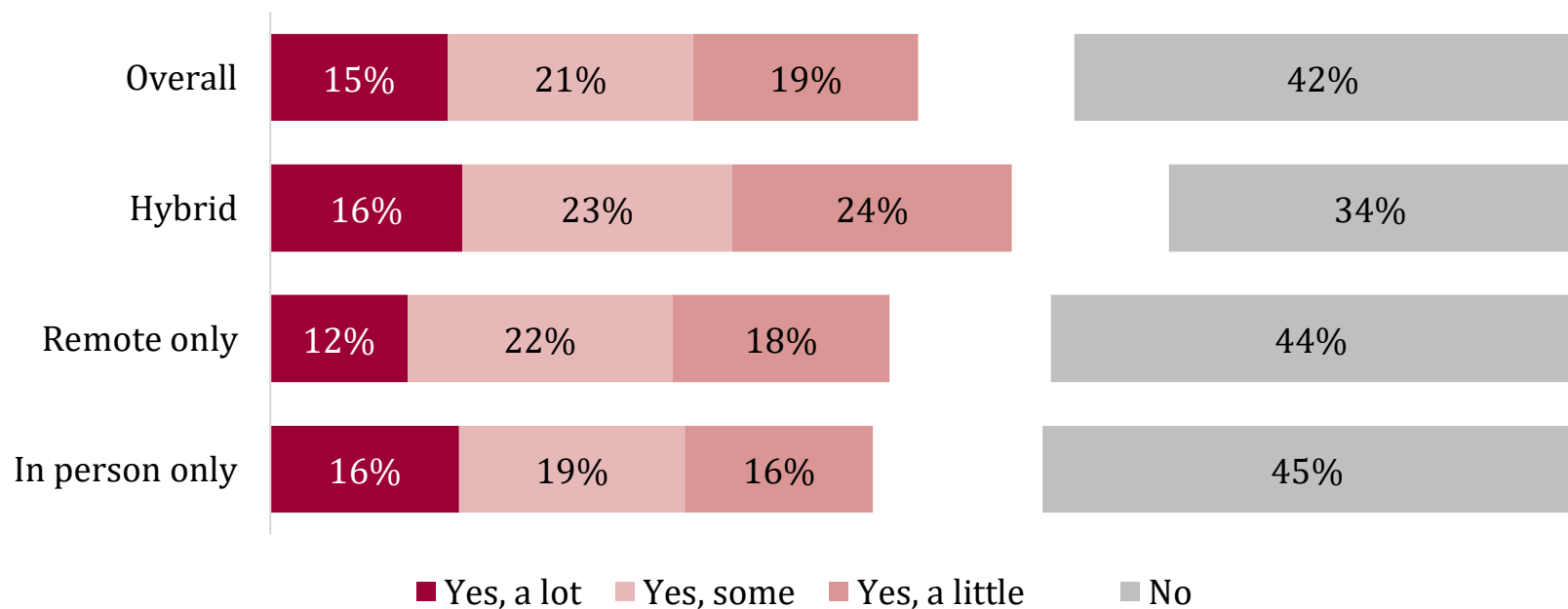
% of parents who say their child will need to catch up academically after this year



Catching up on academics by format

- Hybrid parents are the most likely to say their child will need to catch up academically.
- This echoes findings from previous waves where hybrid parents reported this year had the most negative impacts on their child.

Almost two-thirds of hybrid parents say their child will need to catch up academically
% of parents who say their child will need to catch up academically after this year



How to catch up? Get back in the classroom

- Nearly two-thirds of parents say being back in the classroom full-time will be “very helpful” to catch their child up academically.
- Approaches that emphasize personalization are viewed as more helpful.

Getting back in classroom, personalized learning viewed as most helpful to catch up

% of parents who say each of the following would be ____ helpful for their child to catch up academically

	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not too helpful	Not at all helpful
Being back in the classroom full-time	64%	25%	9%	1%
Frequent updates on child’s academics	63%	29%	5%	2%
Receiving add’l 1-on-1/small-group instruction	60%	30%	6%	3%
Smaller class sizes	56%	30%	7%	3%
Creating individualized education plan for child	48%	36%	8%	6%
Mental/emotional health support from school	42%	35%	12%	7%
Academic activities to do w/ child at home	36%	38%	14%	10%
Having online instruction as an option	30%	37%	17%	13%
Attending summer school	30%	31%	20%	14%

Help to catch up academically by race

- Black and Latino parents call a broader range of strategies “very helpful” to catch their child up academically.

