



# ANNUAL POLL 2024

*Parents and Guardians'  
Opinions on K-12  
Public Education in  
New Orleans*

**The Cowen Institute**  
Poll Policy Brief No. 2  
February 2024

# OVERVIEW

The Cowen Institute has conducted annual polls on perceptions of public education in New Orleans since 2007. Our polls are designed to provide insight into how parents, guardians, and the general public view New Orleans' highly decentralized K-12 public education system. Each year, we ask some new questions about the most relevant and pressing issues facing educators and families. We also repeat questions from our previous polls to assess how opinions change over time on a few key topics.

We now release the poll findings in a series of briefs at the start of each year. This is the second of two briefs that will be released in 2024 with results from polling conducted in the fall of 2023. We present the data in this way to make it more accessible and understandable for the general public — the briefs allow us to group the findings by topic, enabling us to surface trends about particular areas of the city's education system.

To capture the experiences and attitudes of a wide range of parents, as we have done since 2020, we polled 1,000 public and private school parents and guardians in Orleans Parish, as well as a small number who homeschool their children.



**1,000**

**90%**

**10%**

**OCTOBER  
16-26, 2023**

**Orleans Parish  
Parents and  
Guardians Polled**

**Reached via  
Cell Phone**

**Reached via  
Landline**

**Polling Conducted  
by LJR Custom  
Strategies**

## METHODOLOGY

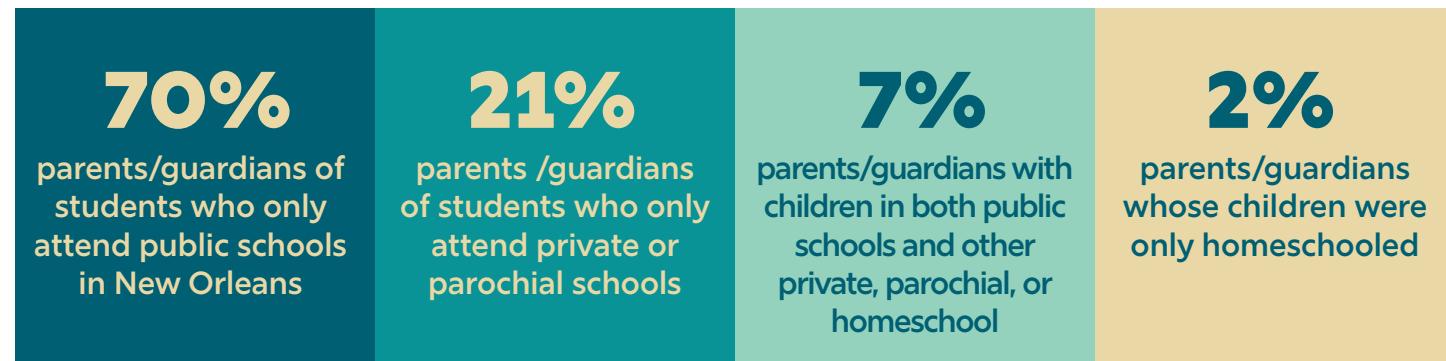
This is the 14th opinion poll on public education in New Orleans published by the Cowen Institute since 2007. The survey items were developed by the Cowen Institute in consultation with LJR Custom Strategies, a strategic research and consulting firm led by Principal Jennifer Johnson. LJR has led our polling over the past six years.

For this poll, LJR surveyed 1,000 adults who reside in Orleans Parish and are the parent/guardian/responsible party for one or more children who currently reside in their household and attend a K-12 school or are homeschooled. The poll was conducted from October 16-26, 2023, via landline and cell phone, with 90% of respondents reached by cell phone and 10% reached by landline. Findings applying to the 1,000 person sample are subject to a sampling error of plus or minus 3.1%; subgroups of the sample are subject to error of up to plus or minus 10%. Please note that when percentages in responses do not add up to 100%, it's due to rounding.

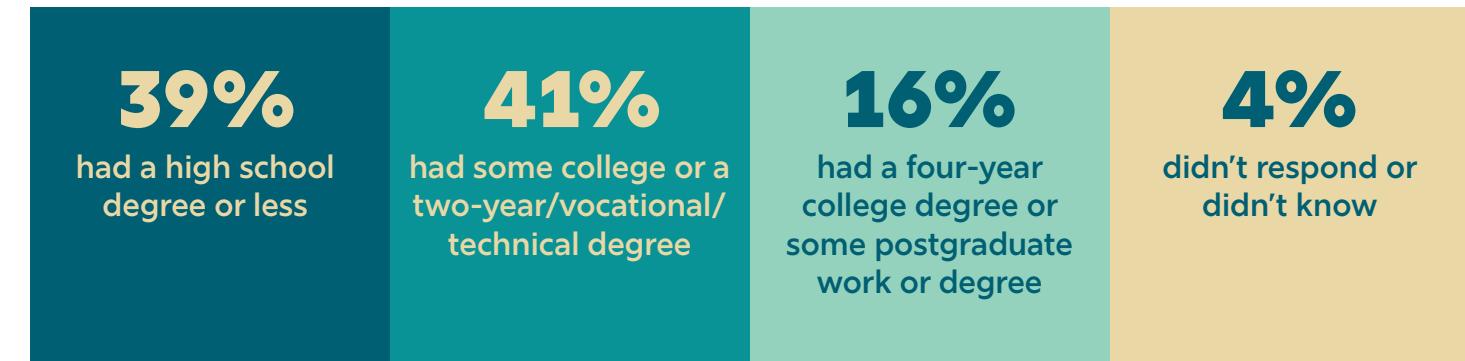
# DEMOGRAPHICS

Of those polled, our respondents had the following characteristics:

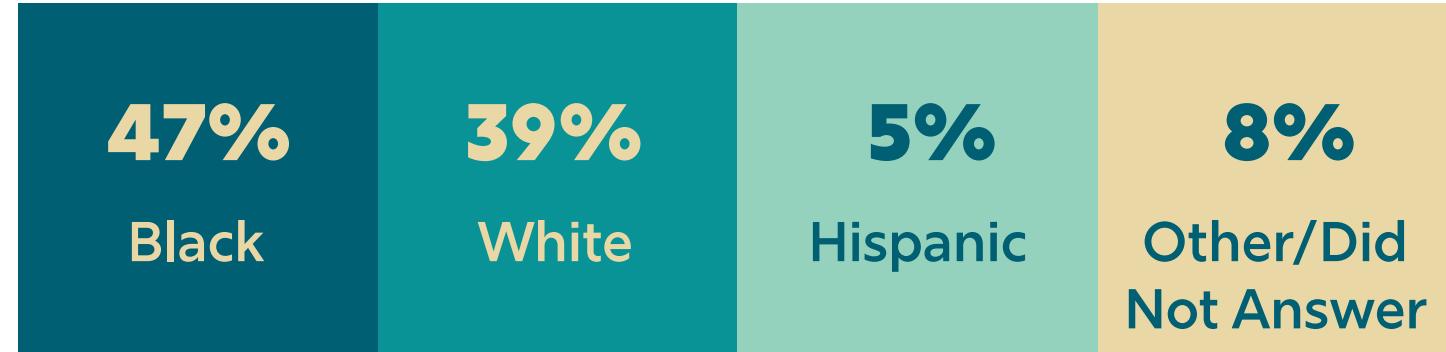
## SCHOOL TYPE



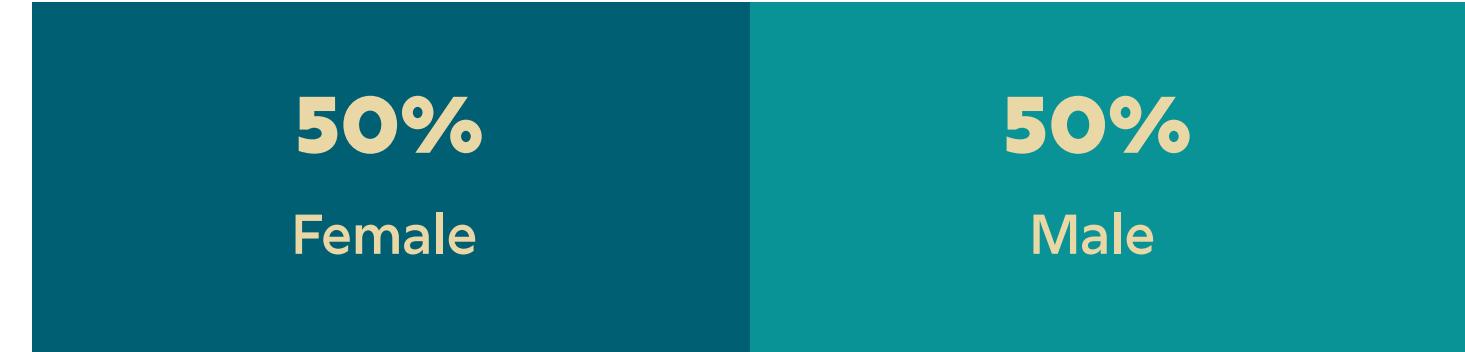
## EDUCATION LEVEL



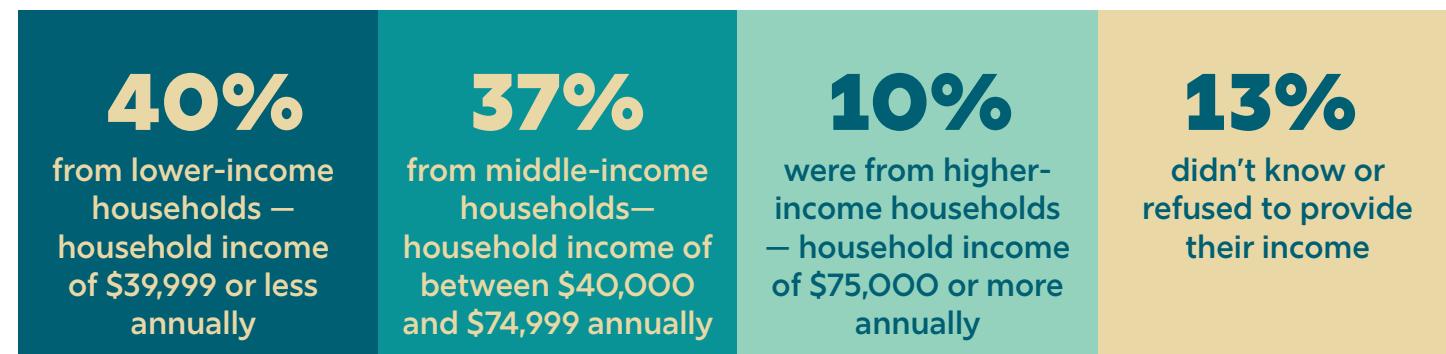
## RACE



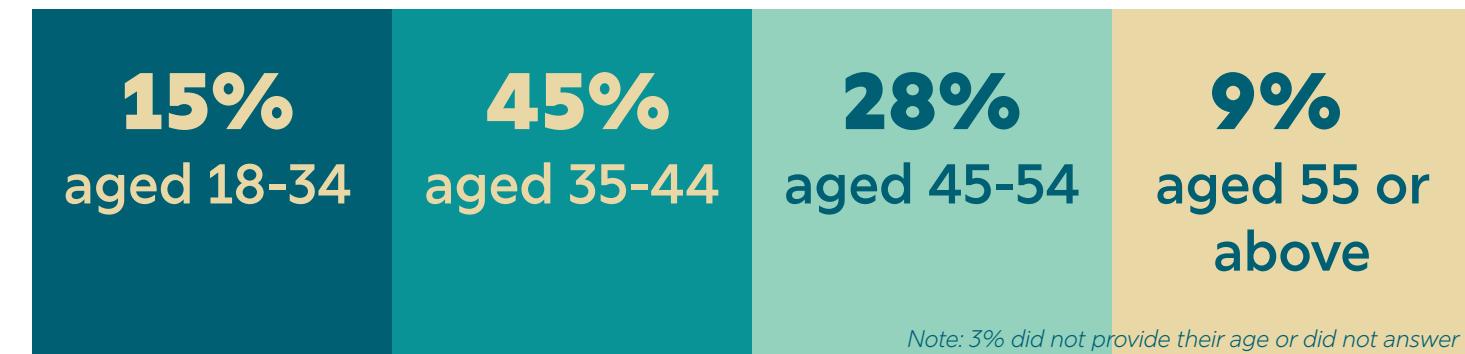
## GENDER



## INCOME LEVEL



## AGE



# || KEY FINDINGS



**Enrollment:** Though the city's public education system is experiencing a notable decline in enrollment, respondents did not express high levels of concern about this shift.



**Career and technical education:** Respondents showed high levels of interest in establishing and promoting career and technical courses that lead to high paying jobs in New Orleans high schools, but many currently lack information about such offerings.



