



**CITY FORWARD**  
COLLECTIVE

# 2021 ANNUAL POLL: MILWAUKEE K-12 EDUCATION SENTIMENTS

# OVERVIEW: KEY FINDINGS

## **Most respondents remain unsatisfied with the state of K-12 education in Milwaukee**

- 26% rate the quality of Milwaukee school's as good/excellent, 22% believe the system is working for students
- 19% believe the quality of schools are improving, while 41% believe quality is getting worse (5 pts more than in 2020)
  - White respondents were more likely to believe that schools are improving (25%) than Black and Hispanic/Latino respondents (16%)
  - Black respondents were more likely to believe schools were getting worse (45%) than white and Hispanic/Latino respondents (39% and 40%)

## **Parents perceive their child's own school quality as good, even as they report similar levels of dissatisfaction with the city's K-12 education system as a whole**

- 71% of parents rate their child's own school as good/excellent; 57% said they are satisfied with school options available to them
  - Hispanic/Latino (77%) and white (78%) respondents were more likely to rate their child's own school as good/excellent than Black (58%) respondents
  - Hispanic/Latino (63%) and white (60%) respondents were more satisfied with the school options available to them than Black (52%) respondents
- Parents had generally low opinions of the city's schools overall: 29% said the city's schools are good/excellent, and 28% said the system is working for students; 39% of parents believe the system is getting worse

# OVERVIEW: KEY FINDINGS

## Respondents demonstrate significant openness to changes in how Milwaukee Public Schools are governed

- Respondents had low awareness of the School Board (10% can name their School Board member), and viewed the board unfavorably (net favorability was -7, with only 22% of respondents believing the School Board is doing a good/excellent job)
  - 14% of Hispanic/Latino and 8% of Black respondents could name their school board member
  - 24% of Black respondents, 23% of white respondents and 21% of Hispanic/Latino respondents believed the School Board is doing an excellent job
- 77% of respondents indicate openness to some form of change in how School Board members are selected, with strong pluralities in favor of shifting election dates to the fall (48% in favor, just 8% opposed), electing more citywide members (62% in favor), and/or having at least some members appointed by the Mayor and Common Council (44% in favor)
  - Black (12%) and Hispanic/Latino (13%) respondents were more likely to oppose moving elections to the fall than white (3%) respondents
  - White respondents (69%) were more likely to support electing more citywide members than Black (56%) and Hispanic/Latino (61%) respondents
  - Black (52%) and Hispanic/Latino (45%) were more likely to support appointment of school board members than white (39%) respondents

# OVERVIEW: KEY FINDINGS

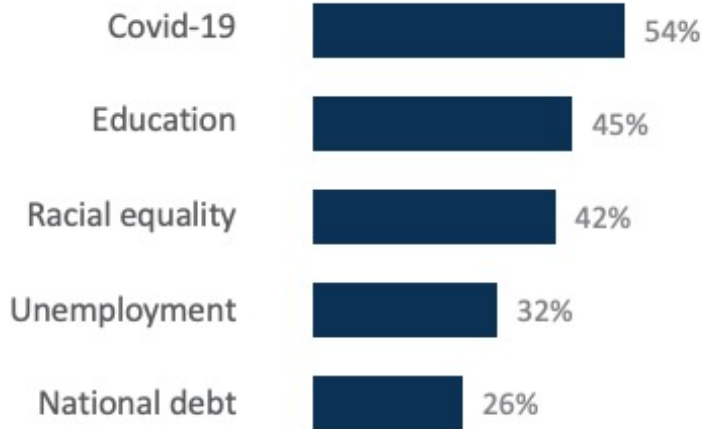
## **There is broad agreement that the COVID-19 pandemic has harmed students' learning; respondents demonstrated substantial support for COVID-related policy mandates to mitigate further impacts**

- Many parents (46%) believe their children fell behind academically during the pandemic; fewer than 1 in 3 (32%) believe their child stayed on track
  - 56% of Hispanic/Latino parents believed their children fell behind academically, compared to 46% of white and 33% of Black parents
  - 45% of Black parents felt their students stayed on track, compared with 18% of Hispanic/Latino parents
- A majority of parents (59%) indicated they had vaccinated their child(ren) or planned to do so, whereas 23% of parents indicated no plans to vaccinate
  - However, student vaccination rates were significantly higher in white (72%) parents than Hispanic/Latino (49%) and Black (46%) parents
  - 30% of Black parents and 25% of Hispanic/Latino parents will not vaccinate children, compared to 19% of white parents
- Black (24%) and Hispanic/Latino (26%) were not sure about their student vaccination plans, compared to 9% of white parents
- Majorities of respondents indicated support for continued school mask mandates (74%), and for at least some form of student vaccination requirements (60%)
  - Black (87%) and Hispanic/Latino (73%) respondents were more likely to support mask mandates than white (62%) respondents
  - White (68%) respondents support some form of student vaccination requirement, whereas 52% of Black and 57% of Hispanic/Latino respondents were in support

# IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

Respondents ranked education as highly important among issues facing the country, second only to COVID-19

Issues Facing Country With Largest Impact<sup>+</sup>  
(Top-2 Box Rank, N=700)



Other Critical Topics With Large Impact<sup>+</sup>  
(N=700)

	Total	Parents vs. Non-Parents		Age			Ethnicity		
		Parents (A)	Non-Parents (B)	18-34 (C)	35-54 (D)	55+ (E)	Caucasian (F)	African American (G)	Hispanic/Other (H)
Healthcare	10%	9%	12%	7%	13%	10%	13%	9%	8%
Crime/Justice	10%	8%	11%	9%	10%	11%	7%	15% FH	7%
Equality	8%	9%	8%	8%	10%	7%	8%	10%	7%
Climate change	7%	6%	9%	7%	7%	6%	8% G	3%	11%
Politics	7%	8%	6%	4%	7%	11% C	11% GH	3%	4%
Economy	6%	5%	6%	3%	7%	9%	10% GH	5%	1%
Affordable living	3%	3%	4%	1%	5% C	2%	1%	6% F	4%
Jobs/Pay	3%	3%	2%	1%	3%	3%	2%	4%	2%

# PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL QUALITY

- Among all residents, only 26% of respondents rated the quality of Milwaukee's schools as good or excellent
  - 19% of respondents believe that the quality of Milwaukee's schools is improving, while 41% believe schools are getting worse
    - White respondents were more likely to believe that schools are improving (25%) than Black and Hispanic/Latino respondents (16%),
    - Black respondents were more likely to believe schools were getting worse (45%) than white and Hispanic/Latino respondents (39% and 40%).
- Only 22% of respondents believe Milwaukee's system of K-12 education is working well for students (down 3 points from 2020)
- While parents' perceptions of citywide school quality largely track the overall trends, there is a significant gap when compared with perceptions of their child(ren)s school options
  - 29% rated the overall quality of Milwaukee's schools as good or excellent (down 3 pts from 2020)
  - 57% expressed satisfaction with the choices of school available (no change)
    - Hispanic/Latino (63%) and white (60%) respondents were more satisfied with the school options available to them than Black (52%) respondents
  - 71% rated the quality of their own child(ren)'s school as good or excellent (up 9 pts from 2020)
    - Hispanic/Latino (77%) and white (78%) respondents were more likely to rate their child's own school as good/excellent than Black (58%) respondents



# PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL QUALITY

The perceived quality of the Milwaukee K-12 schools is unchanged from last year, with nearly one in three rating it poor.

