



# **The State of Education in The Commonwealth: A Community Perspective**

**Findings from a survey of K-12 parents in Massachusetts**

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**This project was sponsored by The Education Trust in Massachusetts  
with support from The Barr Foundation**



# Survey background

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- Results based on a statewide survey of 1,539 parents of school-age children in Massachusetts, including oversamples of Black, Latino, and Asian parents.
- Eighth in a series of polls with waves in May/June 2020, October 2020, February/March 2021, April/May 2021, October/November 2021, March/April 2022, November/December 2022, and April 2023.
- Conducted April 10 – April 30, 2023, via live telephone and online interviewing in English and Spanish. Data was weighted to known population parameters by age, gender, race, education, and region.
- Three parent focus groups were conducted in February 2023, including 2 in English and 1 for Spanish-speaking families.
- Sponsored by the Education Trust in Massachusetts with support from The Barr Foundation.

# Key findings

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- Most parents offer favorable grades to their child's school (77% A or B). Those offering lower grades describe a range of issues, including academics, extracurriculars, safety, and more.
- When it comes to academics, Black (45%) and Latino (44%) parents and those whose children have an IEP (55%) or receive ELL services (60%) report the highest levels of concern.
- Mental health concerns remain elevated compared to the height of the pandemic with 45% of parents very or somewhat concerned. Among parents who say they are very concerned, just 47% think the school has enough resources to help.

# Key findings

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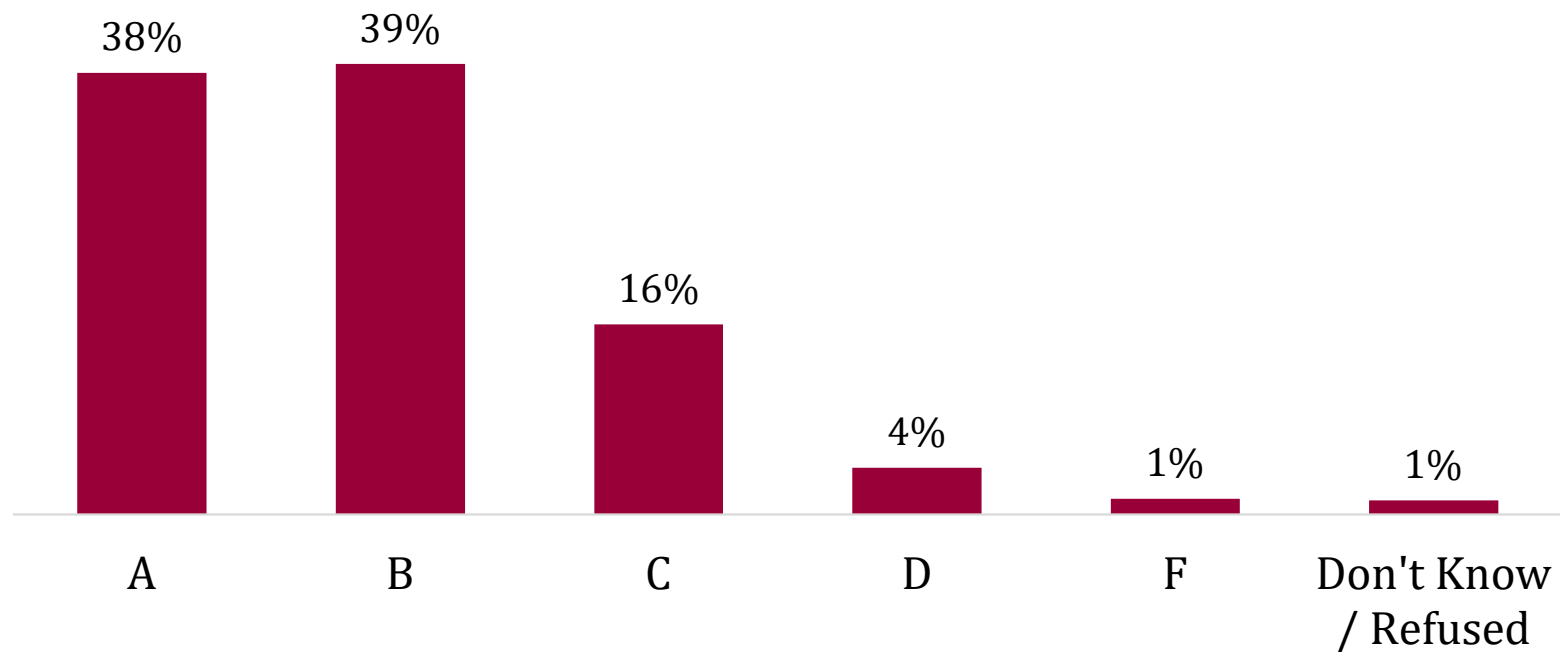
- Overall, 28% of parents report their child has been bullied this year. Black parents (35%), those whose children are behind grade level (42%), parents of children with an IEP (37%), and who receive ELL services (40%) are more likely to say bullying has occurred this year.
- Parents identified safety as a key issue this year in both focus groups as well as survey responses. Lockdowns have been widespread, with 26% saying it has happened this year at their child's school. Most parents are satisfied with protocols, but remain concerned about safety.

# Overall school grades

- Most parents offer positive grades to their children's schools, though 1 in 5 offer grades of C through F for the entire school experience.

## Most parents give their children's schools high marks, offering an A or B

*% of parents who give their children's school each grade*

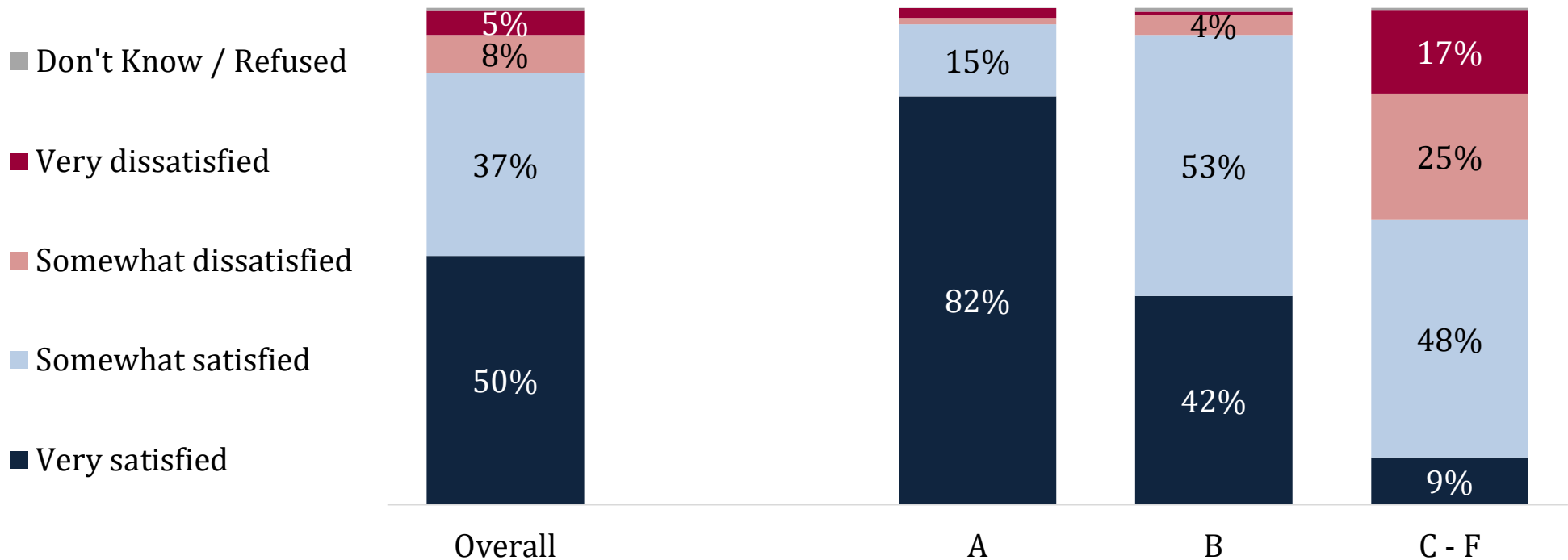


# Satisfaction with quality of education

- Most say they are at least “somewhat satisfied” with their children’s educational experience. Parents who offered their child's school lower grades are less satisfied with the quality of their child's education.

## Many parents offering lower overall grades still say they are “somewhat satisfied”

*% of parents who give their children's school each grade who say they are satisfied / dissatisfied*



# Breakdown of school grades

- Those giving their school lower grades describe very different experiences for their children that extend beyond academics.