Parents differ somewhat on what would be most helpful in catching up

% of parents who say each of the following would be “very helpful” to help their child catch up academically

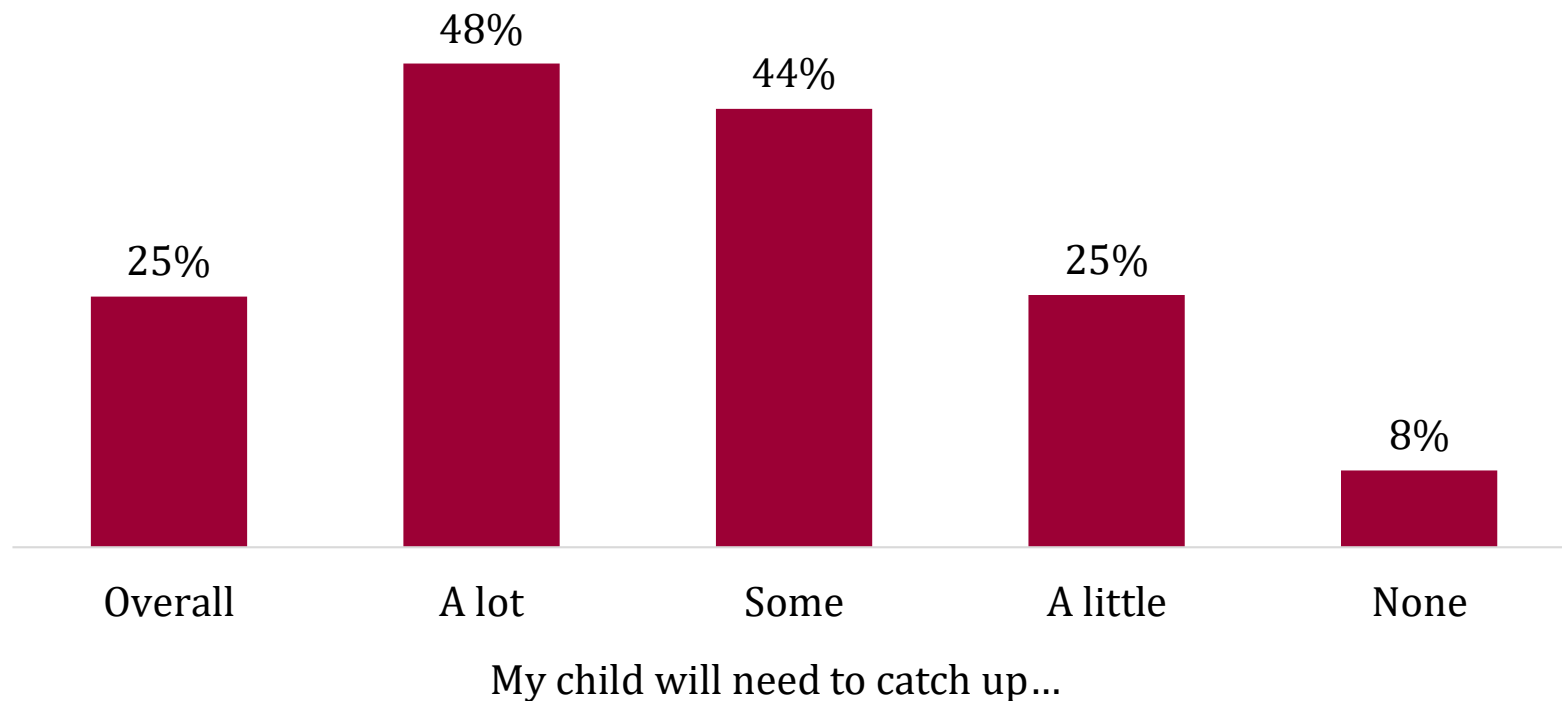
	Overall	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Being back in the classroom full-time in-person	64%	66%	58%	68%	47%
Providing frequent updates of how your child is doing academically	63%	63%	59%	63%	59%
Receiving additional one-on-one or small-group instruction	60%	59%	59%	69%	54%
Smaller class sizes	56%	55%	55%	60%	59%
Creating an individualized learning plan for my child	48%	46%	52%	59%	40%
Access to mental or emotional health support from school	42%	39%	47%	56%	47%
Providing academic activities to do with your child at home	36%	31%	50%	54%	40%
Having your child attend summer school	30%	26%	40%	43%	40%
Having online instruction as an option	30%	26%	39%	42%	37%

Catching up at summer school

- Parents who perceive the greatest need to catch up are the most likely to be planning for summer school.