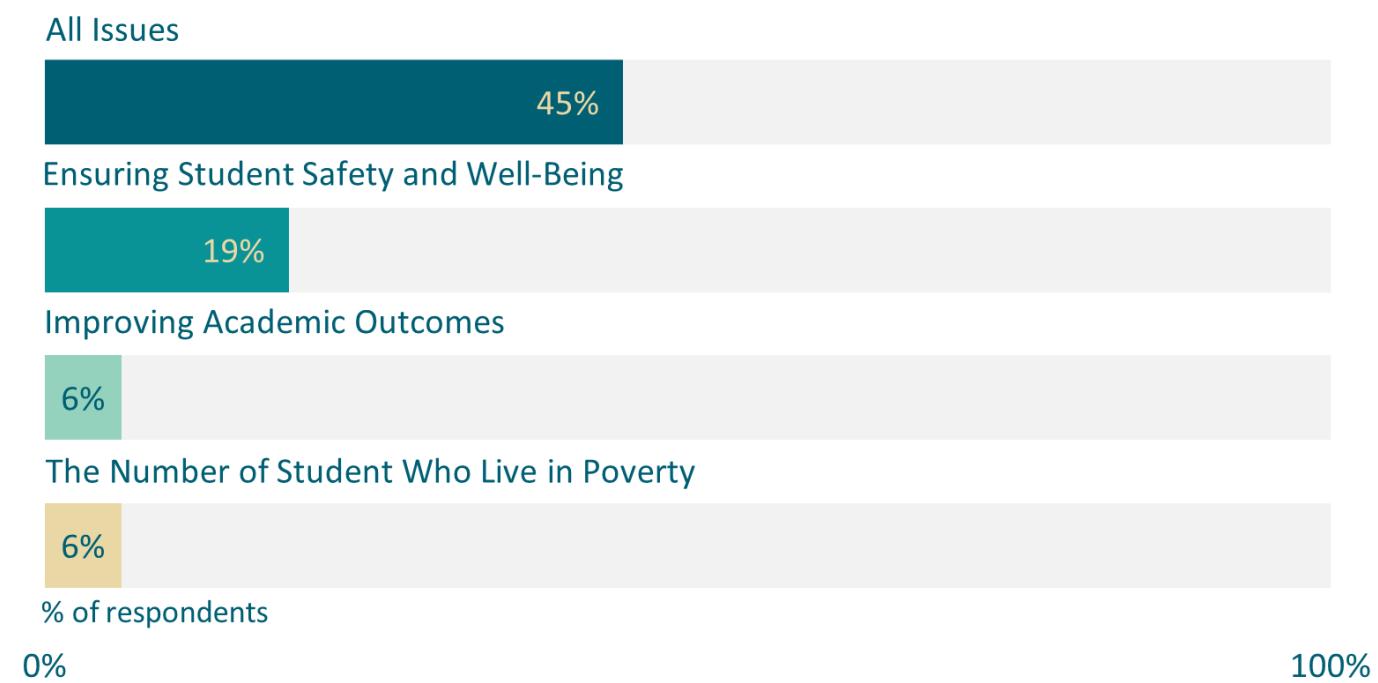
# MOST PRESSING ISSUE

We wanted to assess what parents and guardians felt was the most important issue that needed to be addressed in public education in New Orleans. We provided a list of options and asked them to choose what they believed was the most pressing issue.

A plurality of respondents could not choose just one issue — 45% said that all the issues we provided were pressing. An additional 19% of respondents said “ensuring student safety and well-being” was the most pressing issue, followed by “improving academic outcomes”, “the number of students who live in poverty”, and “lack of diversity at high performing schools”, which all were cited by 6% of respondents.

Broken down by race, 25% of Hispanic respondents identified student safety as the most pressing issue, compared to 21% of White respondents, and 16% of Black respondents. A majority of Black respondents, 50%, said all of the issues were the most pressing, compared to 44% of White respondents, and 27% of Hispanic respondents.

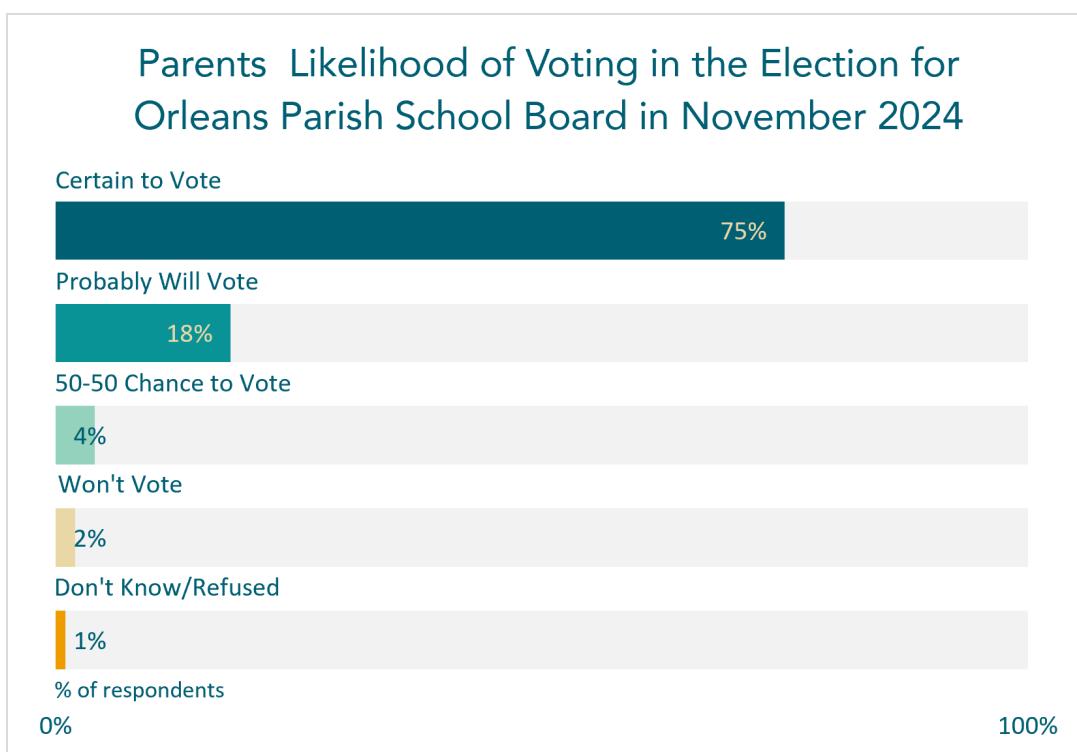
## The Most Current Pressing Issue in K-12 Public Education in New Orleans



# SCHOOL BOARD

This year, New Orleans' voters will have the opportunity to vote in NOLA-PS School Board elections (also referred to as OPSB). Among respondents, 75% said they were certain they would vote in the election and another 18% said they would probably vote, compared to just 2% who said they wouldn't vote.

However, respondents seemed either unwilling to say whether they knew the Board member who currently represents their district or did not know the Board member — 92% said they did not know or refused to answer the question, compared to just 7% who named a school board member (we assessed whether they had named a current school board member, but not whether that member represented the district in which the respondent actually lived).



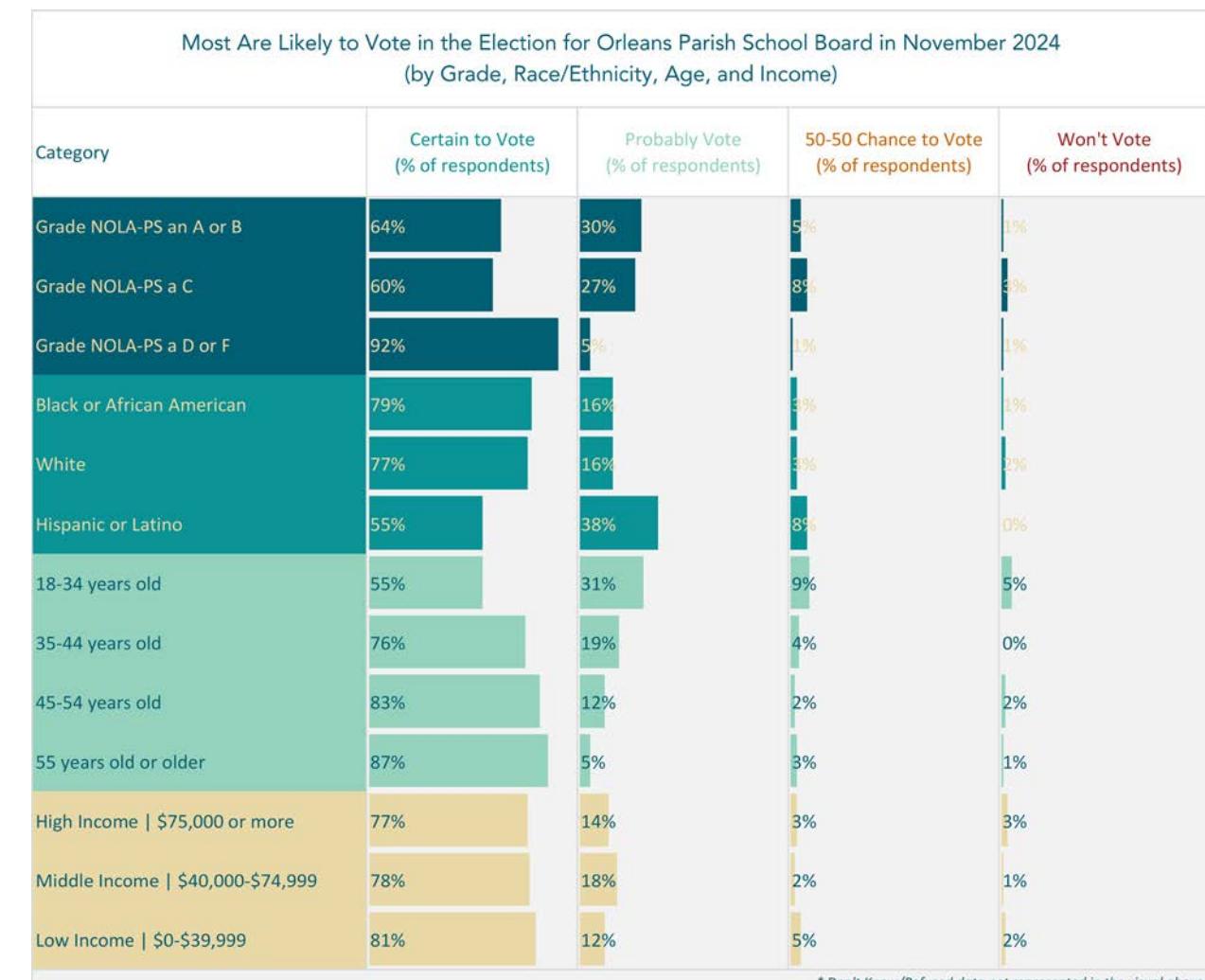
## Subgroup Breakdown

**Perceptions of New Orleans' education:** Respondents who held more negative perceptions of the public education system in New Orleans were the most likely to say they were certain to vote in next year's elections: 92% of those who gave the public education system a D or F grade said they would certainly vote, compared to 60% of those who gave the system a C, and 64% who gave it an A or B grade.

**Race:** Black and White respondents had similar rates of stating they would certainly vote (79% and 77%, respectively), while Hispanic respondents were far less likely to say they would vote (55% said they were certain and 38% said it was probable they would).

**Age:** The older the respondent, the more certain they said they would be to vote: 87% of respondents aged 55 or older said they were certain to vote, compared to 55% of respondents aged 18 to 34.

**Income:** Respondents across all income brackets expressed similar levels of certainty that they would vote (approximately 80% for all).



# COMMON APPLICATION

New Orleans Public Schools has a unique application system called the New Orleans Common Application, also known as NCAP (NCAP has formerly been referred to as OneApp and EnrollINOLA). NOLA-PS has open enrollment, meaning that families can apply to and students can attend almost any school in the city. NCAP is the system by which parents and families apply to NOLA-PS schools — participants rank their choices and the district then assigns students to a school based on an algorithm that factors in such considerations as whether a sibling attends the school as well and how close the family lives to the school, amongst other indicators.

Over the past several polls, we have assessed parents and guardians' satisfaction with the NCAP process. This year, we found that favorability towards NCAP dropped, echoing the negativity we saw in responses across the entire poll. While the percentage of respondents who had very or somewhat positive views of NCAP this year was similar to last year (25% to 22%), the percentage who had somewhat or very negative views of NCAP rose dramatically (42% in 2023 compared to 19% in 2022).

However, there is an important caveat with this data: The negative perceptions were largely driven by parents with a student in a NOLA-PS school who had not completed the NCAP process: 70% of such respondents had negative perceptions. Comparatively, among the parents and guardians who had filled out an NCAP, more had positive views than negative ones — 37% expressed somewhat or very positive views, compared to 27% who had somewhat or very negative ones.

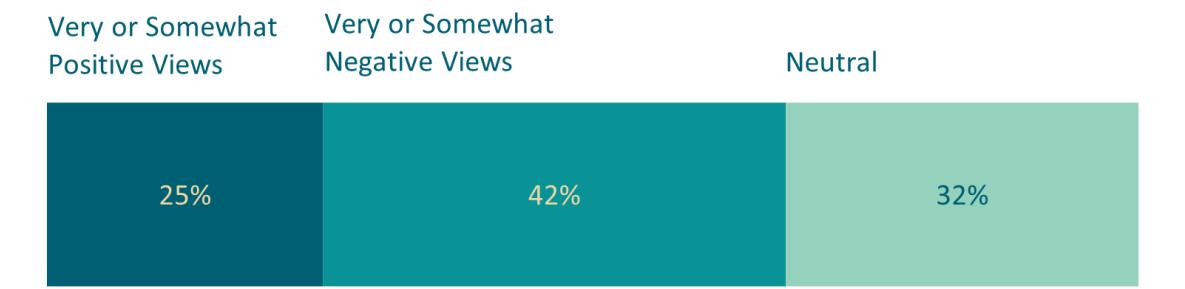
## Subgroup Breakdown

**Multiple schools:** Parents and guardians with children in multiple schools were more favorable toward NCAP than those with children in only one school: 38% of respondents with children in multiple NOLA-PS schools had very or somewhat positive views, compared to 29% with negative views; comparatively, 49% of respondents with a student in a single NOLA-PS school had negative views, compared to 21% who had positive ones.