## Parents offering lower overall grades report a range of concerns and issues

*% of parents who say the school/child fits each description (key figures highlighted)*

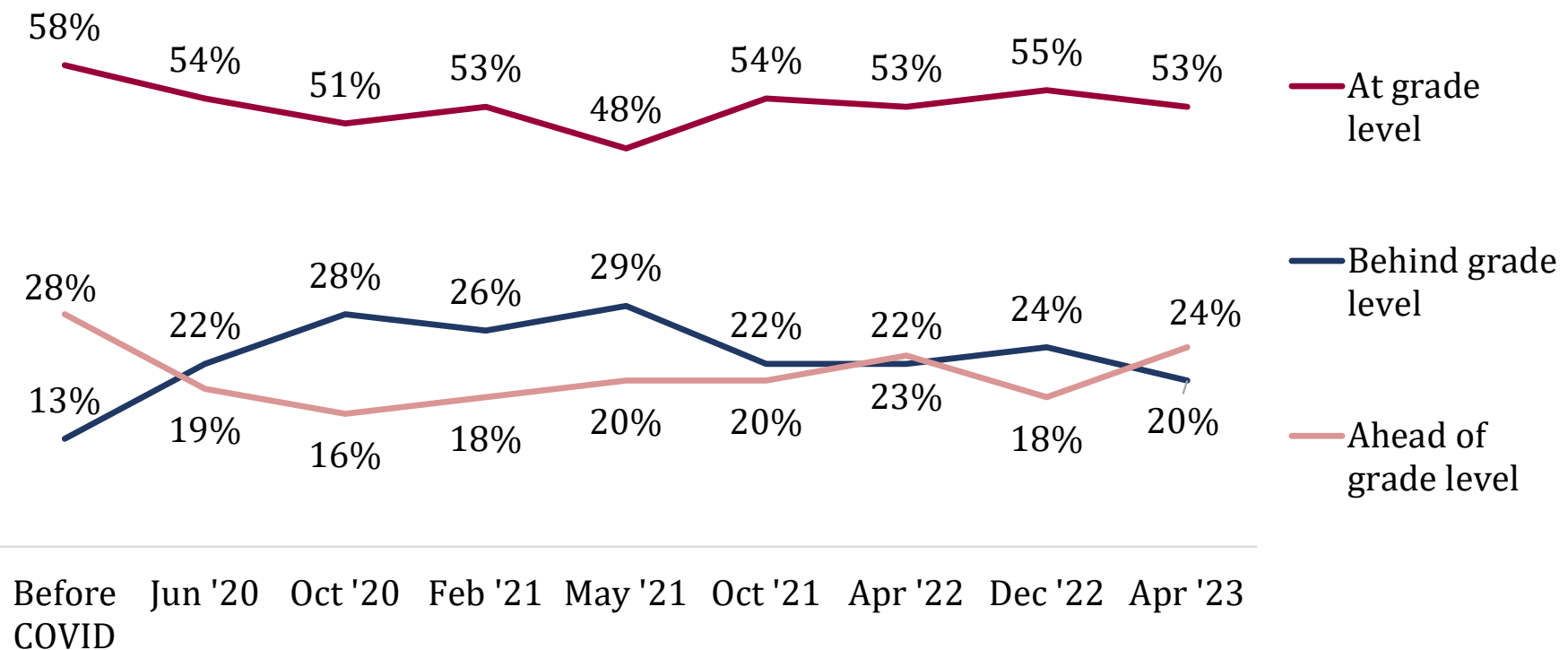
	Overall	School Grade: A	School Grade: B	School Grade: C - F
Child's school offers extracurriculars	80%	87%	80%	67%
Child is academically prepared for next level	78%	91%	82%	49%
Very / somewhat concerned about academics	37%	27%	33%	61%
Parent concerned about child's mental health	45%	36%	42%	67%
School has enough mental health resources	53%	65%	53%	33%
Child is very safe from violence	48%	62%	46%	27%
Child experienced bullying this year	28%	19%	29%	44%

# Children ahead or behind GL

- Most parents see their children at or ahead of grade level, though the percentage who see their children as behind is still above pre-COVID levels.

## Most parents report child is at or ahead of grade level

% of parents who say their child is \_\_\_\_\_



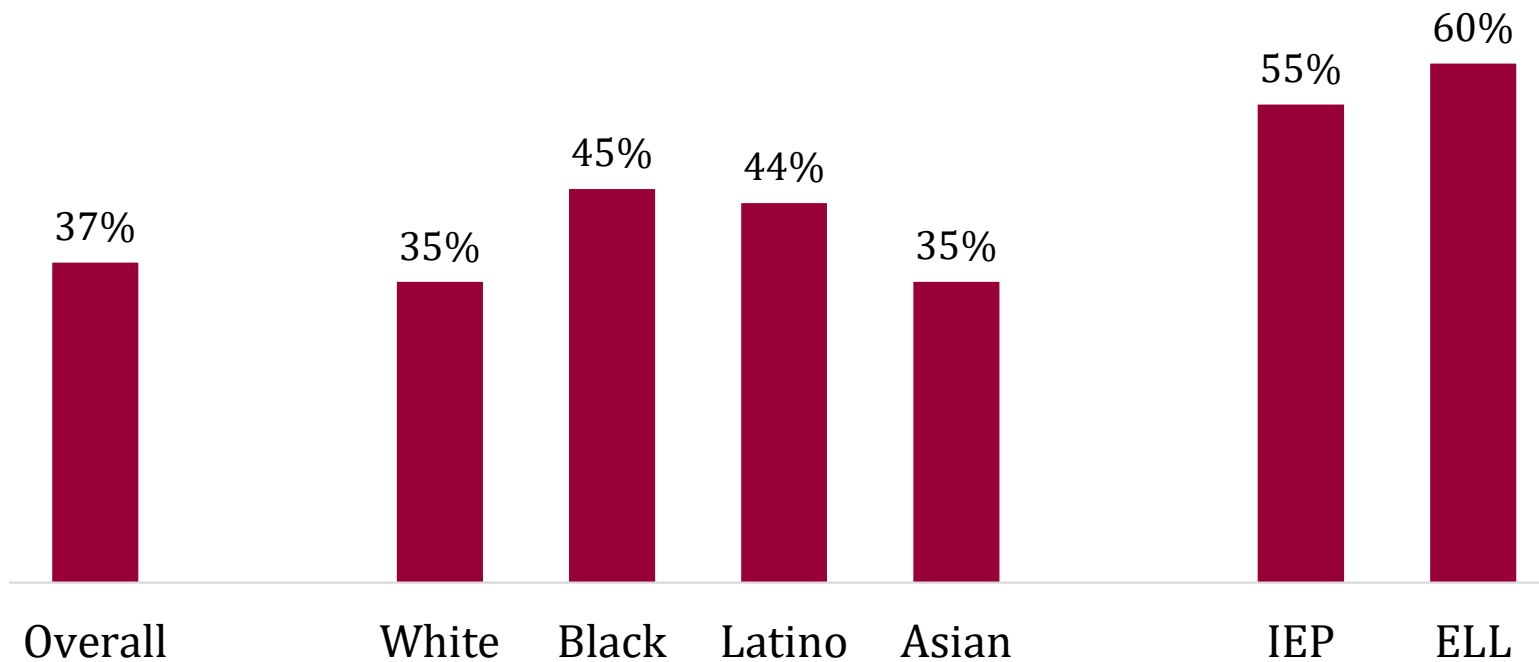


# Academic concerns this year

- Parents of color and those whose children have an IEP or receive ELL services report the most significant concern about academics this school year.