Nearly half of parents who say their child has “a lot” of catching up are planning for summer school

% of parents who plan to send their child to summer school

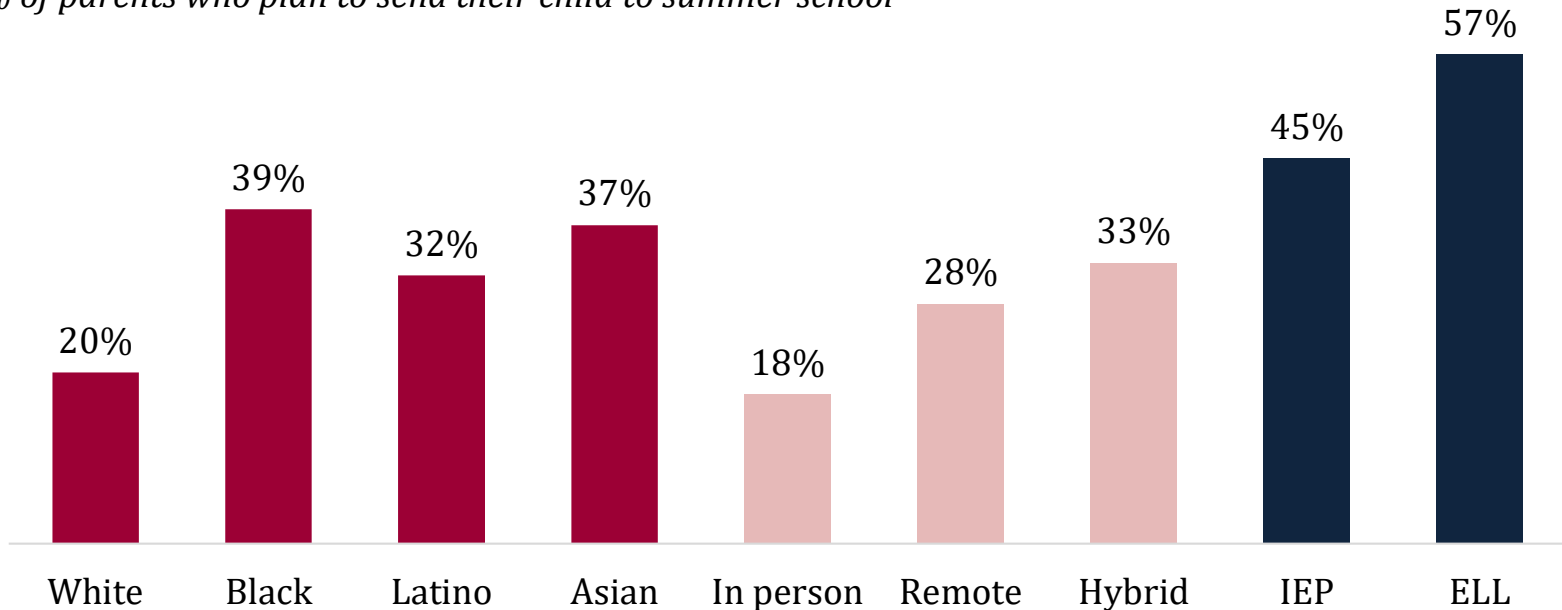


Who's planning for summer school?

- Parents of color, remote and hybrid parents, and those whose child has an IEP or is an English Language Learner are most likely to send their child to summer school.

Parents of IEP and ELL students most likely to plan for summer school

% of parents who plan to send their child to summer school



Why not summer school?

- By far the most common reason parents say they will not send their child to summer school is the perception that their child doesn't need it.
- Other reasons are far less common, although about one-in-ten parents say their child's school is not offering summer school or they are unsure if it is offered.