**Race:** Black and White respondents had similarly negative views to NCAP (45% and 47% negative, respectively), but slightly more White respondents had positive views than Black respondents (27% positive to 18%, respectively); 41% of Hispanic respondents had positive views.

**Income:** Middle and lower income respondents were far more negative than those from wealthier households: 48% of lower income and 49% of middle income respondents had negative perceptions, compared to 27% of higher income respondents.

## Parents' Satisfaction with the NCAP Process for Those who Have a NOLA-PS Student



\* Don't Recognize data not represented

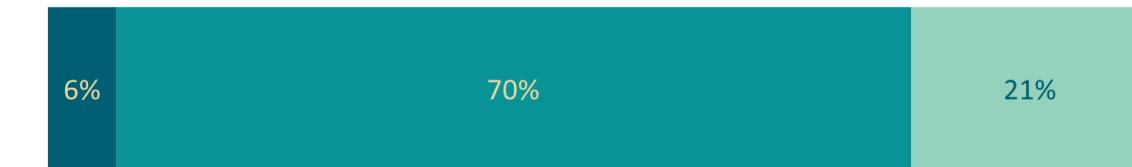
## Parents' Satisfaction with the NCAP Process (by Completion)

■ Very or Somewhat Positive Views ■ Very or Somewhat Negative Views ■ Neutral

### Parents Completed NCAP



### Parents Did Not Complete NCAP



\* Don't Recognize data not represented

# NCAP EXPERIENCE

61% of the parents and guardians we surveyed with a student in a NOLA-PS school had completed the NCAP. 76% of parents and guardians of K-5 students had completed NCAP, which was far higher than parents and guardians of 6-8 (49%) and 9-12 (55%) grade students. Interestingly, higher income respondents had completed the NCAP at notably higher levels than middle and lower income respondents — 85% of higher income respondents had completed the NCAP, compared to 65% of middle income, and 47% of lower income respondents. Hispanic (92%) and White (67%) respondents were also more likely to have completed the NCAP than Black respondents (49%).

Notably, a majority of respondents, 51%, who completed the NCAP stated they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the schools where NCAP had placed their children, compared to 46% of respondents who stated they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their placement. This was a shift from last year, when just 38% of parents expressed satisfaction and 54% expressed dissatisfaction.

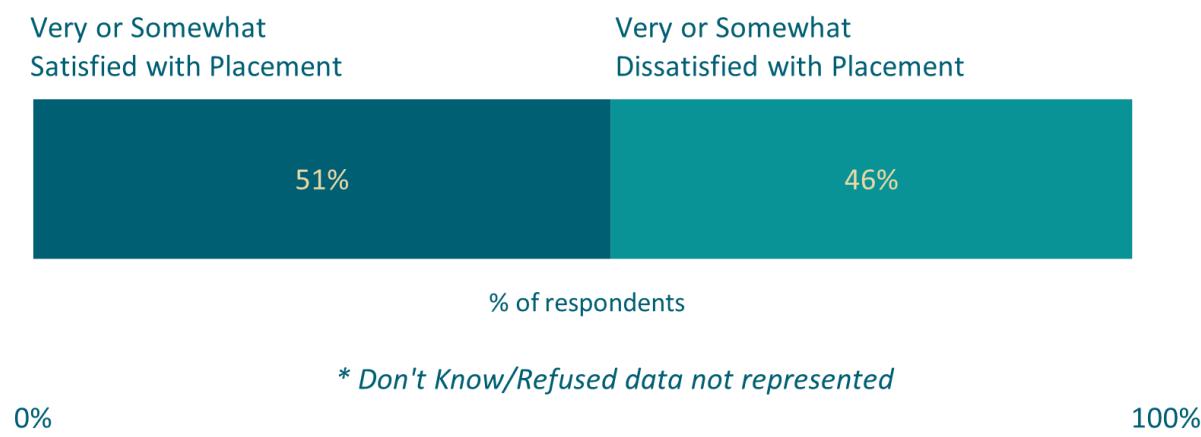
However, just 30% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "NCAP is easy to use", compared to 45% who disagreed or strongly disagreed — last year, 31% expressed agreement and 64% expressed disagreement. It should be noted however, respondents who had actually completed NCAP were more likely to say that NCAP was easy to use, with 45% agreeing with the statement (51% disagreed), while only 6% of respondents who had not completed NCAP thought it was easy to use.

## Subgroup Breakdown

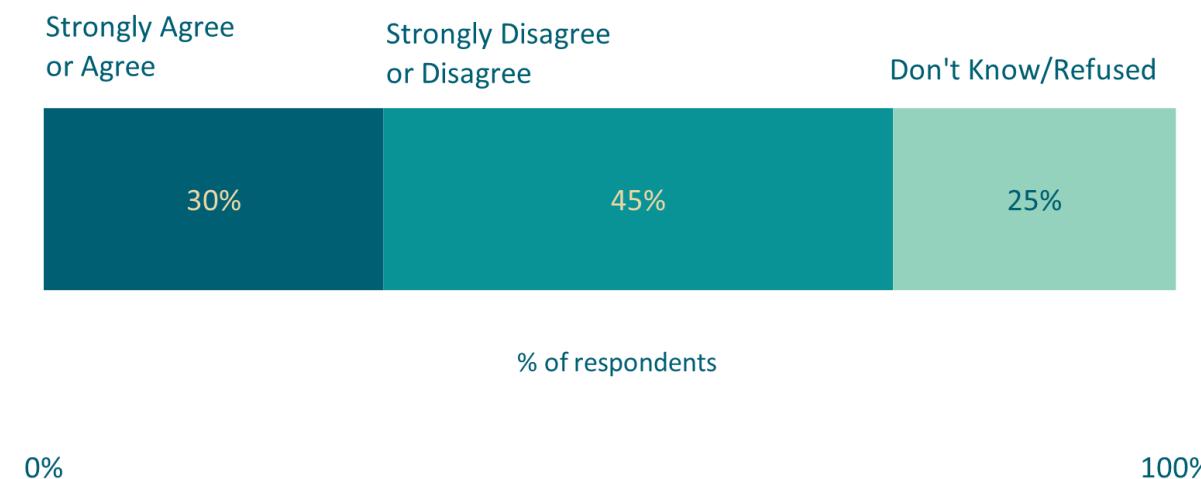
**Income:** Wealthier respondents had the lowest satisfaction rates of all income brackets, with 67% expressing dissatisfaction with their placement, compared to 50% of all other respondents.

**Race:** White and Black respondents had similar response rates, with around 50% expressing satisfaction and 50% expressing dissatisfaction. Hispanic respondents had slightly higher rates of dissatisfaction, at 53%.

### Parents' Satisfaction with the Children's School Placement for Those who Completed the NCAP Process



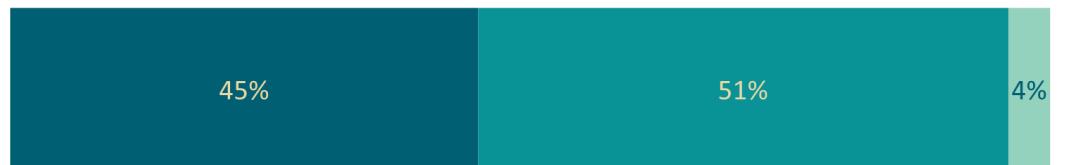
### Overall Parents' Level of Agreement with the Statement "NCAP is Easy to Use"



Parents' Level of Agreement with the Statement  
"NCAP is Easy to Use"  
(by Completion of NCAP Process)

■ Strongly Agree and Agree ■ Strongly Disagree and Disagree ■ Don't Know/Refused

Parents Completed NCAP



Parents Did Not Completed NCAP

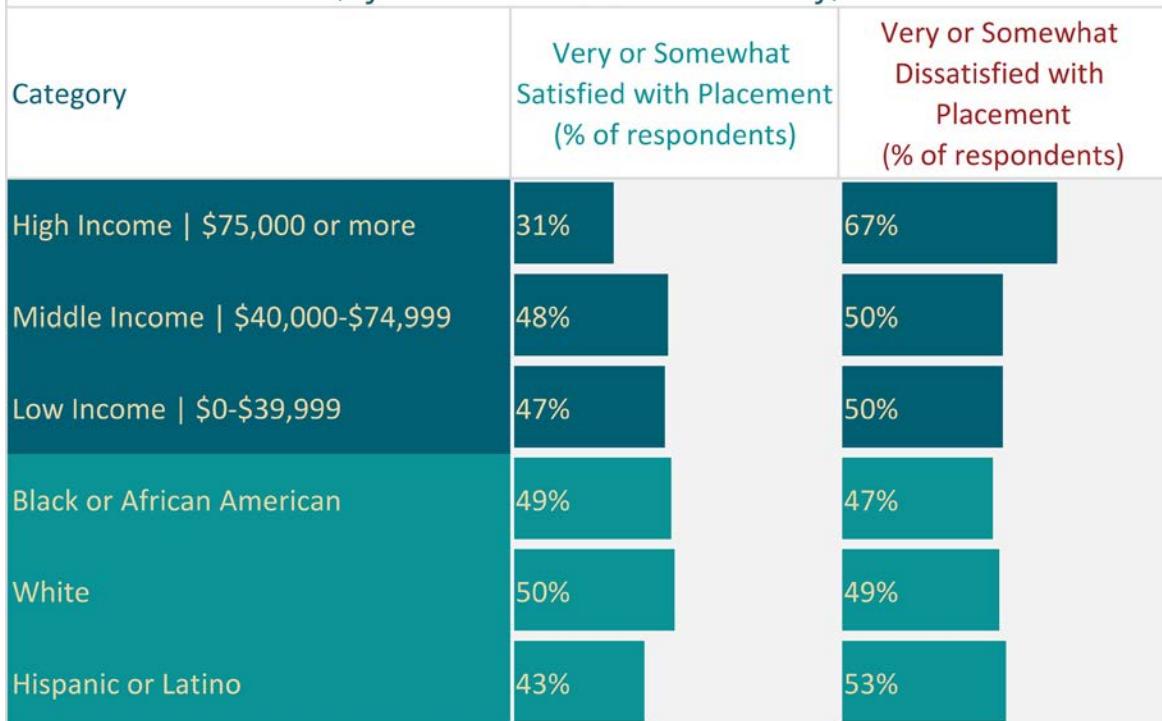


% of respondents

0%

100%

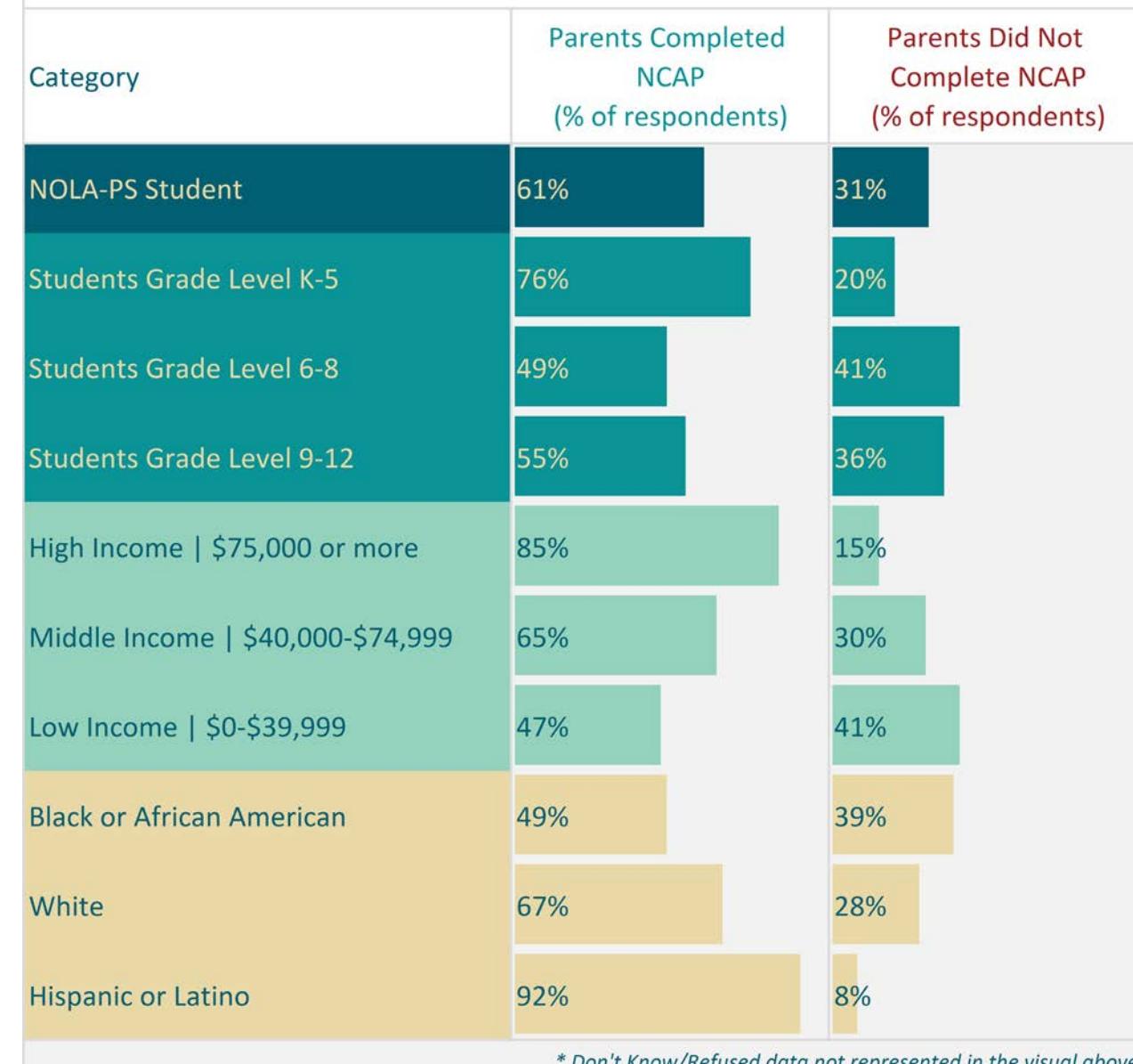
Parents' Satisfaction with the Children's School Placement for Those who Completed the NCAP Process  
(by Income and Race/Ethnicity)