## Parents express a range of concerns about academics this school year

*% parents who are very or somewhat concerned about academics*

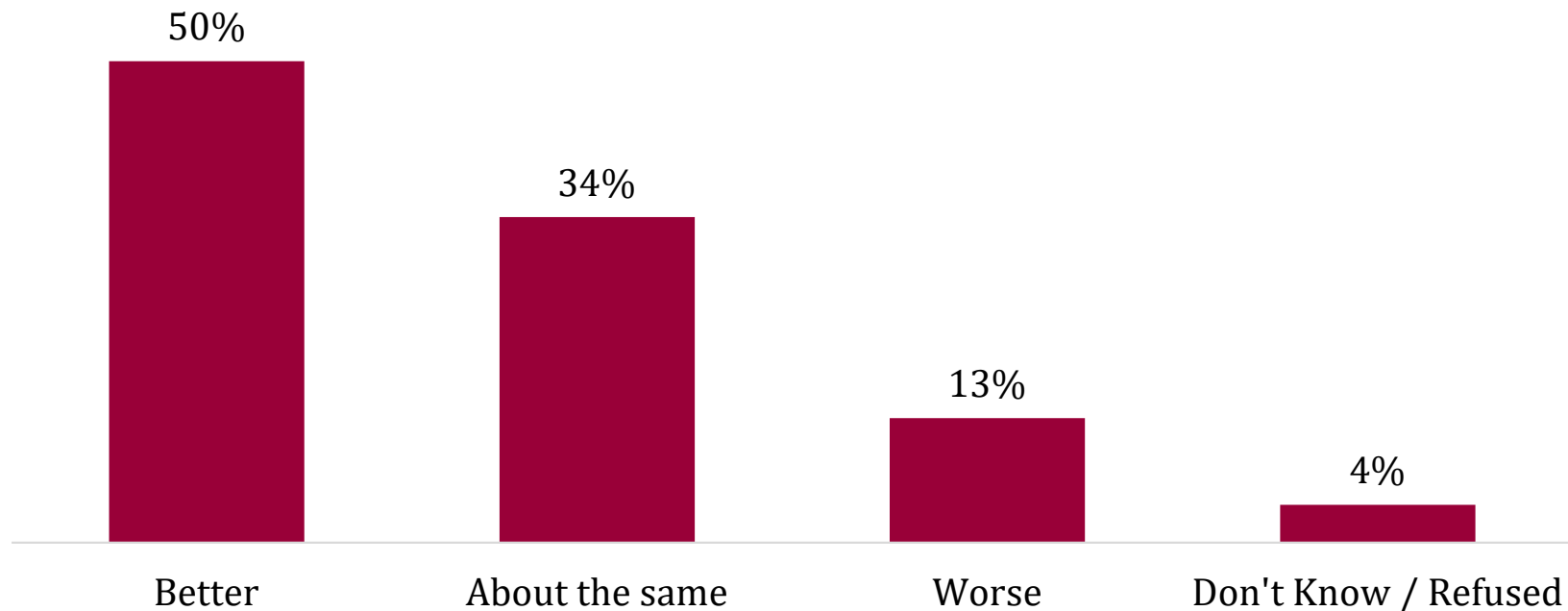


# ELL services ratings

- Half of parents of children who are ELLs say ELL services have improved this school year, while 34% say they have stayed the same.

## About half say ELL services have gotten better since last school year

*% of parents of children who are ELLs who say ELL services are \_\_\_\_\_ compared to last year*

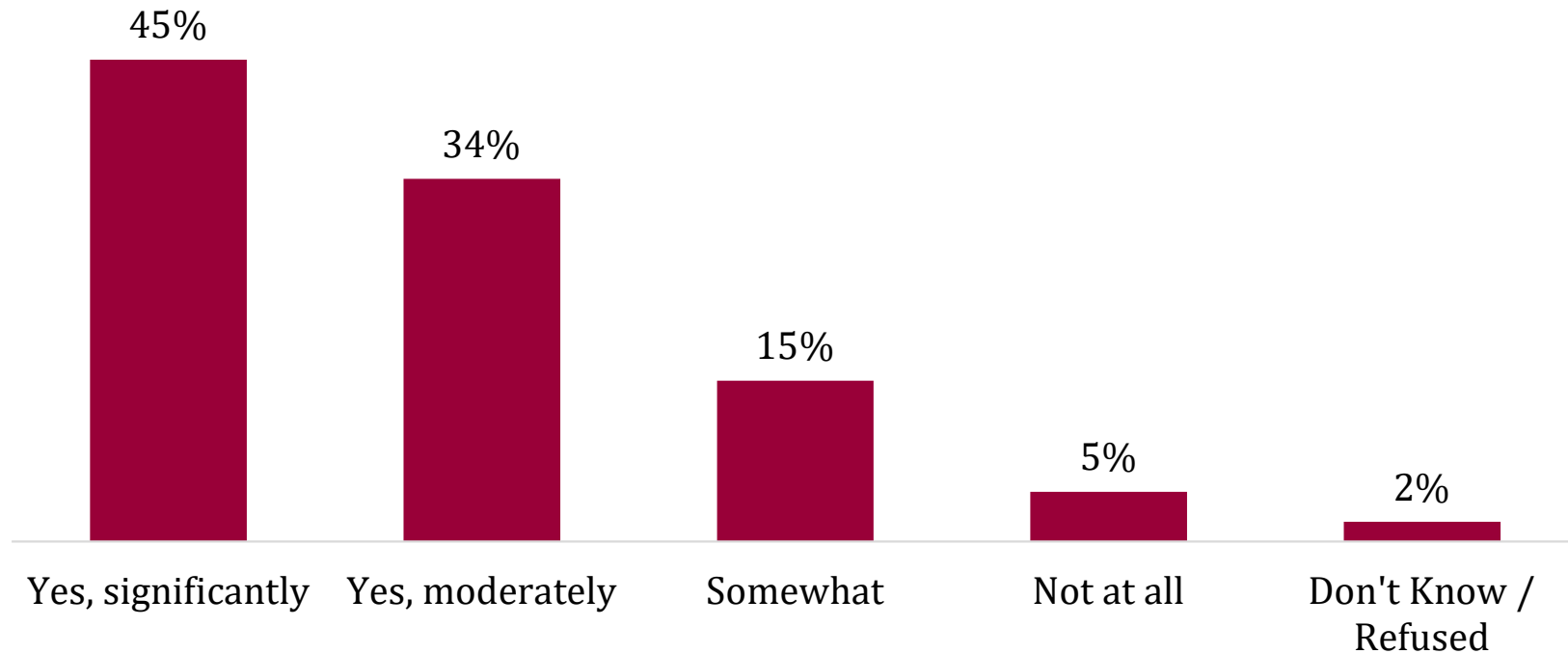


# ELLs language development

- Parents of children who receive ELL services note improvements in language development this school year with 45% saying it has improved “significantly.”

## Most parents of children who are ELLs share moderate language development

*% of parents of English Language Learner children who say language development has improved \_\_\_\_\_*

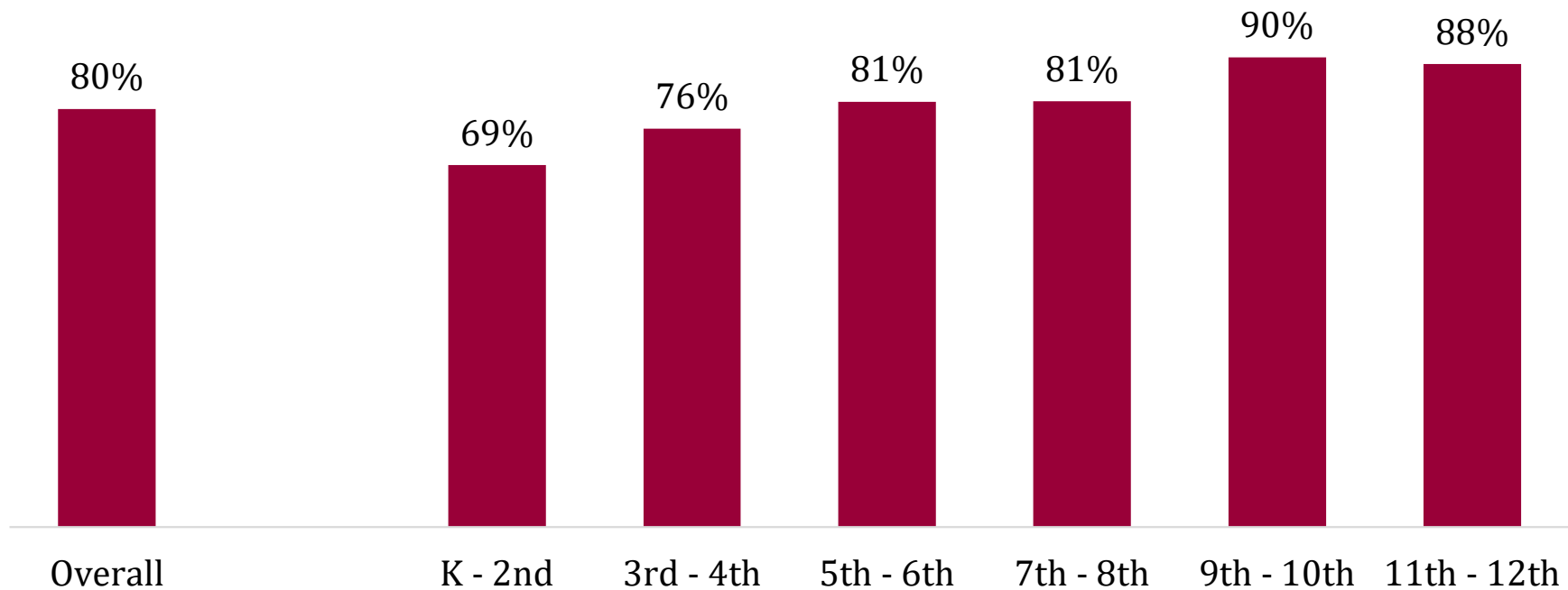


# Extracurriculars by grade level

- Most parents (80%) say their child's school offer some extracurriculars, with more opportunities available at higher grade levels.