No need for summer school, many parents say
Among parents who are not planning to send their child to summer school, % who say it is because...

Child does not need it	58%
Child has other activities planned	11%
School not offering it / unsure if offered	11%
Child needs a break	6%
Travelling	5%
Inconvenient for work / family schedule	4%
COVID / safety concerns	3%
Unaffordable	2%
Child is graduating from high school	2%
Other / Unsure	4%

Funding priorities

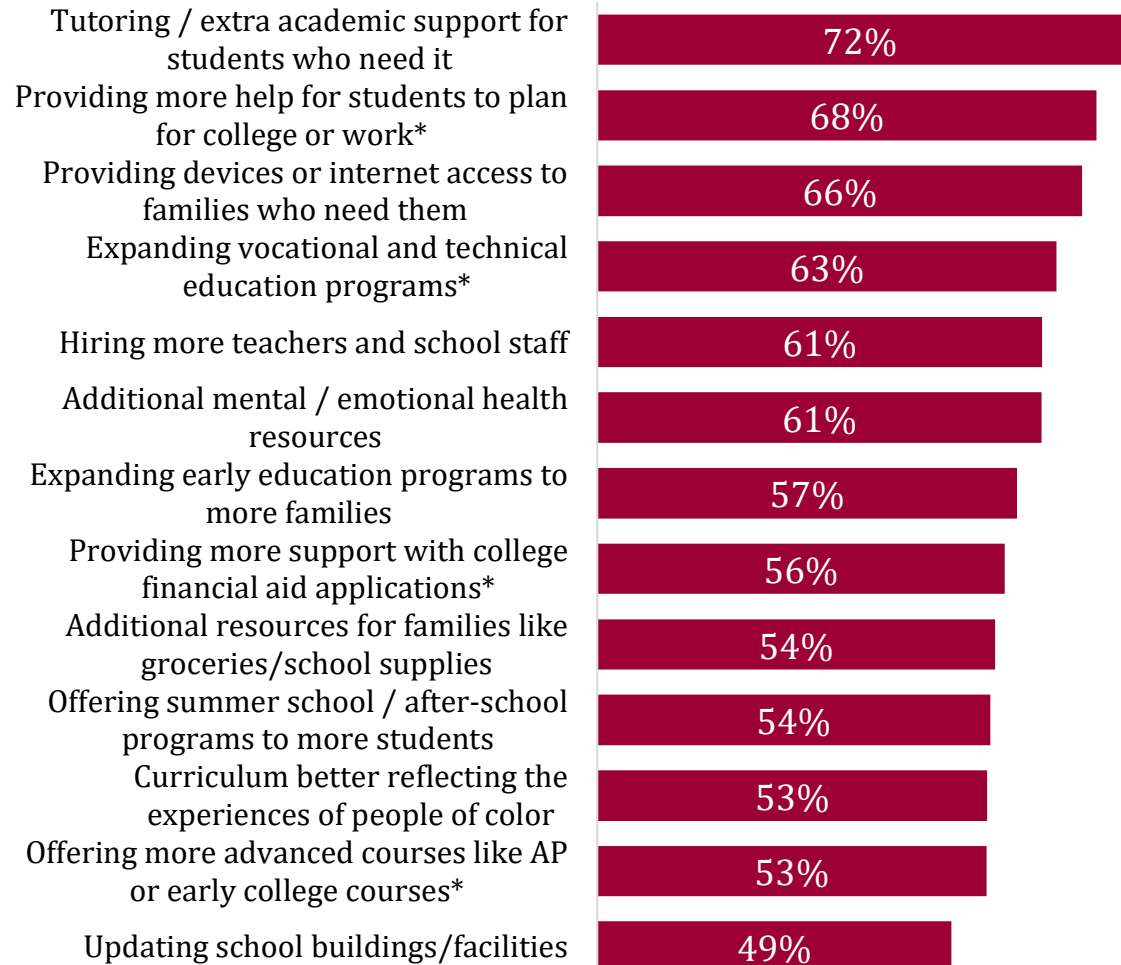
- A majority of parents call nearly every funding proposal a “major priority.”
- Nearly three-quarters of parents support tutoring and extra academic support, echoing their concerns over catching their child up.