Quality of Milwaukee K-12 Schools

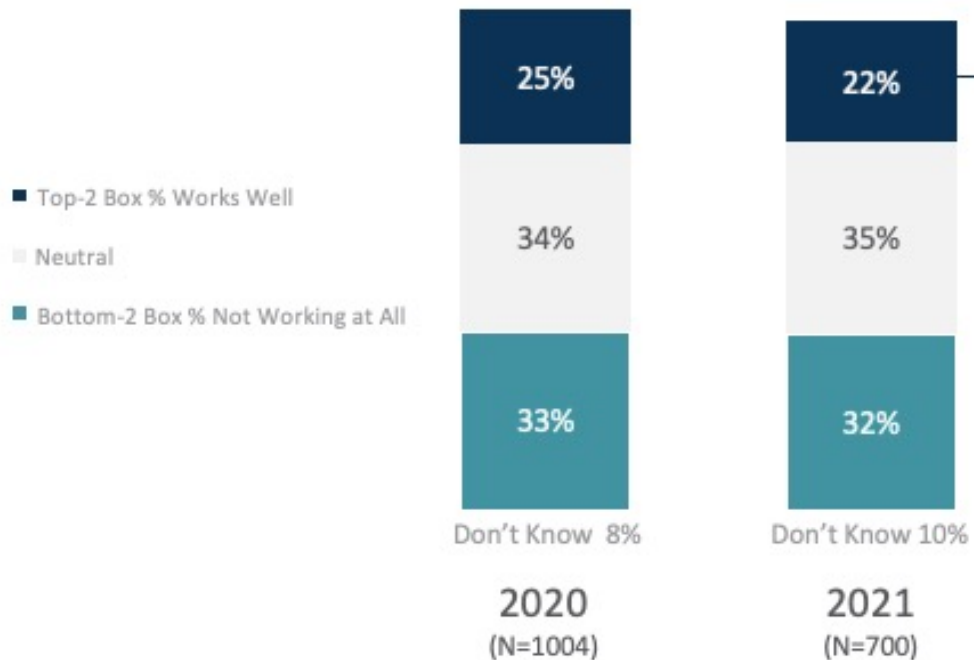
Status of Quality of Milwaukee Schools



# PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL QUALITY

Only 2 in 10 believe the current Milwaukee educational system is working for students

How Well Is The Current Milwaukee Educational System Working For Students?



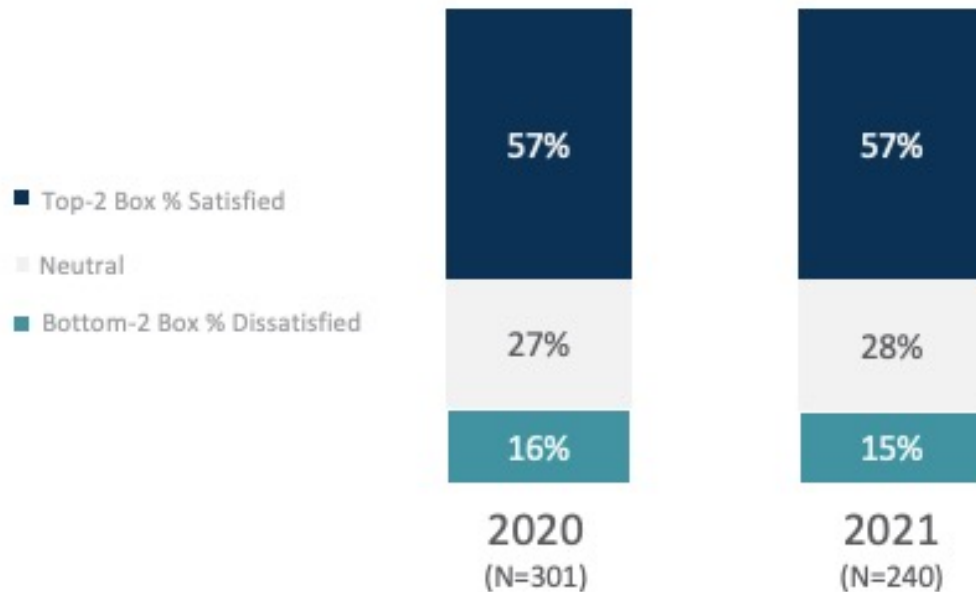
2021		
Parents vs. Non-Parents	Parents (A)	28% B
	Non-Parents (B)	16%
Age	18-34 (C)	25% E
	35-54 (D)	26% E
	55+ (E)	11%
Education	High School or Less (F)	26% ▼
	Some College (G)	17%
	College + (H)	25% G
Ethnicity	Caucasian (I)	21%
	African American (J)	22%
	Hispanic/Other (K)	25%