## Availability of extracurricular activities increases at higher grade levels

*% of parents who say their child's school offers extracurriculars, by grade level*

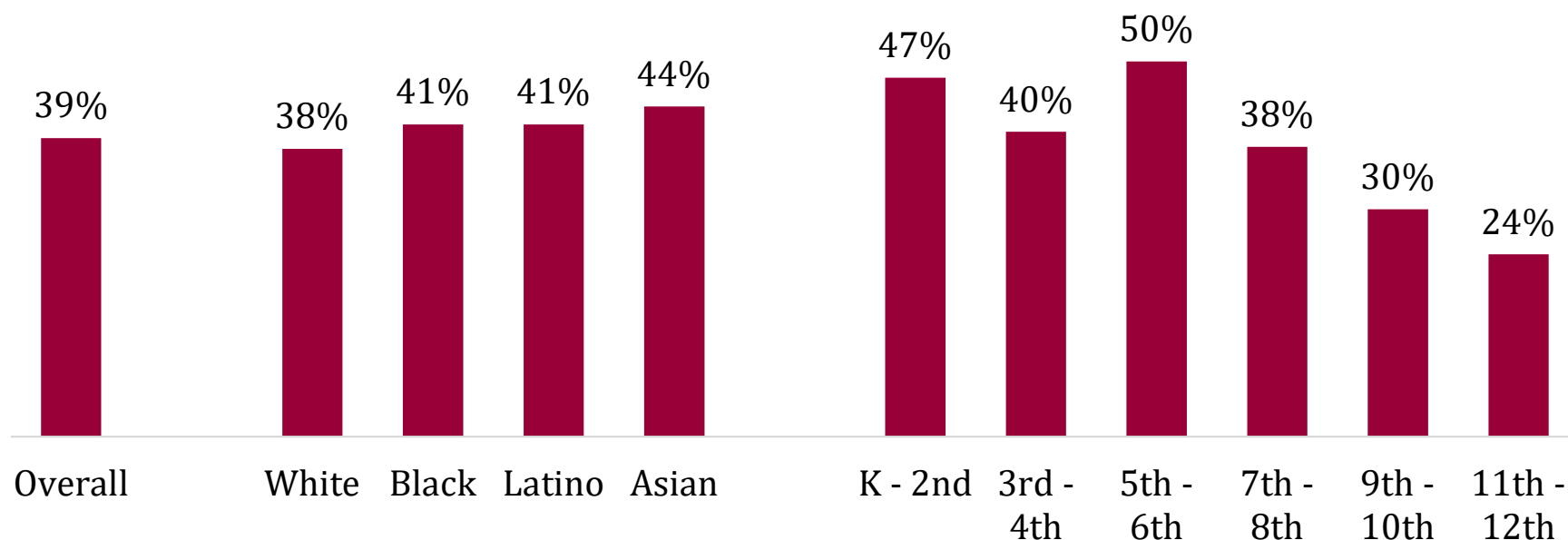


# Parents want more extracurriculars

- Many parents of younger children say they would prefer more extracurriculars than their schools currently offer.

## Parents of younger children are more likely to want more extracurriculars

*% of parents who said the school should offer more extracurricular activities*

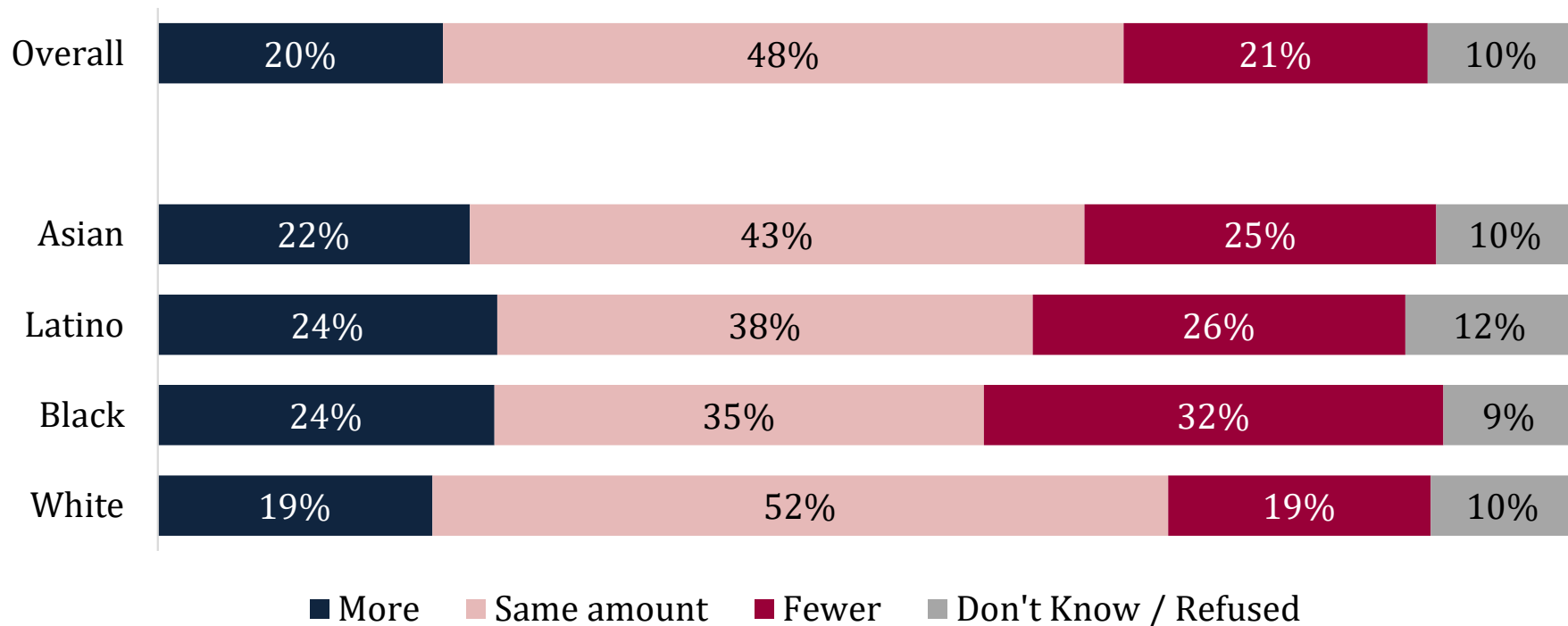


# Extracurriculars compared to pre-COVID

- While about half of white parents (52%) have the same amount of extracurriculars offered as before the pandemic, Black and Latino parents are less likely to say the same.

## Parents of color are more likely to report fewer extracurriculars

% of parents who said the school offered \_\_\_\_\_ extracurriculars compared to before COVID



# Barriers to extracurriculars

- Timing, transportation, and cost are barriers for some parents, making it more difficult for their children to access these activities.

## Time, transportation & cost are key barriers to participation

% of parents whose child's school offers extracurriculars outside of school & say \_\_\_\_\_ is a barrier

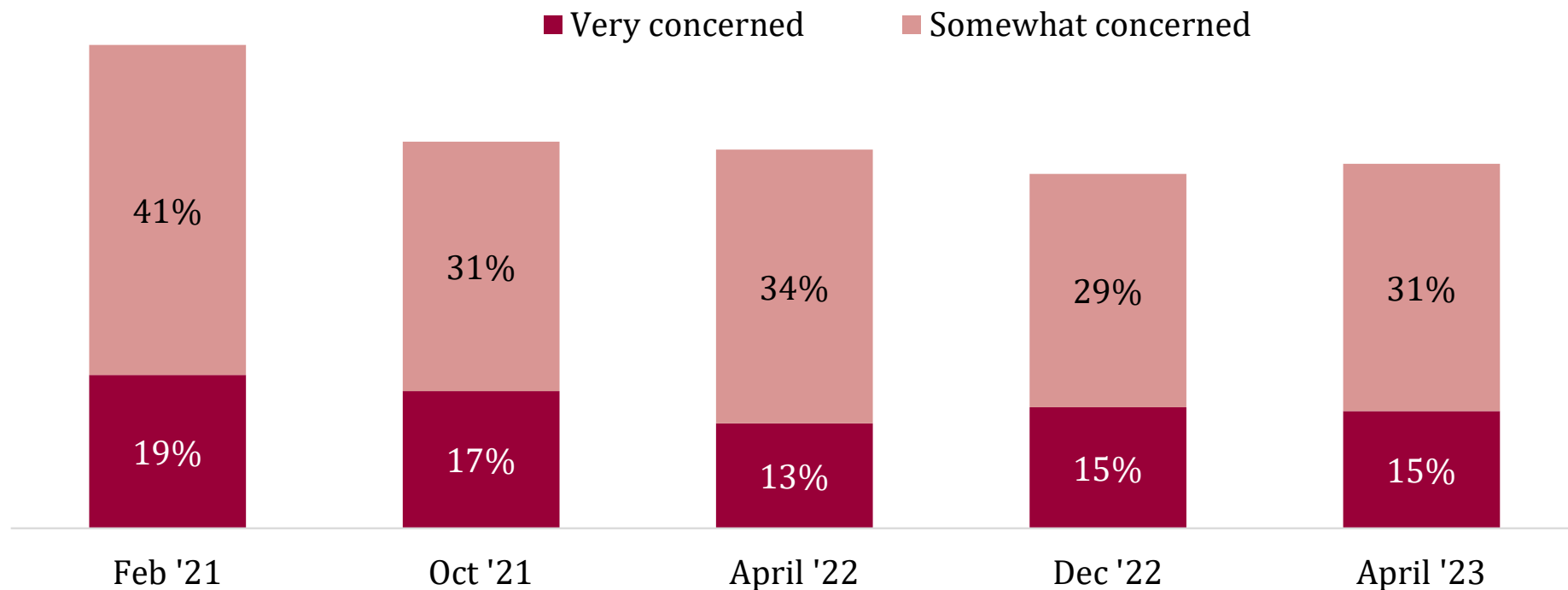
	Overall	<\$50K	\$50-74K	\$75-99K	\$100K+
Time of day	28%	22%	31%	36%	30%
Transportation	27%	38%	26%	30%	23%
Cost	24%	31%	32%	27%	18%
Other	18%	11%	11%	12%	24%