**Item was only asked of parents with at least one child in high school.*

Q: As you may know, schools are expected to receive major additional funding through the American Rescue Plan to spend over the next few years. Regarding your child(ren)’s school district, how much of a priority should each of the following be for using the new funds?

Broad support for a wide range of funding priorities

% of parents who say each of the following should be a major priority for recovery funds



Race differences in funding priorities

- Black and Latino parents are more likely to call a variety of funding uses a “major priority.” Tutoring and help for students planning for college / work receives particular support.

Black, Latino parents call wider range of funding proposals a “major priority”

% of parents who say each of the following should be a “major priority” for recovery funds

	Overall	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Tutoring / extra academic support for students who need it	72%	71%	71%	82%	60%
Providing more help for students to plan for college or work*	68%	66%	72%	83%	68%
Providing devices or internet access to families who need them	66%	65%	68%	79%	58%
Expanding vocational and technical education programs*	63%	62%	67%	76%	49%
Hiring more teachers and school staff	61%	59%	61%	74%	60%
Additional mental / emotional health resources	61%	59%	65%	74%	54%
Expanding early education programs to more families	57%	55%	65%	70%	49%
Providing more support with college financial aid applications*	56%	53%	64%	69%	63%
Additional resources for families like groceries/school supplies	54%	52%	57%	69%	44%
Offering summer school / after-school programs to more students	54%	51%	63%	72%	45%
Curriculum better reflecting the experiences of people of color	53%	51%	64%	63%	50%
Offering more advanced courses like AP or early college courses*	53%	50%	59%	73%	54%
Updating school buildings/facilities	49%	47%	46%	64%	41%

Income differences in funding priorities

- Lower-income parents are more likely to support additional resources for families, especially non-traditional programs like grocery assistance.

Lower-income parents support broader range of funding priorities

% of parents who say each of the following should be a "major priority" for recovery funds

	Overall	<\$50K	\$50K - <\$75K	\$75K - <\$100K	\$100K+
Tutoring / extra academic support for students who need it	72%	79%	70%	71%	68%
Providing more help for students to plan for college or work*	68%	78%	72%	61%	62%
Providing devices or internet access to families who need them	66%	75%	65%	56%	66%
Expanding vocational and technical education programs*	63%	75%	60%	71%	55%
Hiring more teachers and school staff	61%	67%	59%	53%	61%
Additional mental / emotional health resources	61%	69%	59%	59%	57%
Expanding early education programs to more families	57%	70%	56%	55%	52%
Providing more support with college financial aid applications*	56%	67%	64%	57%	46%
Additional resources for families like groceries/school supplies	54%	70%	55%	49%	49%
Offering summer school / after-school programs to more students	54%	64%	55%	48%	49%
Curriculum better reflecting the experiences of people of color	53%	57%	51%	53%	53%
Offering more advanced courses like AP or early college courses*	53%	64%	40%	54%	50%
Updating school buildings/facilities	49%	50%	47%	53%	46%

School communication preferences

- Email is viewed as most effective way to receive school info.
- Younger/parents of color favor other modes as well.

Email most effective school comm. mode, though parents identify a range of options

% of parents who say _____ has been the most effective way to receive school information this year