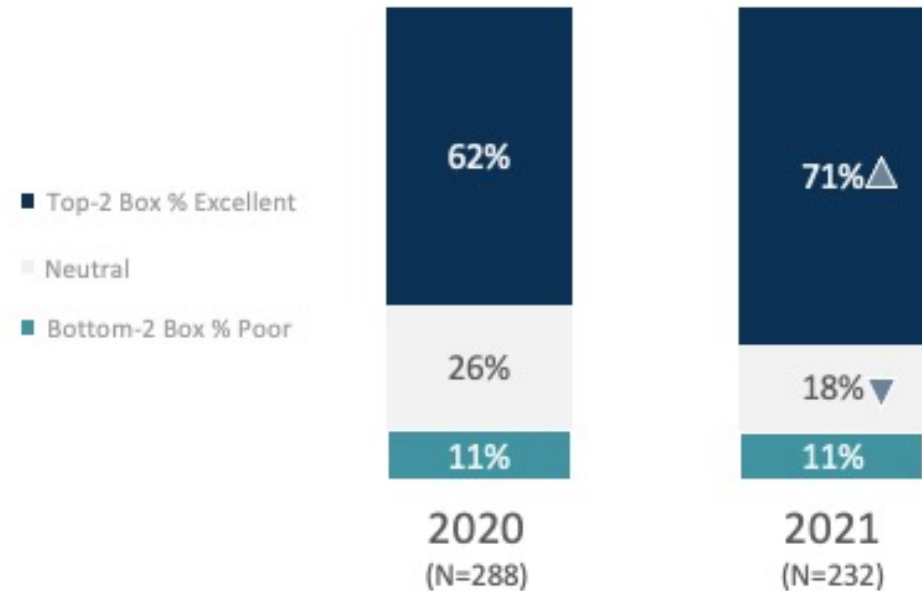
# PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL QUALITY

Satisfaction with choice of school is stable; perceived quality among parents of the child's school has increased over 2020

**Satisfaction with Choice of Schools**  
(Among Parents)



**Perceived Quality of Child's School**  
(Among Parents)

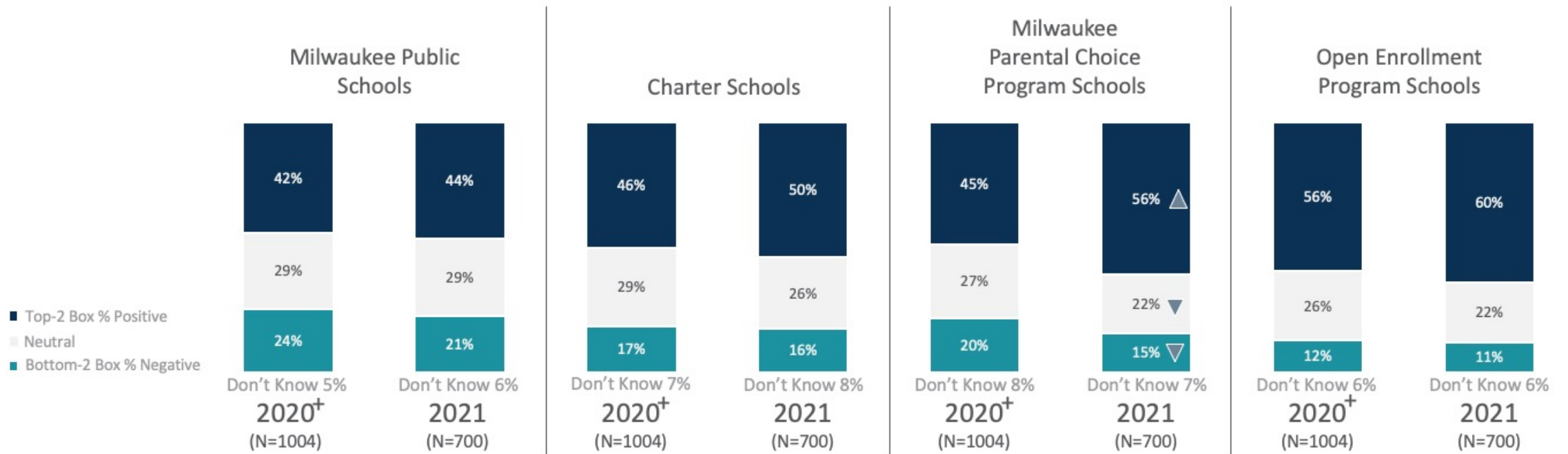


# PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOLS BY SECTOR

- Perceptions of MPS and public charter schools remained stable, while there was a significant increase in favorable perceptions of the voucher program
  - MPS: 44% favorable, +22 net favorable
  - Public Charters: 50% favorable, +34 net favorable
    - 55% of Hispanic/Latino, 52% of white and 46% of Black respondents viewed public charters positively
  - MPCP: 56% favorable, +42 net favorable (+14 points from 2020)
    - 66% of Hispanic/Latino, 60% of Black and 48% of white respondents viewed MPCP schools positively
- Shifts in MPCP/voucher favorability were driven by statistically significant improvements in perceptions among 3 respondent groups:
  - 1) African-American (44% favorable in 2020 → 60% favorable in 2021)
  - 2) college-educated (45% → 58%)
  - 3) younger (42% → 57%) & middle-aged (49% → 58%)

# PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOLS BY SECTOR

Perceptions of MPS and public charter schools remained stable, while there was a significant increase in favorable perceptions of the voucher program



# PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOLS BY SECTOR

The overall opinion of Milwaukee Parental Choice Program School has improved over 2020, driven by an increase among younger and middle-aged residents, more educated, and African Americans

2021 Overall Opinion by Respondent Type  
(Top-2 Box Rating)

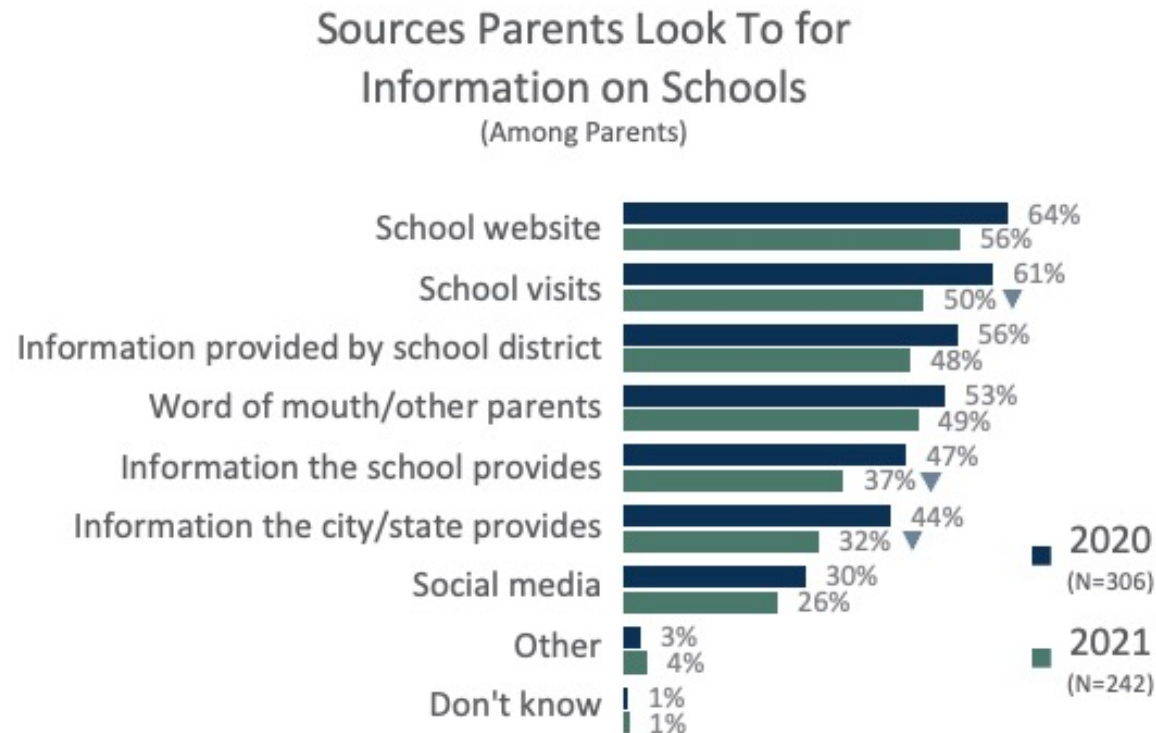
	Total	Parents vs. Non-Parents		Age			Education			Ethnicity		
		Parents (A)	Non-Parents (B)	18-34 (C)	35-54 (D)	55+ (E)	High School or Less (F)	Some College (G)	College+ (H)	Caucasian (I)	African American (J)	Hispanic/Other (K)
Milwaukee Public Schools	44%	47%	40%	47%	43%	41%	51% G	38%	46%	44%	43%	42%
Charter Schools	50%	51%	48%	47%	51%	50%	43%	49%	54%	52%	46%	55%
Milwaukee Parental Choice Program School	56% ▲	60% ▲	53% ▲	57% ▲	58% ▲	52%	49%	59%	57% ▲	48%	60% I ▲	66% I
Open Enrollment Program Schools	60%	61%	59%	50%	66% C	62%	56%	56%	66%	62%	60% ▲	58%

# SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

- Most parents (80%) report that they are able to access the information they need to make schooling decisions for their children
- Compared to 2020, we found significant shifts in the sources of information about schools used by parents:
  - School visits: down 11 pts, from 61% → 50%
  - School-provided information: down 10 pts, from 47% → 37%
  - City/state-provided information (e.g., state report card): down 12 pts, from 44% → 32%

# SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Most parents say they have what they need to choose a school for their children, though we found significant shifts in sources of information about schools used by parents



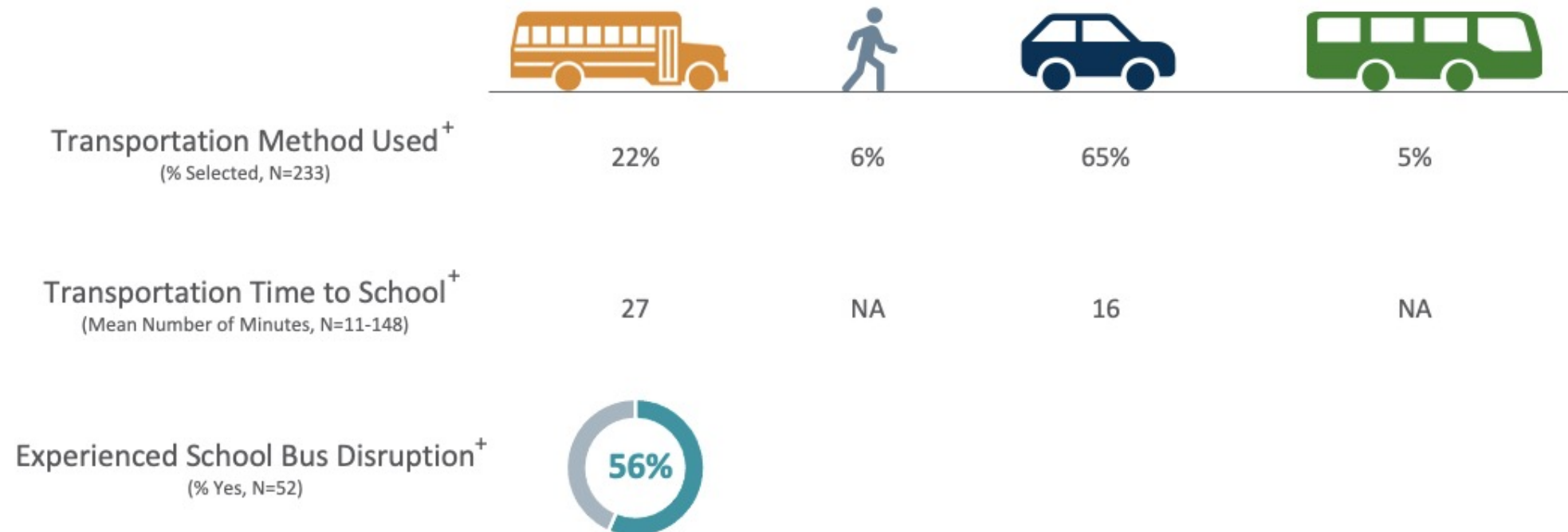
Percent of Parents Who Feel They Have the Information Needed to Choose the Best Schools  
(Among Parents)

		2020	2021	
All Parents		79%	80%	
	Age	18-34 (A)	65%	83% ▲
		35-54 (B)	84% A	80%
55+ (C)		NA	NA	
Education	High School or Less (D)	68%	70%	
	Some College (E)	73%	75%	
	College + (F)	91% DE	90% DE	
Ethnicity	Caucasian (G)	86%	81%	
	African American (H)	75%	79%	
	Hispanic/Other (I)	76%	77%	
		(N=306)	(N=242)	



# TRANSPORTATION

- Most students are driven to school, with an average travel time of 16 min
- Of those who ride the bus, most experienced disrupted service this year



# COVID-19

- Learning Loss
  - 46% of parents indicate their children fell behind academically during the pandemic
    - 56% of Hispanic/Latino parents believed their children fell behind academically, compared to 46% of white and 33% of Black parents
  - Just under one-third (32%) indicate their children stayed on track
    - 45% of Black parents felt their students stayed on track, compared with 18% of Hispanic/Latino parents
- Mitigation & Mandates
  - 74% support mask mandates for students and staff attending in-person school
    - 77% of parents
    - Black (87%) and Hispanic/Latino (73%) respondents were more likely to support mask mandates than white (62%) respondents
  - 60% support some form of student vaccination requirement for in-person schooling
    - White (68%) respondents supported some form of student vaccination requirement, vs 52% of Black and 57% of Hispanic/Latino respondents
- Vaccination Plans
  - 32% of parents report their children are already vaccinated