# Mental health concerns

- Mental health concerns have declined somewhat since February 2021, though they remain elevated.

## Parents remain concerned about their children's mental health

*% of parents who say they are \_\_\_\_\_ about their child's mental/emotional health*



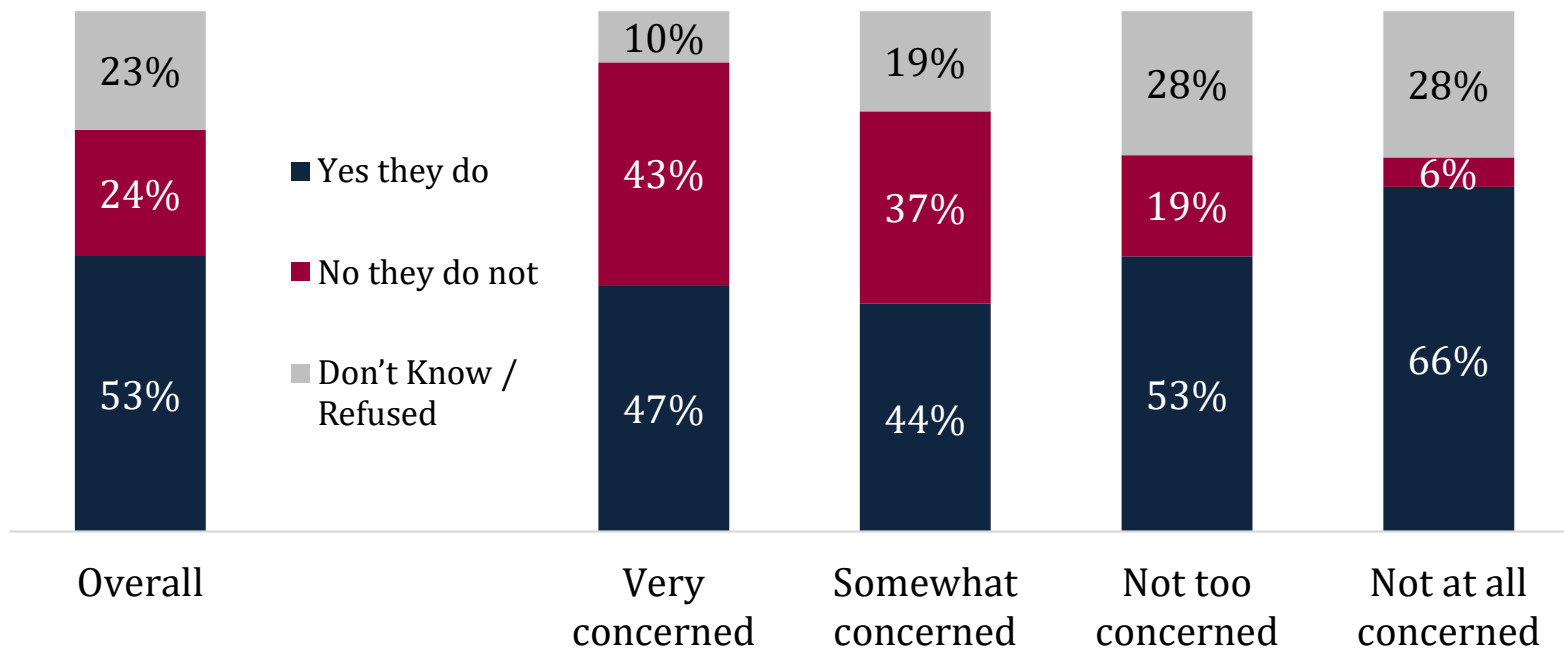


# Availability of mental health resources

- Only about half of parents (53%) say their child's school has enough resources to support students with their mental health. Parents who are most concerned about their children's well-being are more likely to report not having access to resources.

## Parents who are more concerned are also less sure of available resources

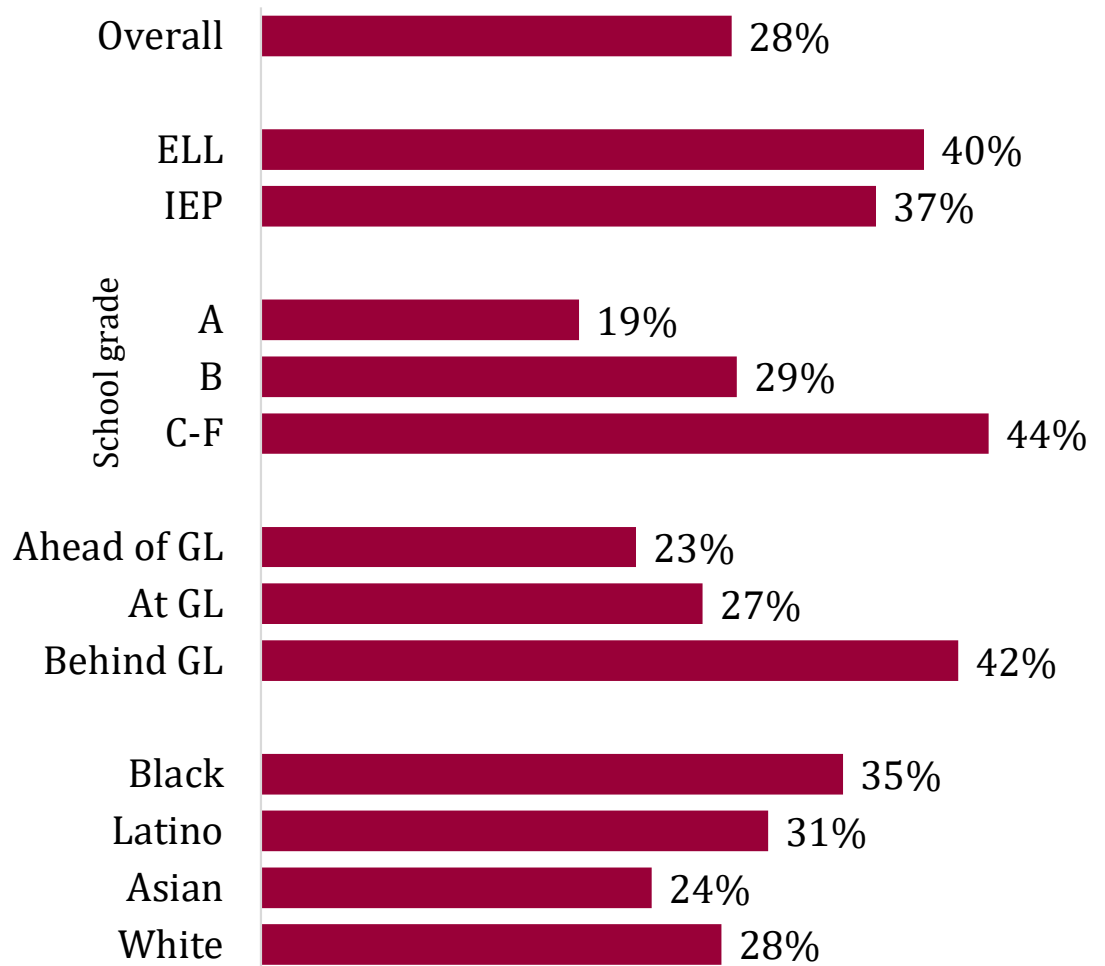
*% of parents in each group who say their child's school does / does not have enough MH resources*



# Reports of bullying this school year

- Parents who gave their child's school a grade of C through F were most likely to say their child experienced bullying (44%).
- Those whose children are behind grade level (42%) and Black parents (35%) were more likely to say their child was bullied.
- More parents of children who receive ELL services also report bullying this school year (40%).