\* Don't Know/Refused data not represented in the visual above

Parents' Completion of the NCAP

(by Student Type, Student Grade Level, Income, and Race/Ethnicity)



\* Don't Know/Refused data not represented in the visual above

# III SPECIFIC ISSUES

We also asked parents and guardians how concerned they were about certain issues impacting K-12 public education in the city currently. Notably, responses varied depending on the socio-economic status of the respondents.

## IMPACT OF COMMUNITY VIOLENCE ON STUDENTS

93% of all respondents say the impact of community violence on students concerns them a lot. More than 90% of lower and middle income respondents expressed this concern, compared to 87% of higher income respondents.

Crime was consistently stated as a top concern for respondents regardless of their race, with more than 90% of Black (95%), White (91%), and Hispanic (92%) respondents naming it as a concern.

## POVERTY

This same gap between higher and lower income respondents appeared when we asked about their concern for the impact of poverty on education and students in the city. Overall, 89% of all respondents said it was a major concern, but the percentage of respondents citing this concern dropped from 92% among those from lower income households to 84% among those from higher income households.

93% of Black respondents cited poverty as a concern compared to 85% of White respondents.

## HIRING AND RETAINING QUALITY TEACHERS

Conversely, when it came to the issue of hiring and retaining quality teachers in the city, parents and guardians from higher income households were more likely to name this as a concern than those from lower income households. Overall, 64% of respondents stated hiring and keeping quality teachers was a concern for them. But 80% of higher income respondents said this was a concern, compared to 53% of lower-income respondents.

Responses varied greatly along racial lines on this issue, with Hispanic respondents naming it as a concern most frequently, at 83%, compared to 70% of White and 54% of Black respondents.

## DISTANCE CHILDREN TRAVEL TO SCHOOL

Parents and guardians of NOLA-PS students from higher income households were also more likely to cite the distance children travel to school as a major concern than parents and guardians from lower income households. Overall, 54% of respondents named this topic as a concern, but 61% of higher income respondents cited it, compared to 52% of middle and lower income respondents.

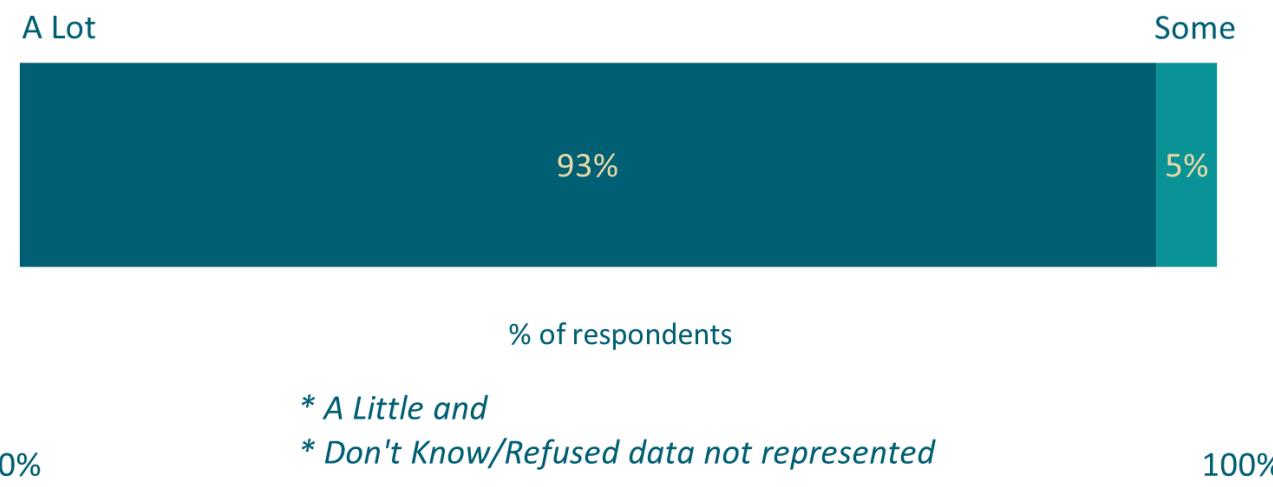
A majority of both White (52%) and Black (51%) respondents named distance traveled to school as a concern, but it was a far larger concern for Hispanic respondents (73%).

## IMPACT OF LOWER PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

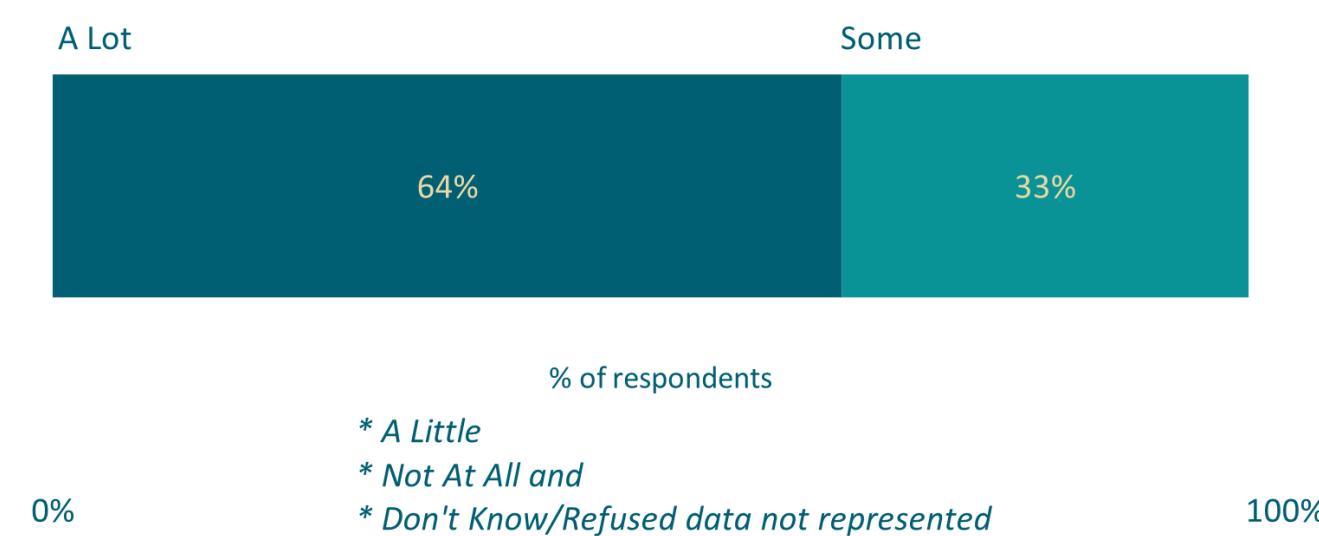
Public school enrollment has been dropping in NOLA-PS schools over the past few years. We asked parents and guardians whether this concerned them. We found a large difference in how concerning respondents viewed the decreasing enrollment in public schools depending on their income. Just 39% of all respondents cited this as a concern. However, 56% of higher income respondents did so, which was far higher than the 34% of lower income respondents who named it as an issue.

Only 36% of White and 35% of Black respondents viewed declining public school enrollment as a top concern, while 72% of Hispanic respondents cited it.

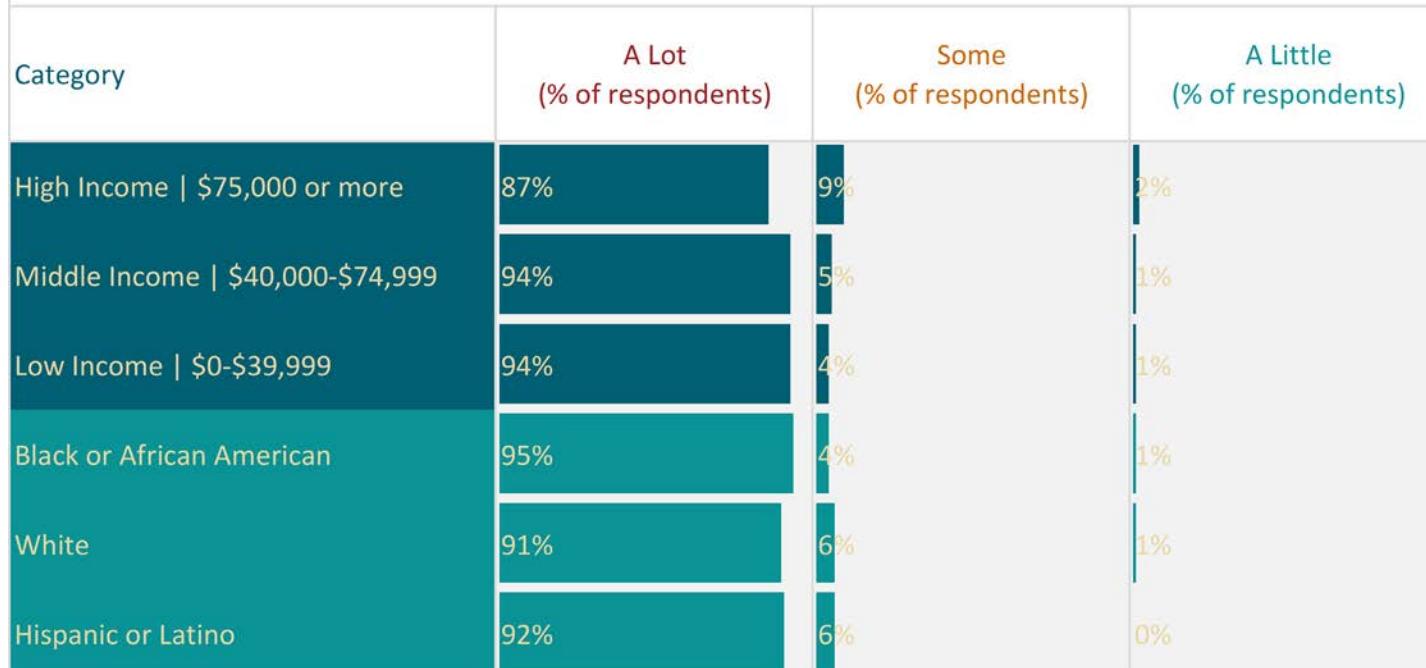
## Parents' Level of Concern About the Impact of Community Violence on Students