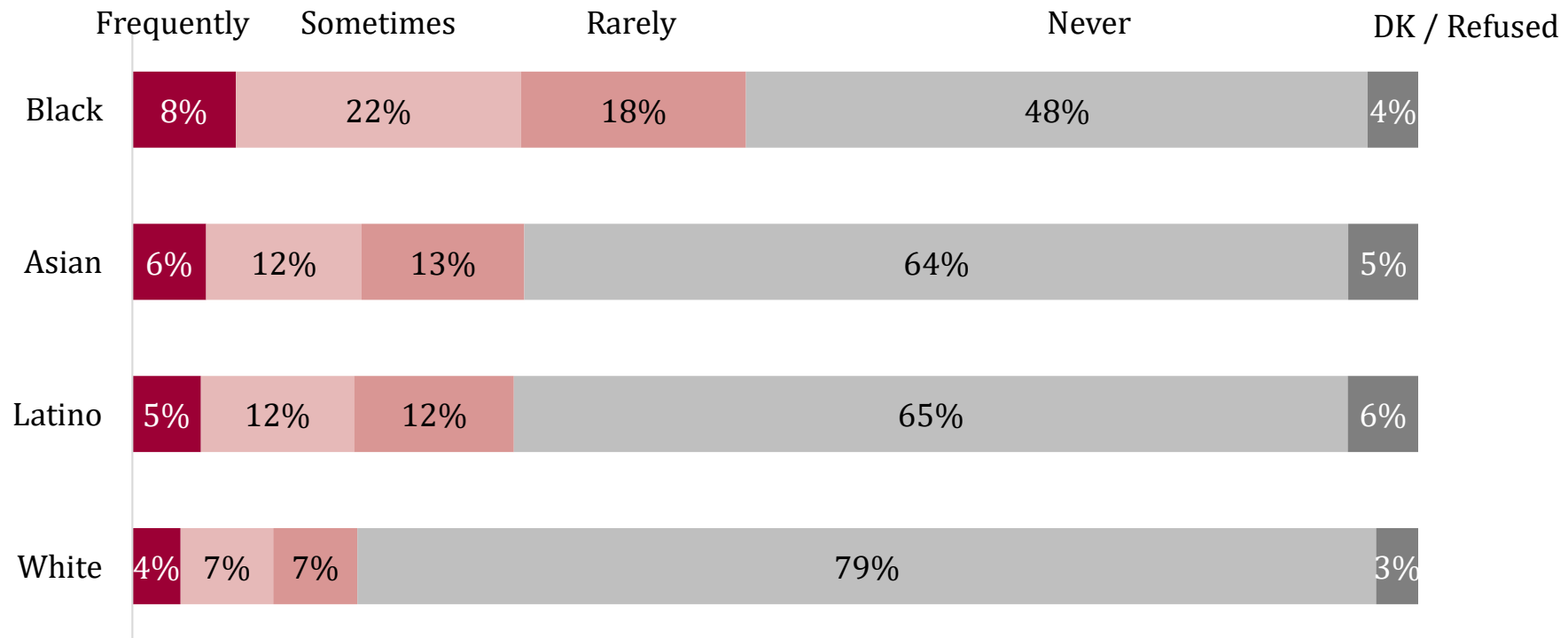
	Overall	White		Black		Latino		Asian	
		<40	40+	<40	40+	<40	40+	<40	40+
Emails	60%	47%	70%	37%	50%	48%	60%	46%	65%
Phone calls	12%	17%	7%	19%	18%	20%	14%	21%	15%
Online learning platforms like Google Classroom	11%	19%	7%	26%	11%	9%	9%	17%	9%
Text messages	10%	11%	8%	13%	16%	15%	12%	8%	6%
Conversations with my child	5%	4%	6%	4%	5%	5%	4%	4%	4%

Equal treatment

- Black parents are the most likely to say their child has been treated unfairly at school because of their race or ethnicity.

Parents of color more likely to say their child is treated unfairly

% of parents who say their child has _____ been treated unfairly at school because of their race or ethnicity