**Many parents report their child has been bullied**  
*% of parents who say their child experienced bullying this year*

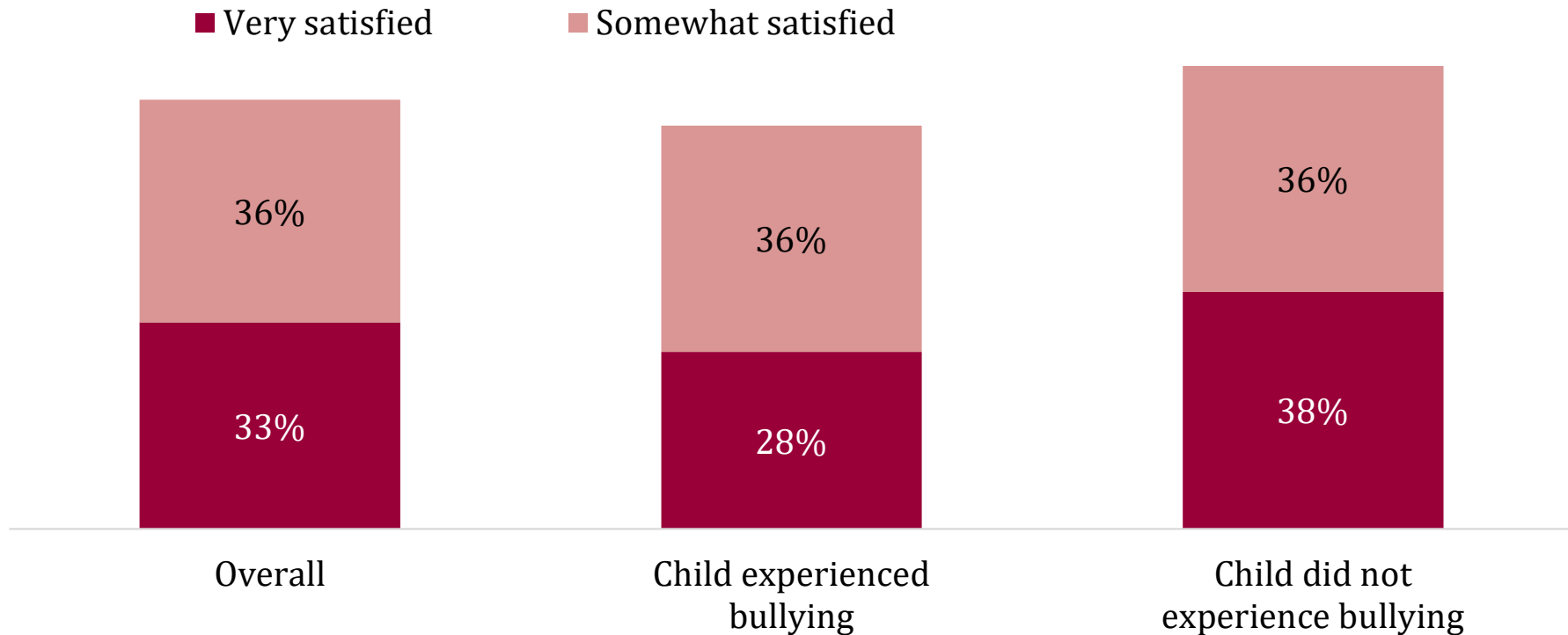


# Satisfaction with bullying protocol

- While a majority of parents are at least somewhat familiar with their child's school policies and procedures around bullying, just 28% of parents whose children have been bullied are "very satisfied" with the school bullying protocols.

## Most are at least somewhat satisfied with school bullying protocols

*% of parents who said they are \_\_\_ with school bullying protocols*

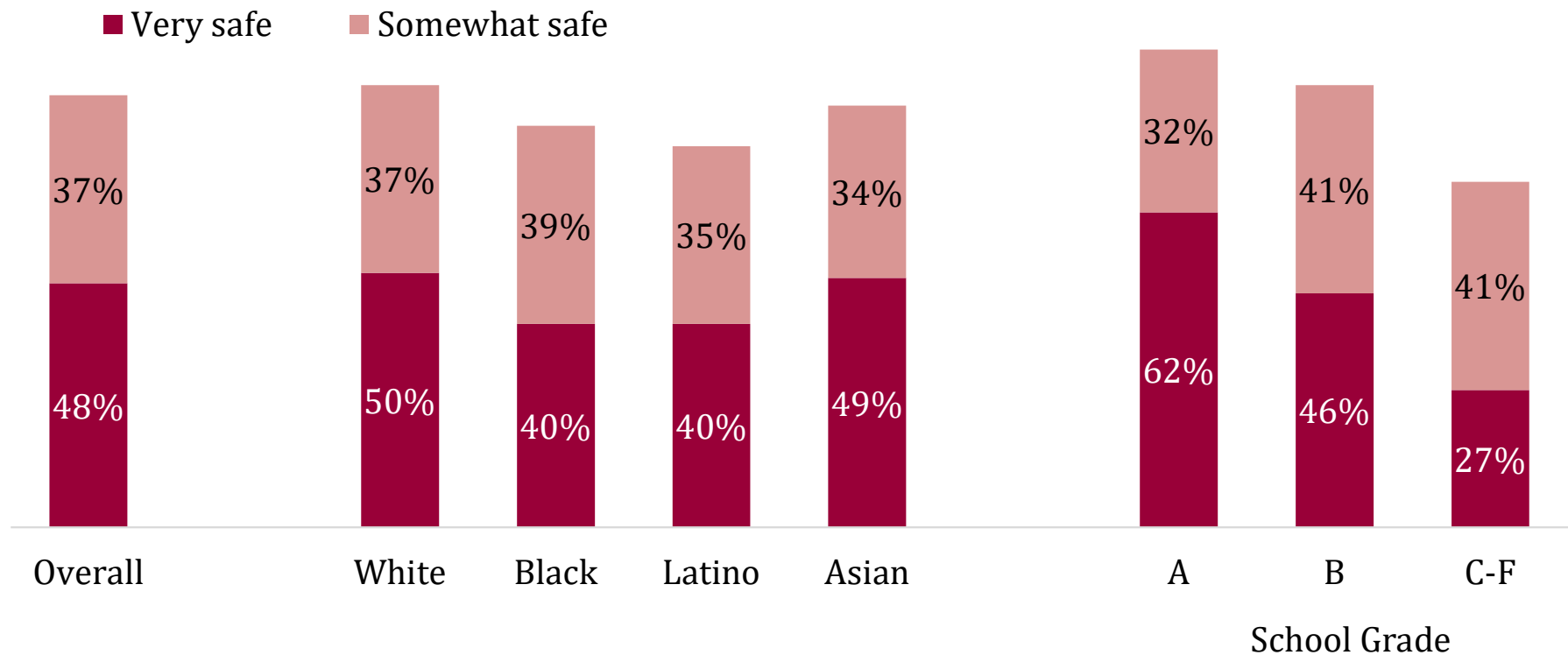


# Perceptions of safety from violence

- Black and Latino parents are less likely to say their children are “very safe” from violence. Parents who gave their child’s school a lower overall grade are also less likely to feel their child is “very safe.”