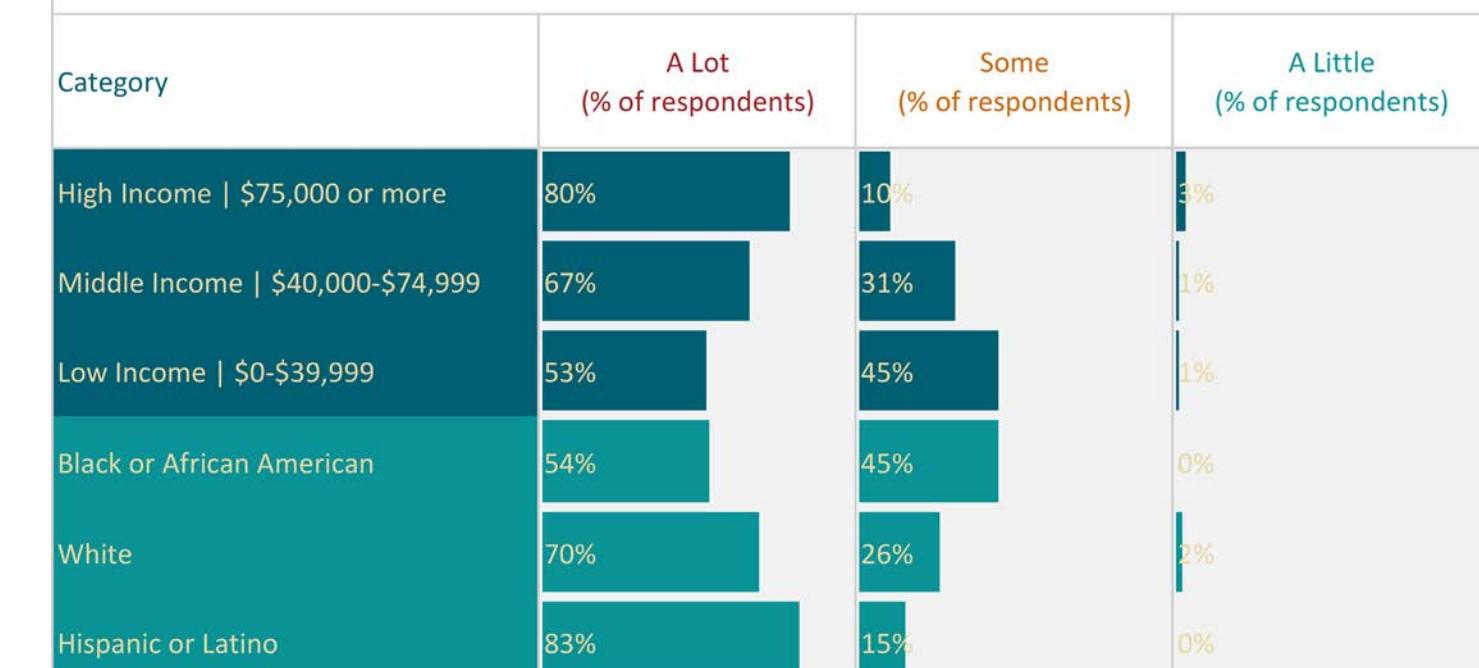
## Parents' Level of Concern About the Difficulty of Hiring and Retaining Quality Teachers



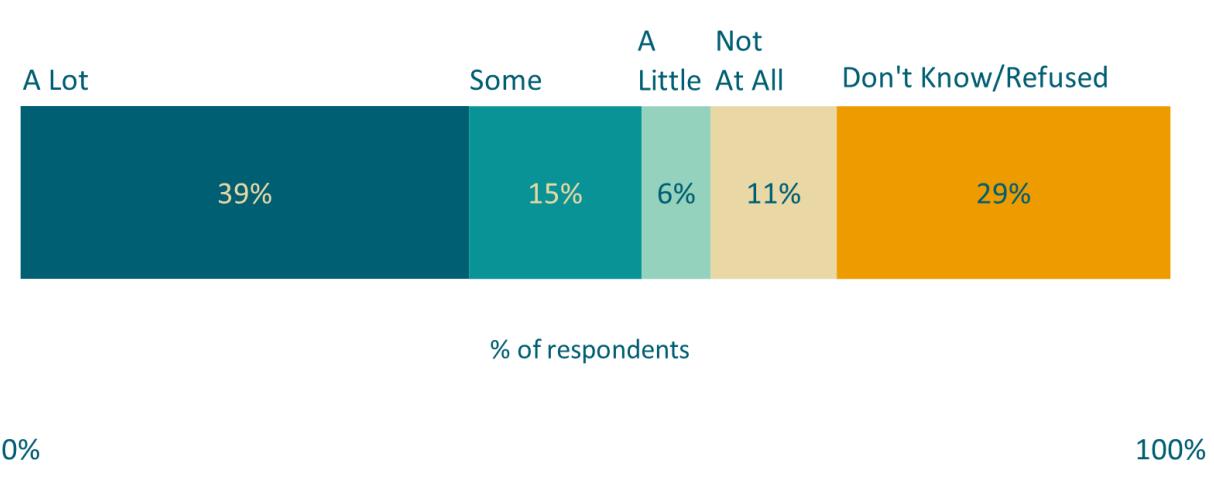
### Parents' Level of Concern About the Impact of Community Violence on Students (by Income and Race/Ethnicity)



### Parents' Level of Concern About the Difficulty of Hiring and Retaining Quality Teachers (by Income and Race/Ethnicity)



## Parents' Level of Concern About the Impact of Low Student Enrolling in Public Schools

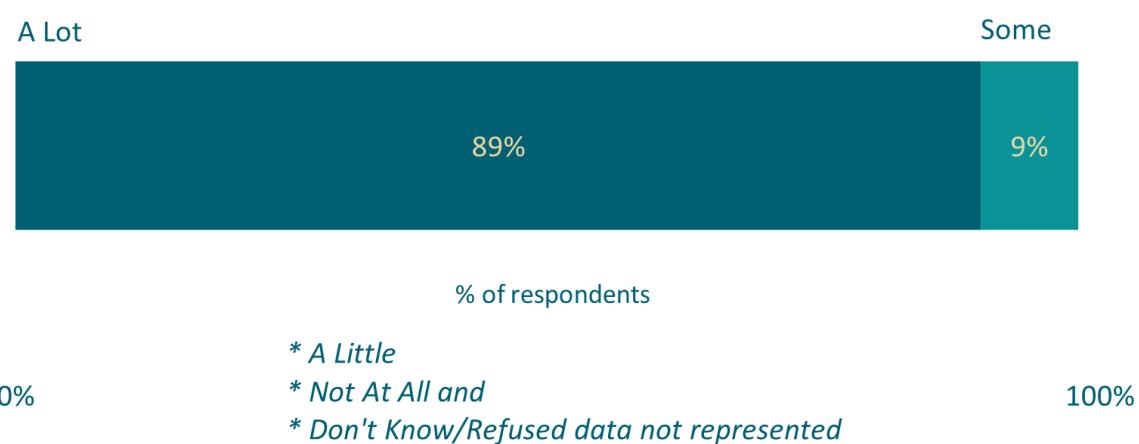


## Parents' Level of Concern About the Impact of Low Student Enrollment in Public Schools (by Income and Race/Ethnicity)

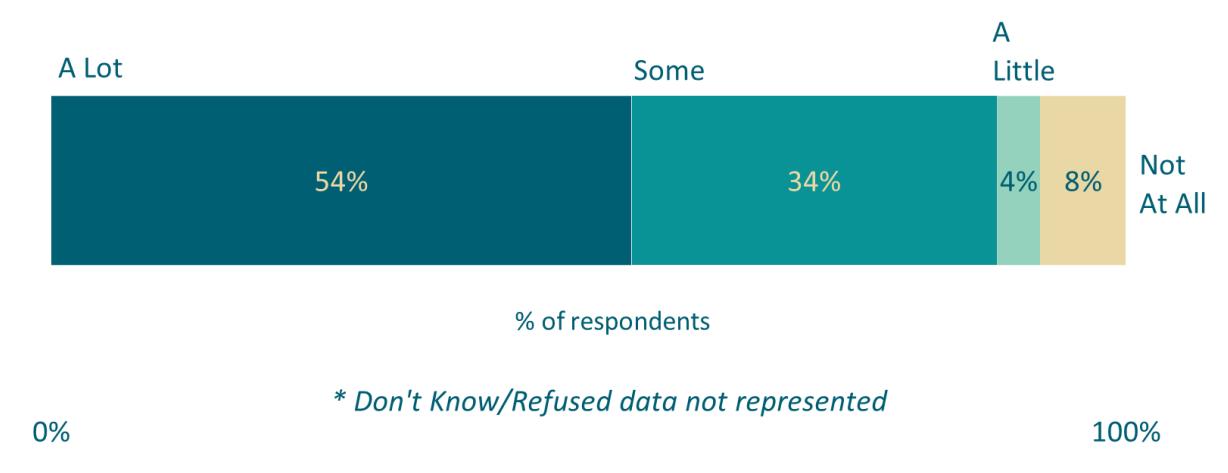
Category	A Lot (% of respondents)	Some (% of respondents)	A Little (% of respondents)
High Income   \$75,000 or more	56%	15%	17%
Middle Income   \$40,000-\$74,999	33%	17%	6%
Low Income   \$0-\$39,999	34%	10%	4%
Black or African American	35%	12%	4%
White	36%	16%	8%
Hispanic or Latino	72%	21%	4%

\* Not At All and Don't Know/Refused data not represented in the visual above

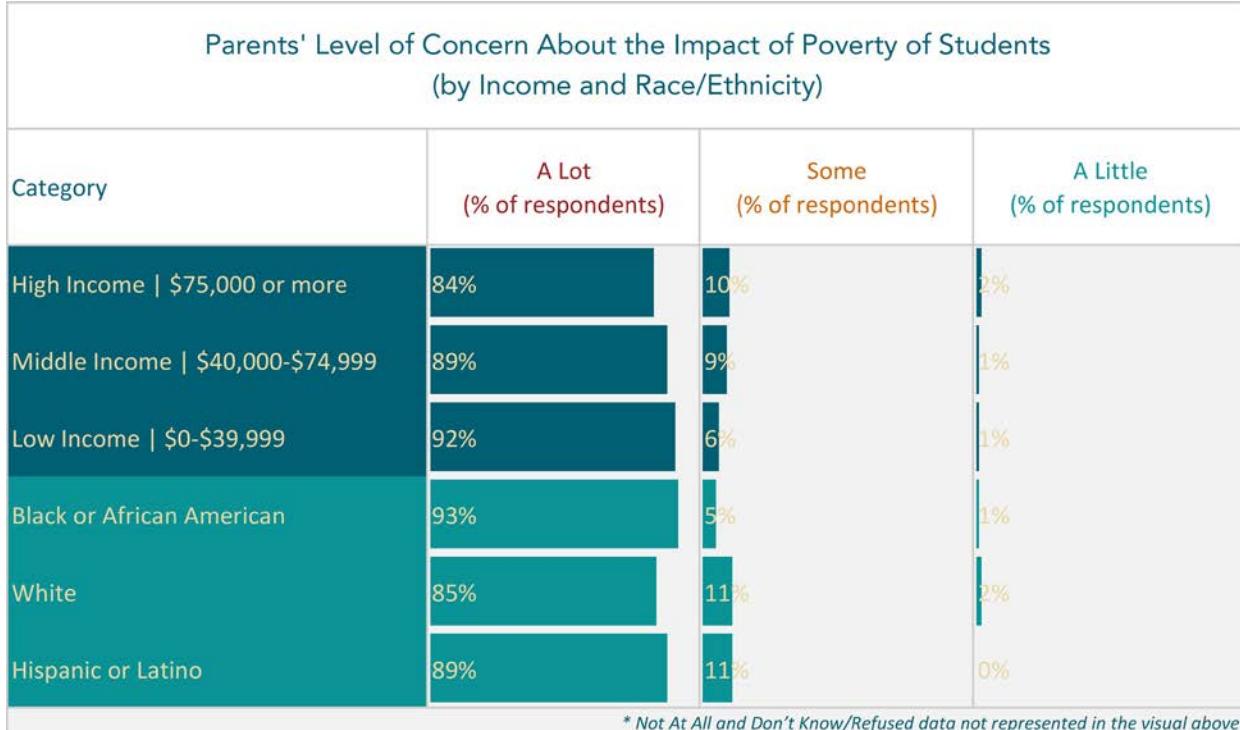
## Parents' Level of Concern About the Impact of Poverty of Students



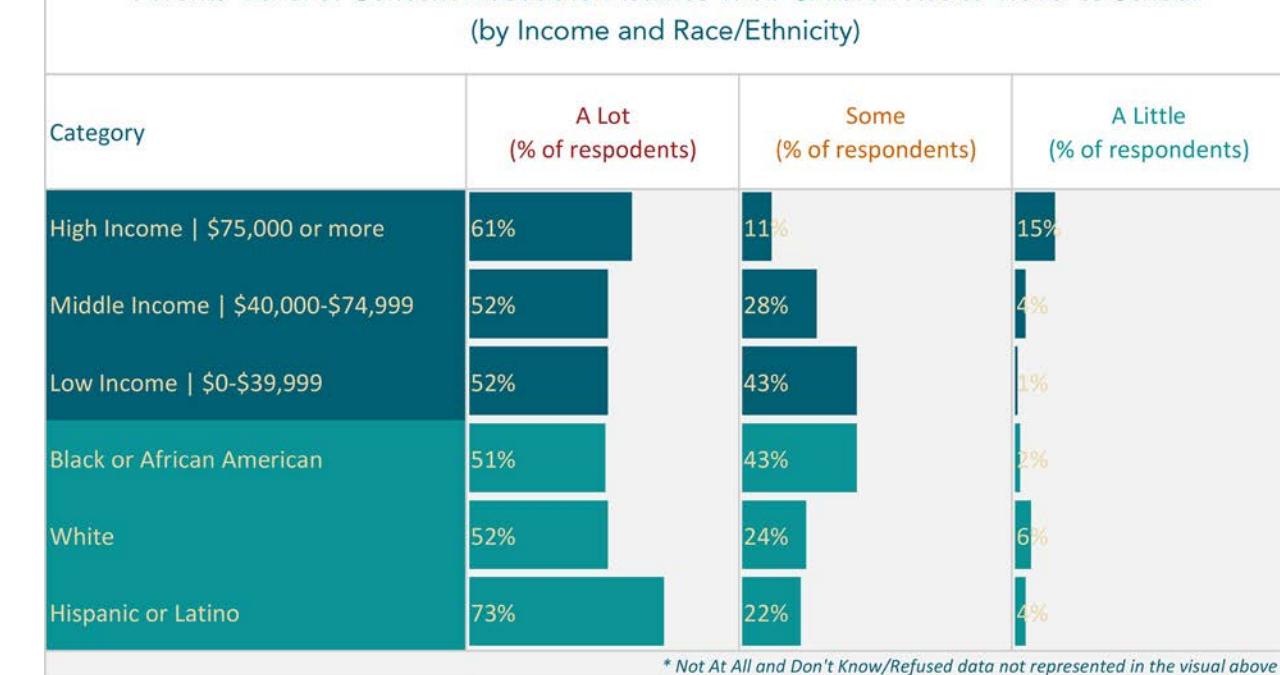
## Parents' Level of Concern About the Distance Their Children Has to Travel to School



### Parents' Level of Concern About the Impact of Poverty of Students (by Income and Race/Ethnicity)



### Parents' Level of Concern About the Distance Their Children Has to Travel to School (by Income and Race/Ethnicity)



**Note:** This question was only asked of NOLA-PS parents and guardians.

# SCHOOL COMPOSITION

## THE RACIAL AND ETHNIC BACKGROUND OF STUDENTS

A majority of parents and guardians (56%) stated that having a student population from a diverse racial and ethnic background at their child(ren)'s school was important. This was far more important for lower income respondents (72%) than the higher income respondents (55%) surveyed. (Note: This was a split formed question, meaning that the same respondents did not say they both want their children in diverse and shared race schools.)