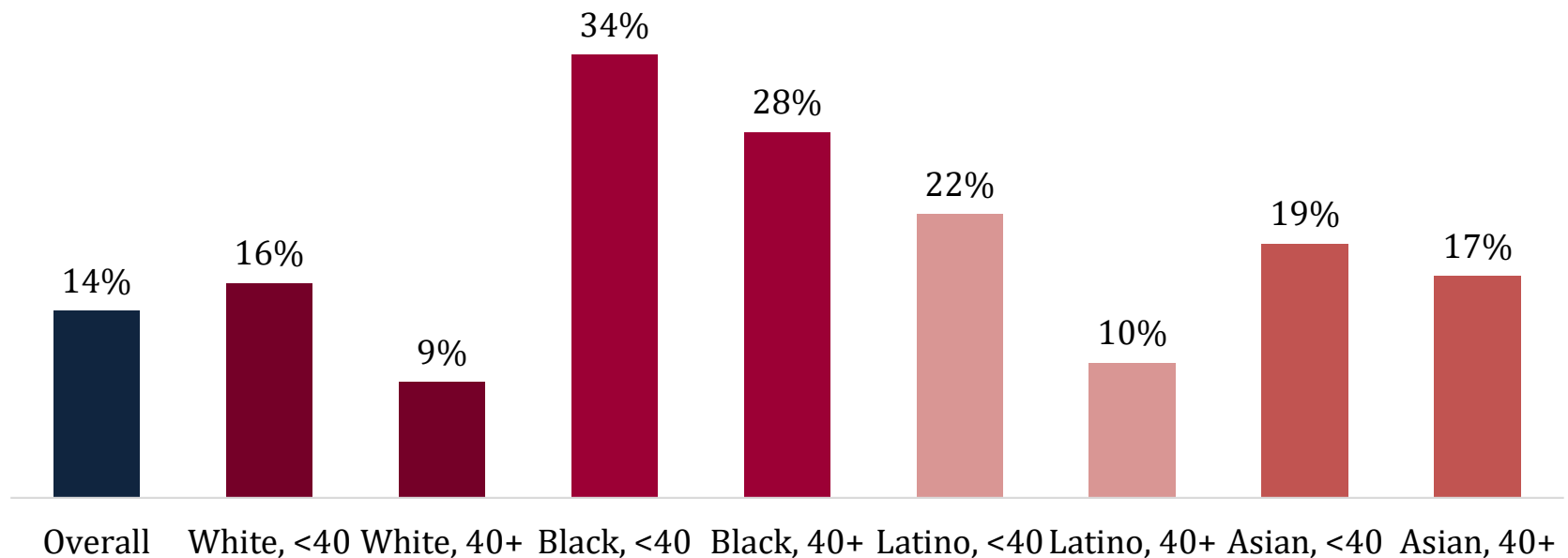


More younger parents notice unfair treatment

- Younger parents – especially younger parents of color – are more likely to say their child has been treated unfairly at school.

More younger Black parents say their child has been treated unfairly

% of parents who say their child has frequently/sometimes been treated unfairly at school because of their race or ethnicity