## Black and Latino parents are less likely to see their children as safe from violence

*% of parents who say their child is \_\_\_ from violence at school*

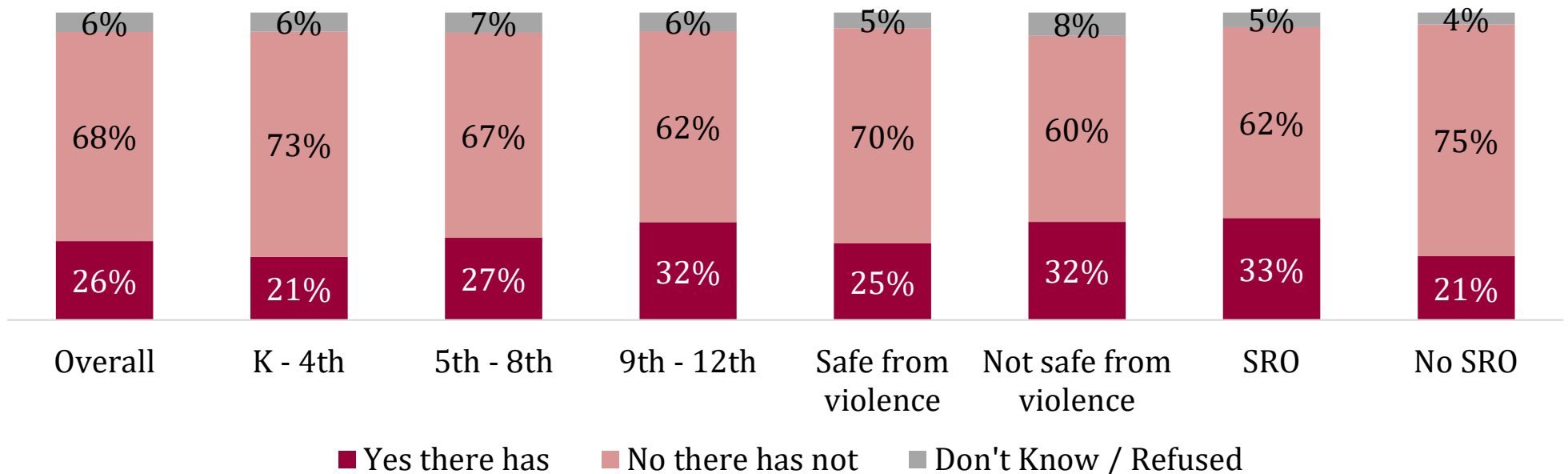


# Lockdown incidents

- About one in four parents (26%) say there has been an incident requiring a lockdown this school year.
- Parents with older children are more likely to say there has been an incident this school year.

## One in four say a lockdown has been required, more among higher grade levels

% of parents who said \_\_\_\_\_ been an incident requiring lock down or evacuation

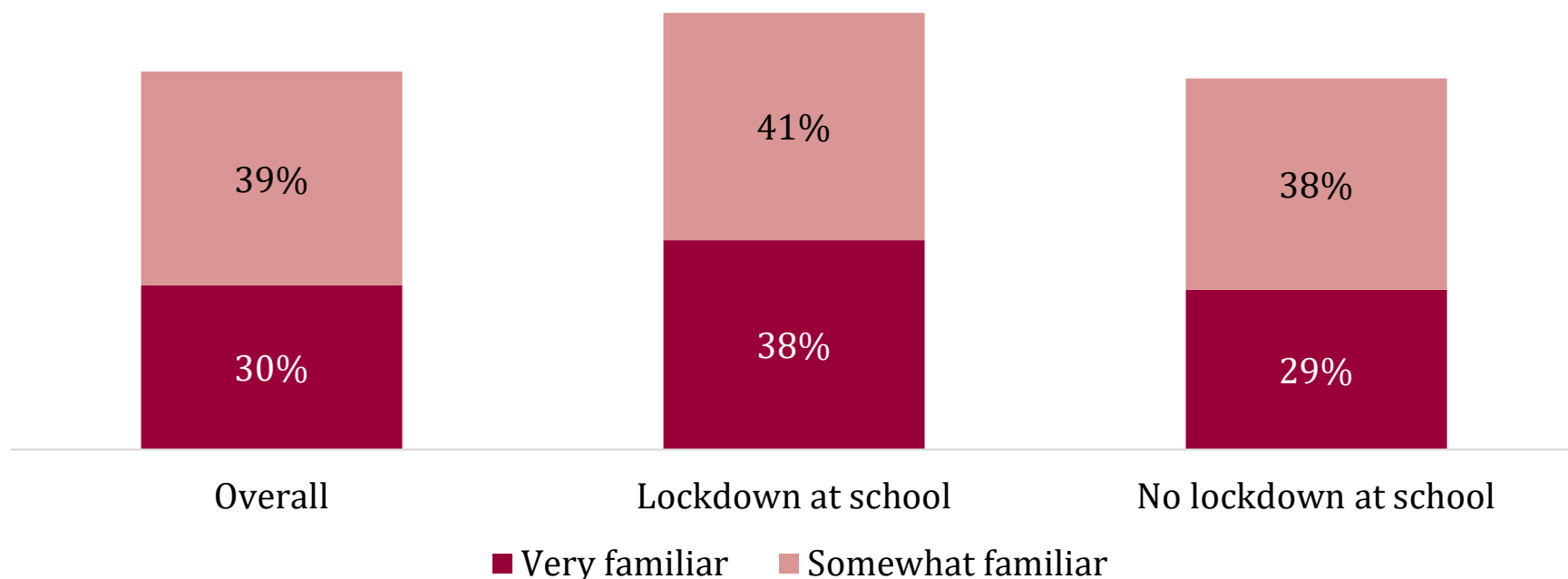


# Familiarity with emergency response

- Most parents are at least somewhat familiar with emergency response protocols. Those whose children have experienced lockdowns are more familiar with their schools' emergency response protocol.

## Experience with lockdowns brings more familiarity with protocols

*% of parents who say there are \_\_\_ with the emergency response protocol at their child's school*

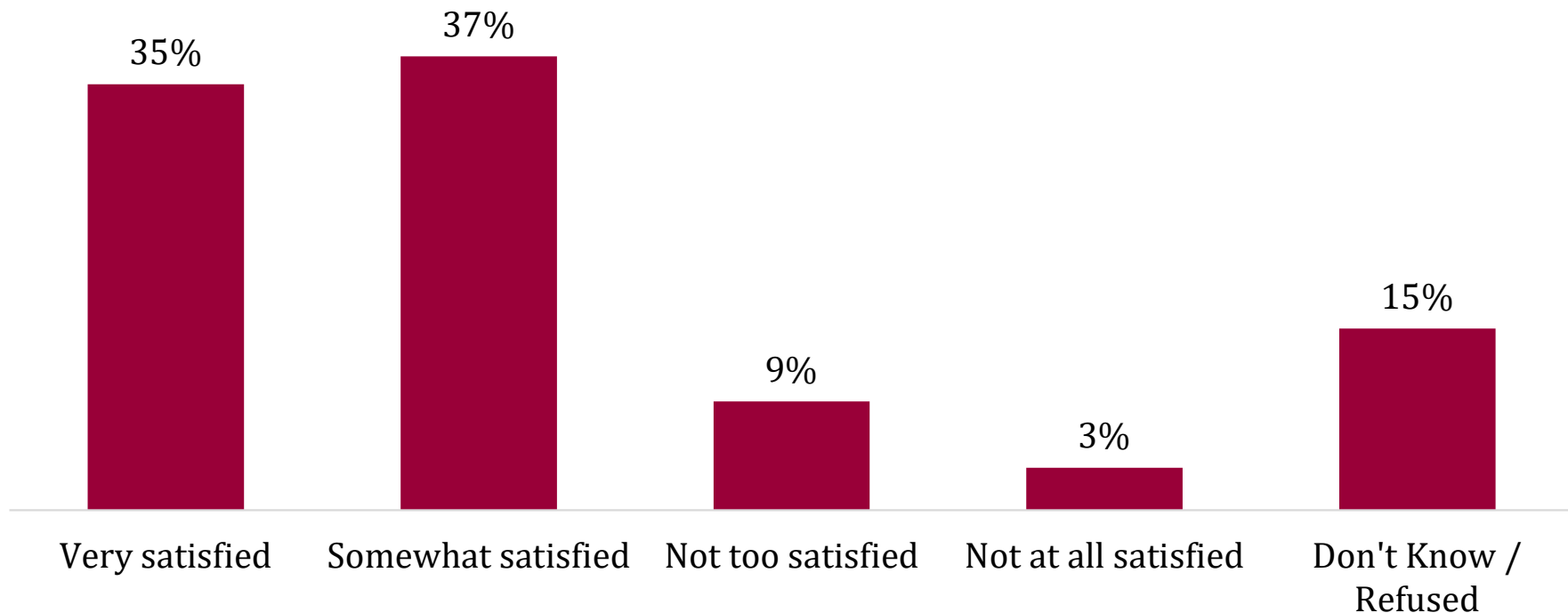


# Satisfaction with emergency response

- While a majority of parents are at least somewhat satisfied with the schools' emergency response protocol, 27% are dissatisfied or unsure.