However, these results seemed to be directly contradicted by another question we asked. We questioned parents and guardians on whether it was important that their children attend a school where students mostly shared the same racial and ethnic background as their children. Overall, 48% of parents and guardians said this was important, but 65% of those from lower income households stated it was important to them (compared to just 7% of those from higher income households), which would seem to not align with the same respondents' answers to the question of having a diverse student body.

Black respondents were more likely to say both options were important, while White respondents were less likely to say either was important. However, a majority of both Black (65%) and White (51%) respondents stated that having students from a diverse racial and ethnic background was important.

## THE SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF STUDENTS

Compared to the importance of students attending a school with students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, parents and guardians were far less likely to say it was important that their child(ren) attend a school with students from a diverse socioeconomic background.

Just 39% of parents and guardians said it was important for their child to attend a school where students came from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds. A majority, 63%, of lower income respondents said it was important, compared to 45% of higher income respondents, and just 26% of middle income respondents.

Black respondents were at least twice as likely as White respondents to say it was important to have students from a diverse socioeconomic background (53% to 27%).

## THE RACIAL AND ETHNIC BACKGROUND OF TEACHERS

Interestingly, the race and ethnicity of teachers did not seem that important to parents and guardians. Just 18% of all parents and guardians stated that it was important for their children to attend a school where teachers came from a diverse racial and ethnic background. Notably, though, 52% of higher income respondents stated this was important to them.

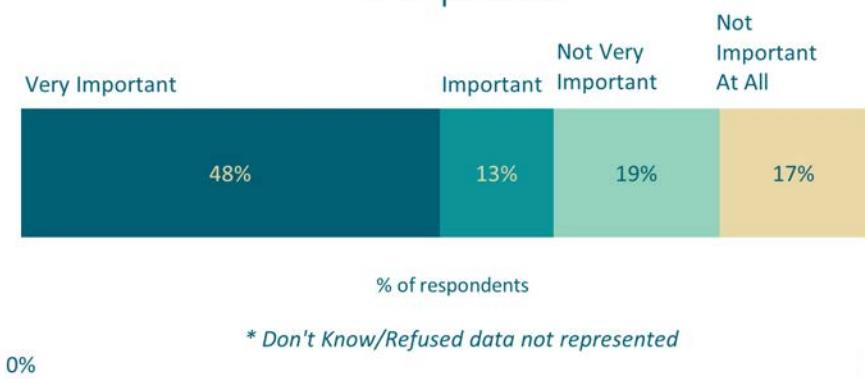
Only 16% of all respondents said that having most teachers share the race and ethnicity of their child was important. Once again, however, the percentage was higher for wealthier respondents, with 36% saying it was important to them, compared to 20% of lower income respondents.

Responses did not vary greatly by race.

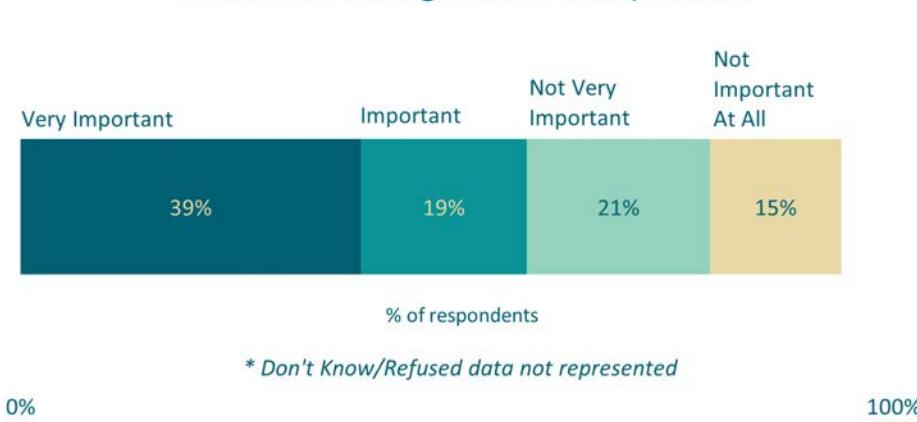
Parents Feel That Having Their Children Attend a School with Students from Diverse Racial and Ethnic Backgrounds is Important



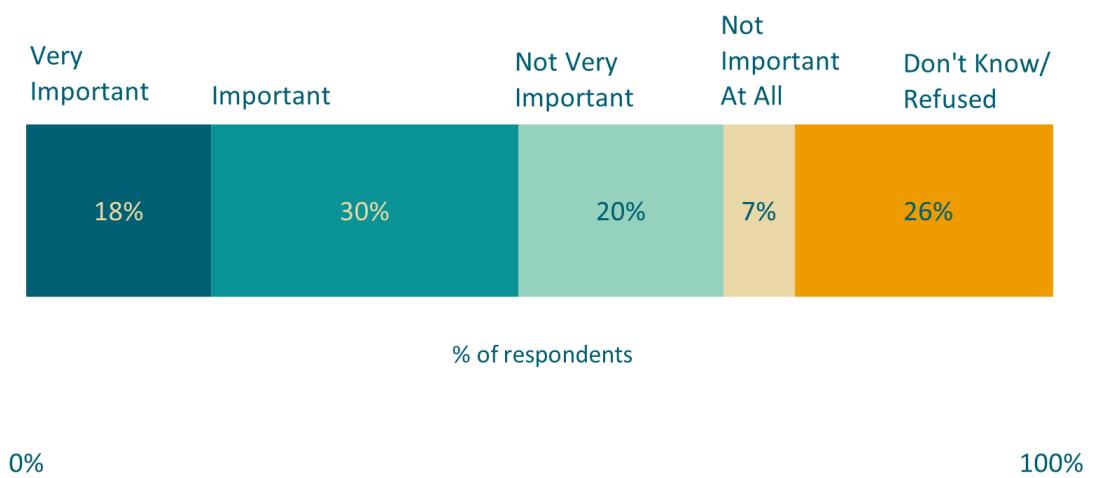
Parents Feel That Having Their Children Attend a School Where Most of the Other Students Share the Same Racial Identity as Their Children is Important



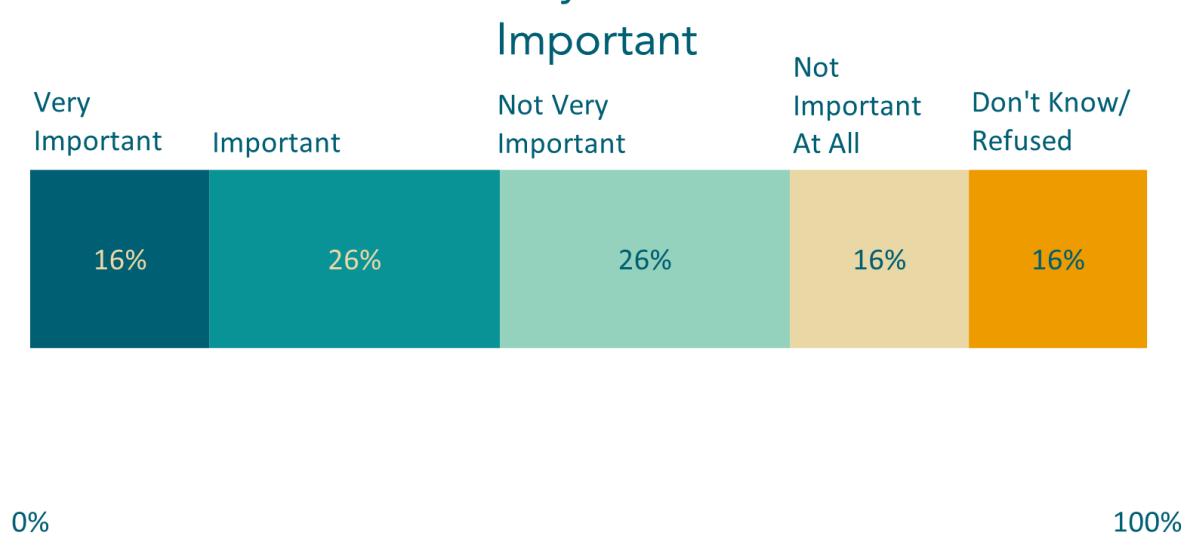
Parents Feel That Having Their Children Attend a School with Students from Diverse Socio-Economic Backgrounds is Important

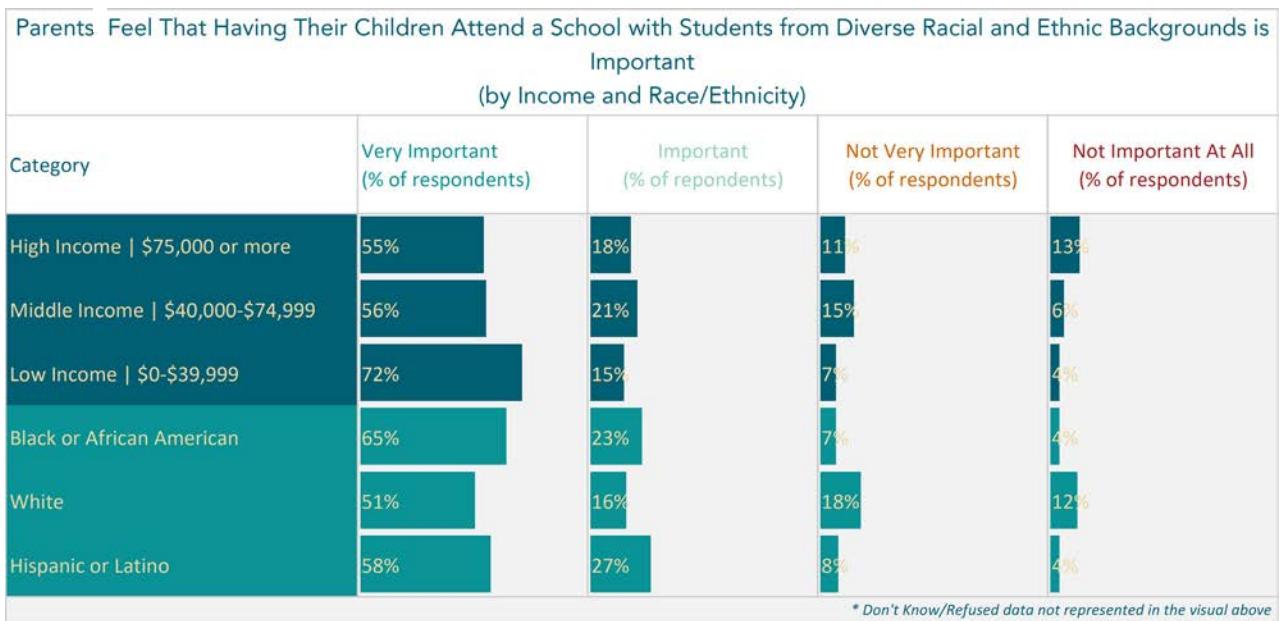


Parents Feel That Having Their Children Attend a School with Teachers from Diverse Racial and Ethnic Backgrounds is Important