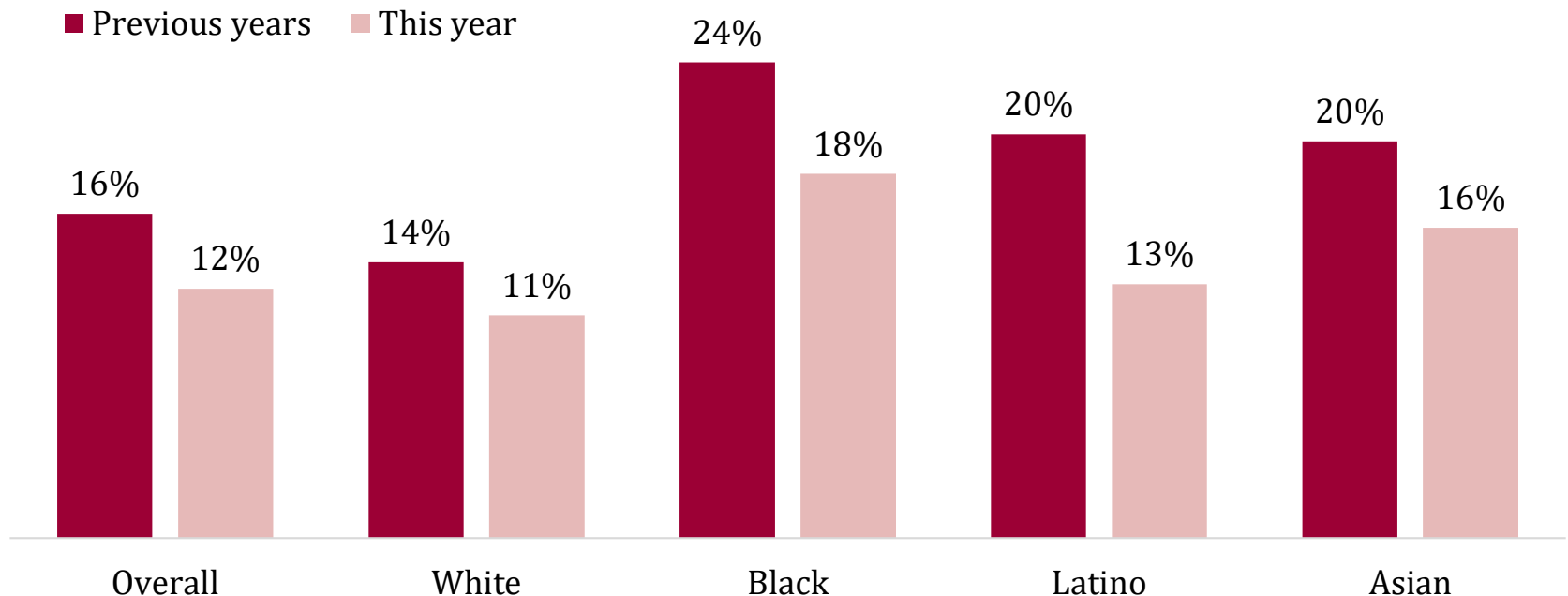


Disciplinary actions

- Black and Latino parents report the biggest drops in disciplinary action taken against their child between last year and this year. However, Black and Asian parents are still more likely to say their child has been disciplined.

Black parents still most likely to say their child is disciplined at school

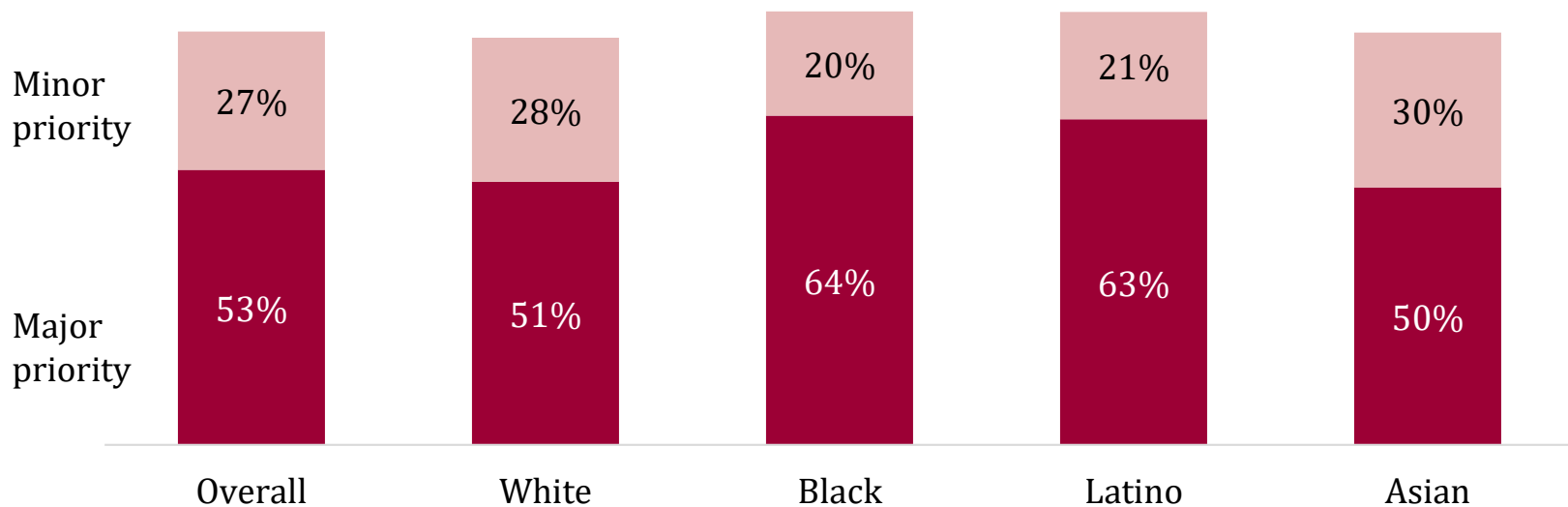
% of parents who say their child was frequently or sometimes disciplined in previous years vs. this year



Modifying curriculum

- Black and Latino parents are more likely to say modifying the school curriculum to better reflect the experiences and accomplishments of people of color is a “major” priority.
- Across racial and ethnic groups, roughly 80% call it a major/minor priority.

Black, Latino parents more likely to call for modifying curriculum to better reflect people of color
% of parents who say each of the following should be a “major priority” for recovery funds



Thank you!

- Results and a recording of today's presentation are available at massincpolling.com/education
- Please email any questions or comments to mduggan@massincpolling.com



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