## Most parents are at least somewhat satisfied with the emergency response

*% of parents who say they are \_\_\_ with their child's schools' emergency response protocol*

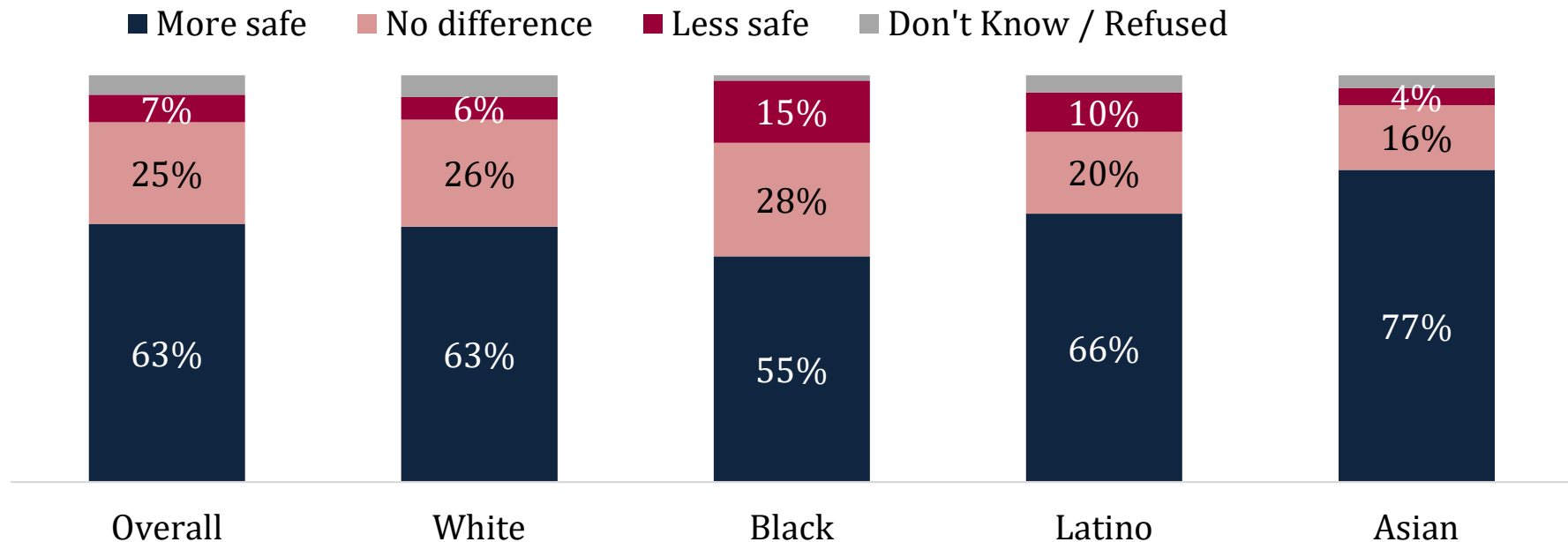


# SROs and feelings of safety

- Majorities of parents say their child feels more safe with the presence of police and SROs in school.

## Most parents say SROs in schools make their children feel more safe

% of parents who say the presence of an SRO makes their child feel\_\_\_\_\_

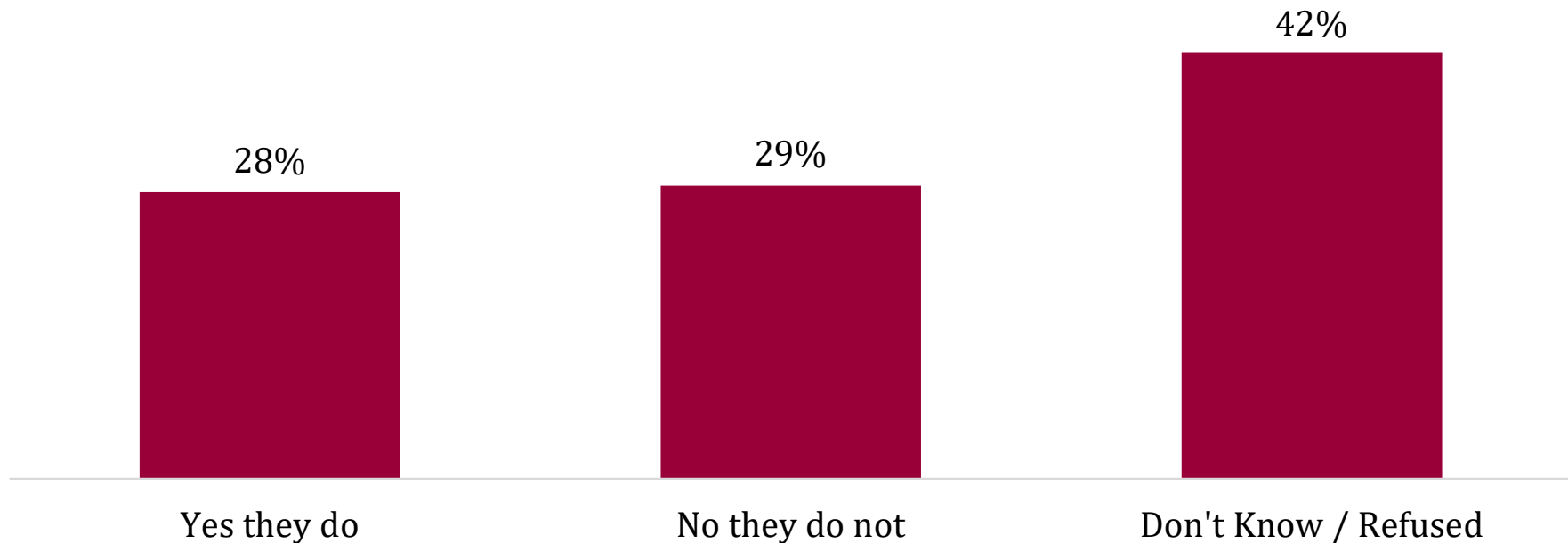




# Alternative approaches

- Many parents (42%) are unsure if their child's school has any alternative approaches prior to the discipline process.

**Most say school does not use alternative approaches to discipline or do not know**  
*% of parents who say their child's school does / does not have alternative approaches*

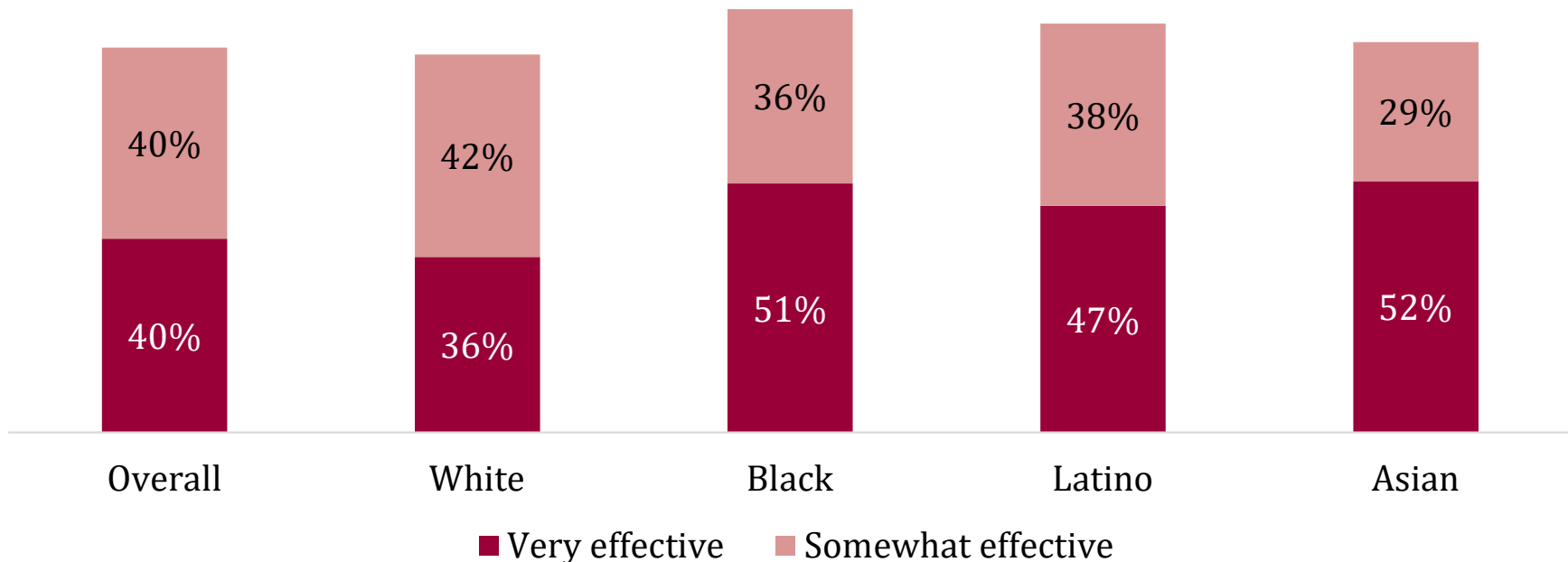


# Alternative approach effectiveness

- Among parents who say their child's school has alternative approaches, most say they are very or somewhat effective.

## More Black and Latino parents call alternative approaches "very effective"

*% of parents who say child's school has alt. approaches and say they are very/somewhat effective*





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**The Education Trust**



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