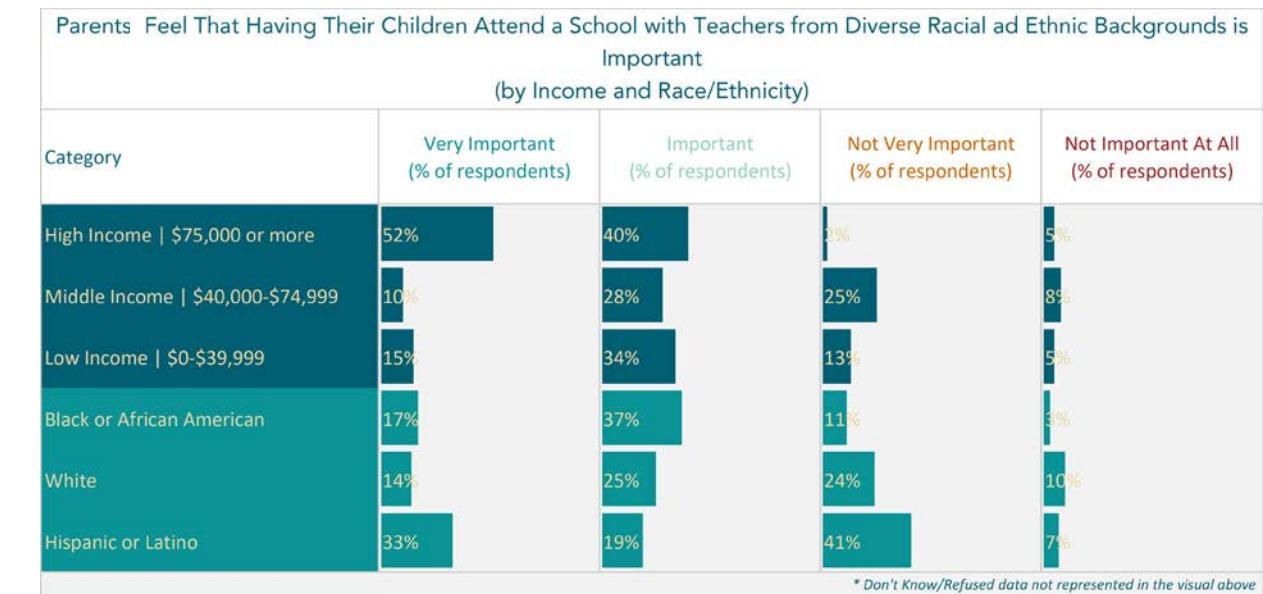


Parents Feel That Having Their Children Attend a School Where Most of the Teachers Share the Same Racial Identity with Their Children is Important

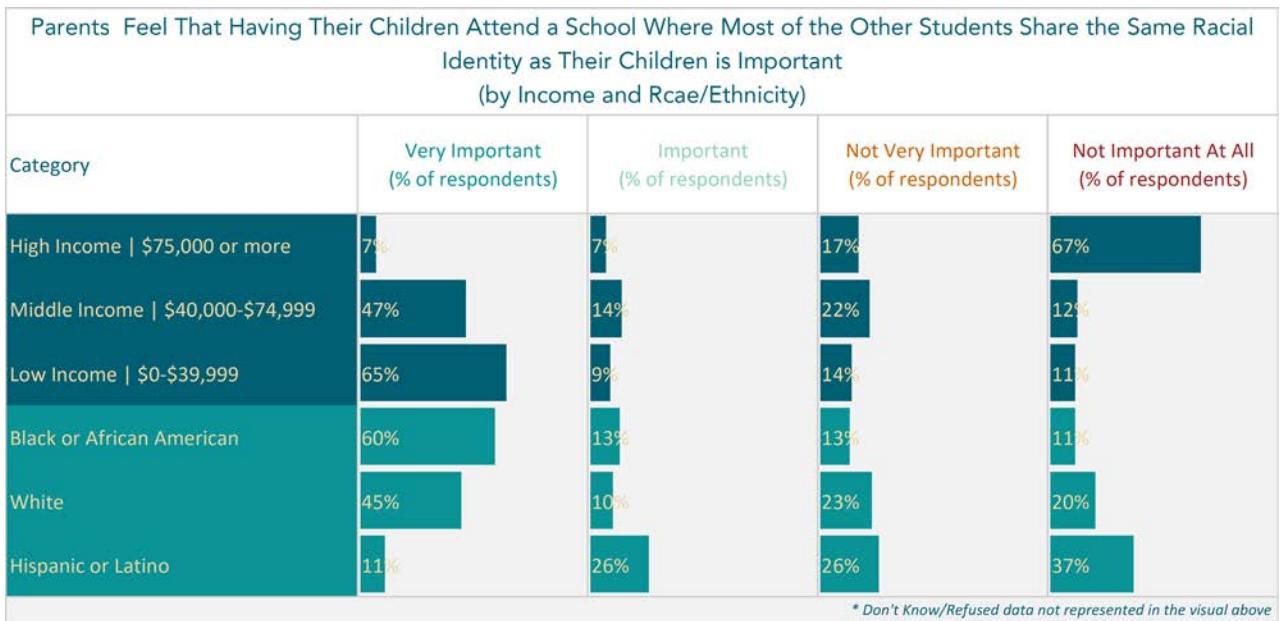




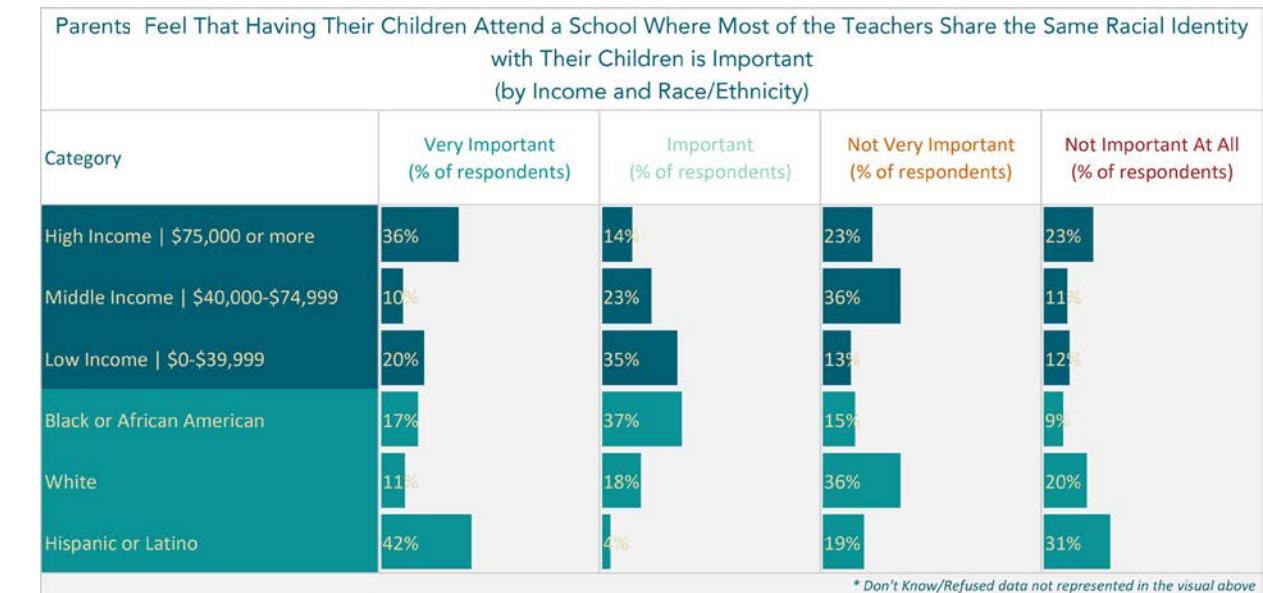
\* Don't Know/Refused data not represented in the visual above



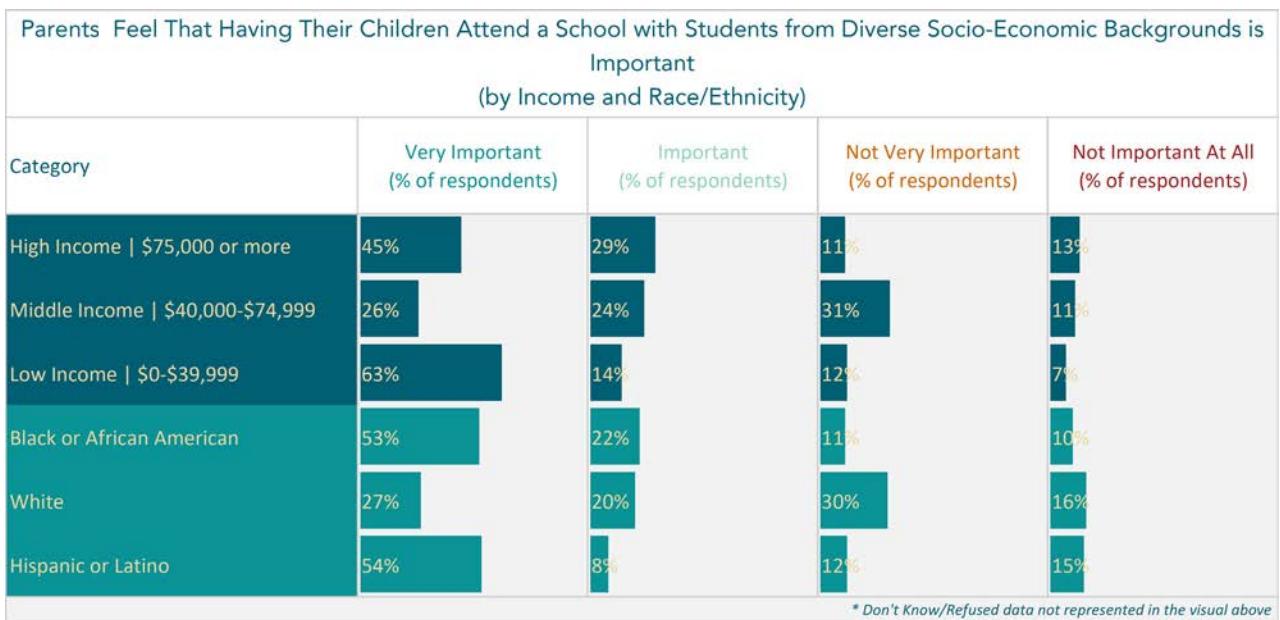
\* Don't Know/Refused data not represented in the visual above



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\* Don't Know/Refused data not represented in the visual above

# SCHOOL SELECTION

Given the open enrollment system in New Orleans, parents and guardians' preferences in how their children are assigned to a school matters. We asked parents and guardians whether they would prefer if the district assigned their child to the school closest to their home, and could therefore avoid the school choice process. We found respondents liked this method of school selection, with 60% saying they agreed or strongly agreed with that statement, which aligned closely with the 69% who gave the same response last year. Comparatively, 30% of respondents said they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, which was an increase from the 21% who said so in 2022.

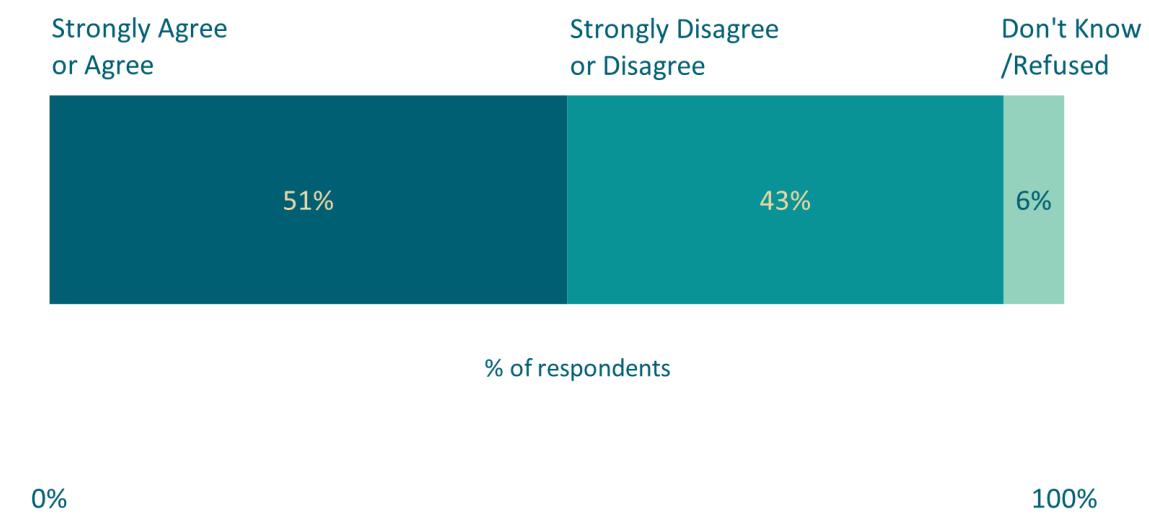
Parents and guardians also want some say in where their children attend school. 95% of all respondents said they strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that "It is most important for me to have a say in which school my child attends, regardless of where it is located." That mirrored the results from last year when 92% expressed agreement with the statement.

# POST-SECONDARY

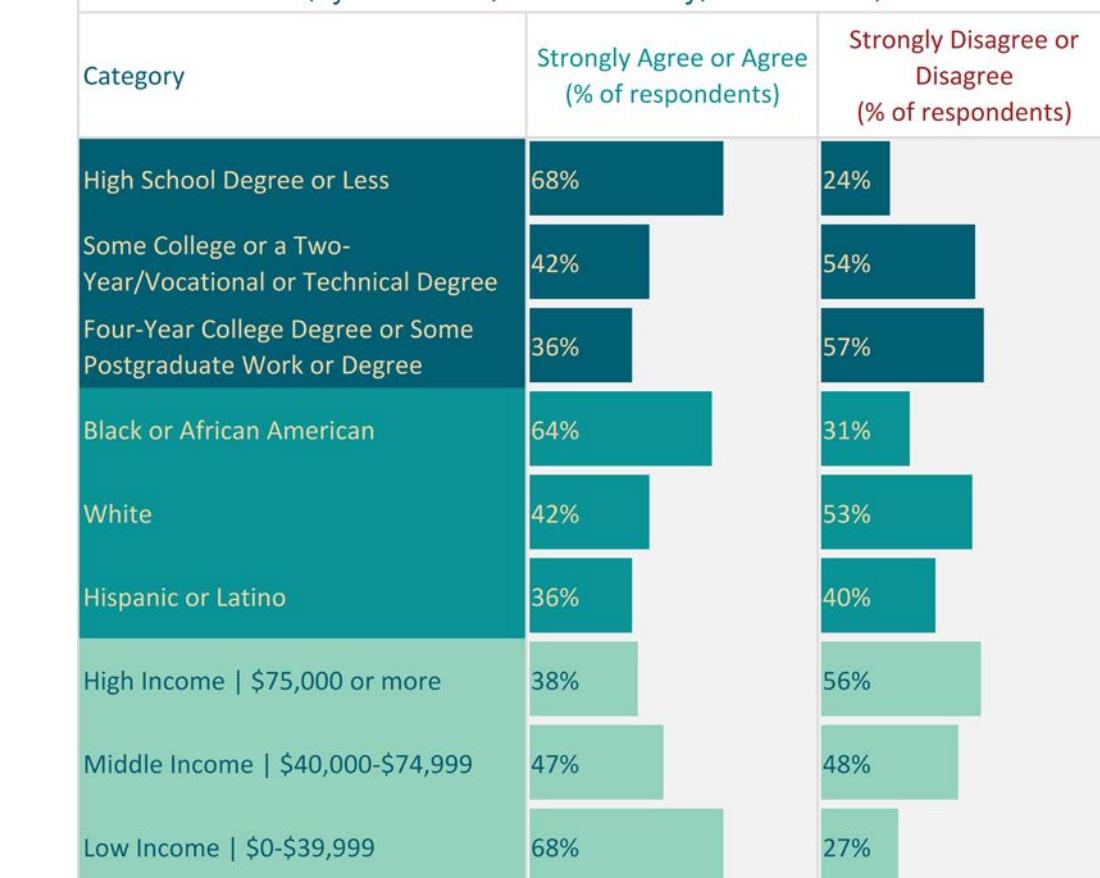
While there is a great deal of evidence showing that college graduates make more over the course of their lifetimes than those without a college degree, due to the increasing cost of college, and the high rate of student debt in the United States, we wanted to assess whether New Orleans parents and guardians still believed college or post-secondary education was worth the expense.

We found that a majority of parents and guardians are unsure if a college degree is worth the cost: 51% said they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "given the cost of higher education, I'm not sure a college degree is worth it," compared to 43% who disagreed or strongly disagreed with it. The more education a respondent had, the more likely they were to disagree with the statement: 57% of college graduates disagreed, while 36% agreed, compared to just 24% of those with a high school degree or less disagreed and 68% expressed agreement. White respondents were also far more likely to believe college was worth the cost, with 53% disagreeing with the statement and 42% agreeing, while in Black respondents, the ratio was flipped, with 64% agreeing that the cost of college made them unsure it was worth it, compared to 31% who disagreed. Similar gaps also existed between respondents based on income, with 56% of wealthier respondents disagreeing and 38% agreeing, while 27% of lower income respondents disagreed, and 68% agreed.

Most Are Unsure Whether a College Degree Is Worth it Given the Current Cost of Higher Education



Most Are Unsure Whether a College Degree is Worth it Given the Current Cost of Higher Education  
(by Education, Race/Ethnicity, and Income)



\* Don't Know/Refused data not represented

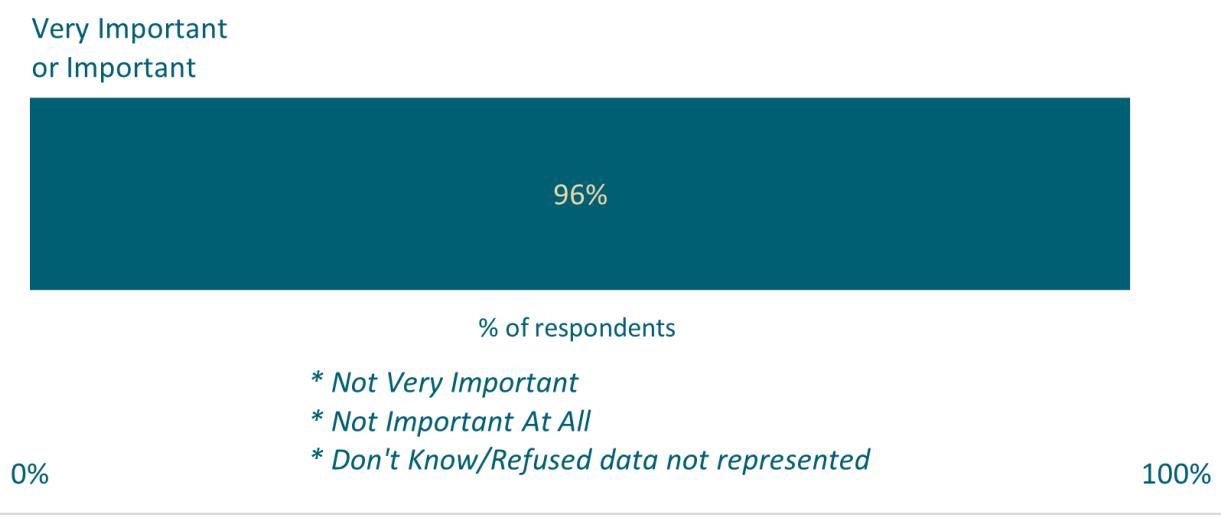
# CAREER AND TECH

To ensure students have economic and employment opportunities after they graduate, schools and states, both locally and nationally, have placed an increasing emphasis on offering students career and technical education while they are in high school. We wanted to assess parents and guardians' perception of career and technical education.

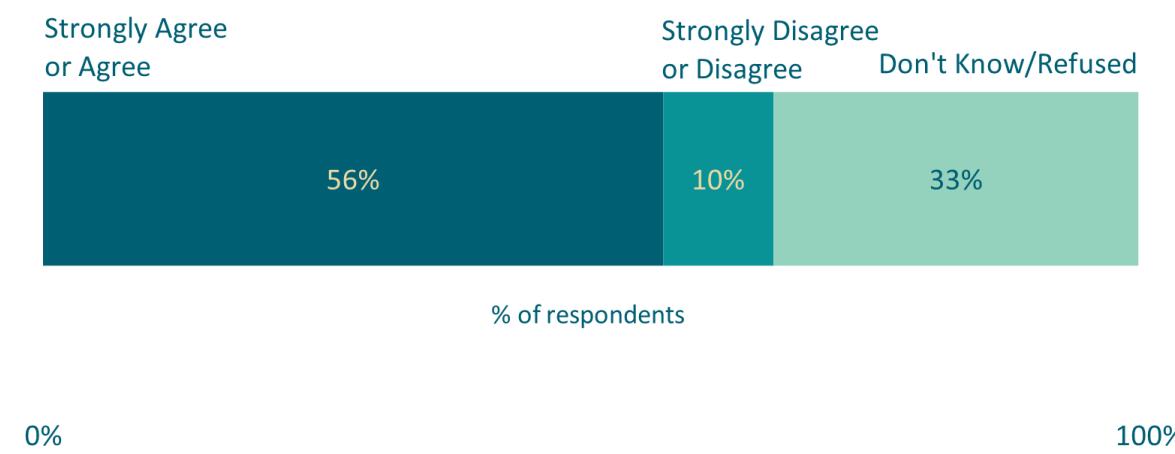
We found resounding support among parents and guardians for promoting career and technical education in high schools. A near universal 96% of respondents said that it was important or very important to offer career and technical course work in high school that leads to high paying jobs and 94% agreed that they would consider having their children pursue career or technical course work that leads to a good paying job while in high school. However, the fact that many schools already offer such courses is not as widely understood by parents and guardians — only 56% reported that they were currently aware of those types of offerings.

Support for offering career and technical course work was strongest amongst parents and guardians with the most negative perceptions of public education in the city (those who assigned a D or F grade) and those who were age 55 and older. Support was lowest amongst college graduates and respondents aged 18-34. Respondents from higher incomes households were also less likely to think it was important than respondents from lower income households.

## Most Feel That Offering Career and Technical Course Work in High School That Leads to High Paying Jobs Is Important



## Most Are Aware of Career and Technical Course Work Available to Students in the New Orleans Public Schools That Leads to High Paying Jobs



# CONCLUSION //

## Most Would Consider Having Their Children Pursue Career or Technical Course Work in High School that Leads to a High Paying Job

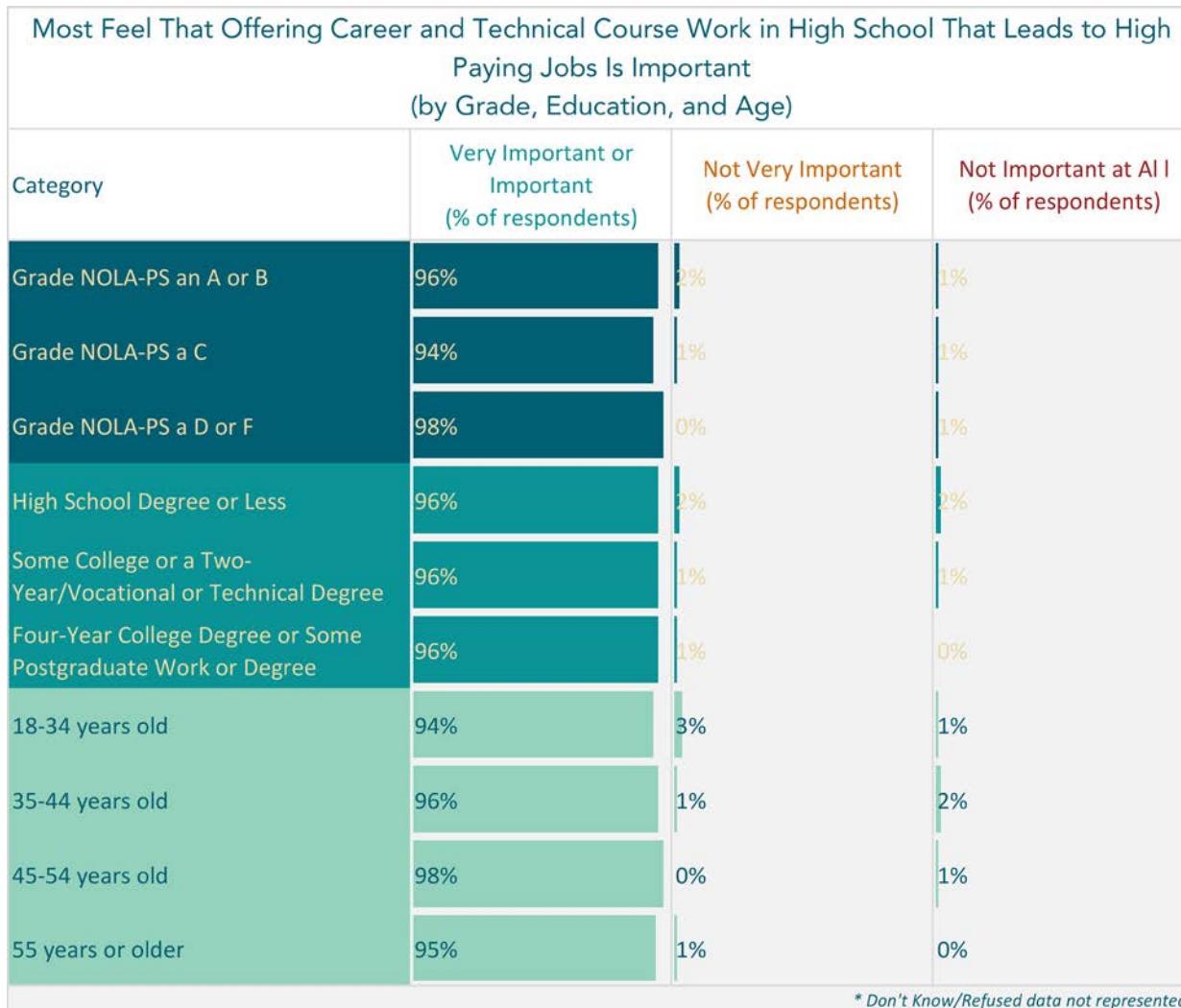


This was the second of the two briefs we have published on our polling of parents' and guardians' perceptions of public education in New Orleans for this year. The first brief is also available on our website, [coweninstitute.org](http://coweninstitute.org).

The results highlighted in both briefs illustrate a key finding from our polling from previous years: namely, that the socioeconomic status and race of families impacts their experience with public education in the city. While this finding may seem self-evident, it also is a reminder that education reflects many of the existing challenges that New Orleans continues to face.

Additionally, the findings in this brief illustrate the importance of the upcoming NOLA-PS School Board elections. Three-fourths of parents and guardians in the city intend to vote in the election, which could have a significant impact on the future direction of public education in New Orleans.

Finally, this year's findings regarding career and technical education echoed those from previous Cowen institute polls on the topic. Parents and guardians, regardless of demographics, are highly supportive of career and technical education and would like their child(ren) to have the opportunity to pursue it while in high school.





# Cowen Institute

TULANE UNIVERSITY

To explore the data in greater depth and  
for interactive poll visuals, visit:  
**[cowendata.org](http://cowendata.org)**