An additional 27% indicate they plan to vaccinate their children

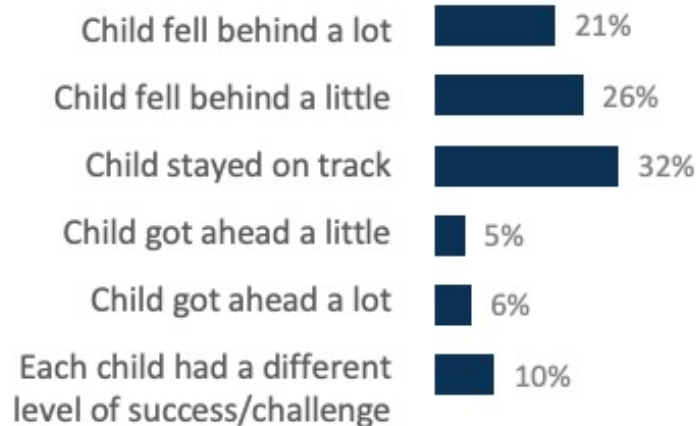
- By race/ethnicity: 72% of White parents had already or planned to vaccinate their children, vs 46% of Black and 49% of Hispanic parents
- By age: Only 44% of parents under 35 planned to vaccinate, vs 67% of parents over 35
- By educational attainment: 74% of parents with college degrees planned to vaccinate their children, vs 49% of parents with no/some college

*NOTE: Polling was conducted after Pfizer vaccine approval for 5-11 year olds, and prior to the Omicron surge*

# COVID-19: LEARNING LOSS

47% of parents indicate their children fell behind academically during the pandemic; just under one-third (32%) indicate their children stayed on track

Impact of Remote Learning on Academic Performance<sup>+</sup>  
(Among Parents, N=233)



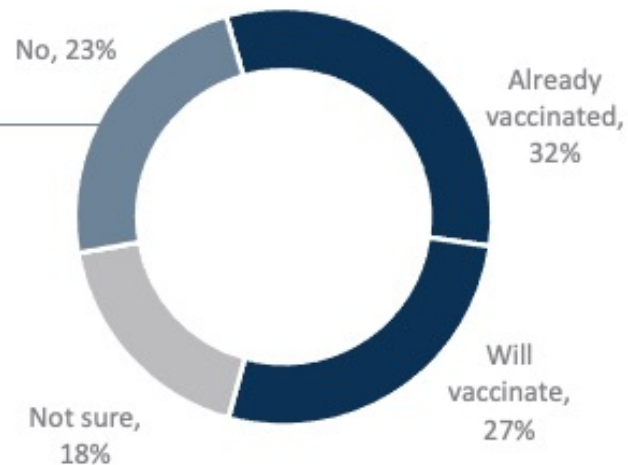
	Type of School Attended				Grade Level		
	Public (A)	Charter (B)	Voucher (C)	Open Enrollment (D)	Elementary School (E)	Middle School (F)	High School (G)
Child fell behind a lot	23%	NA	NA	19%	14%	NA	23%
Child fell behind a little	24%	NA	NA	31%	40% G	NA	19%
Child stayed on track	31%	NA	NA	27%	33%	NA	35%
Child got ahead a little	4%	NA	NA	15%	5%	NA	6%
Child got ahead a lot	3%	NA	NA	7%	5%	NA	1%
Each child had a different level of success/challenge	15%	NA	NA	-	3%	NA	16% E
	(N=99)	(N=12)	(N=22)	(N=31)	(N=63)	(N=24)	(N=50)

# COVID-19: PARENTS ON VACCINATING CHILDREN

More than half of parents either have or plan to vaccinate their child against COVID-19, while one in five is planning against vaccinating

Plans to Vaccinate Child Against COVID-19<sup>+</sup>  
(N=242)

Age	18-34 (A)	34% B
	35-54 (B)	17%
	55+ (C)	23%
Ethnicity	Caucasian (D)	19%
	African American (E)	30%
	Hispanic/Other (F)	25%
Political Affiliation	Democrats (G)	12%
	Independents (H)	45% G
	Republicans (I)	34% G
Income	<\$50,000 (J)	33% L
	\$50,000 - \$100,000 (K)	20%
	\$100,000+ (L)	13%



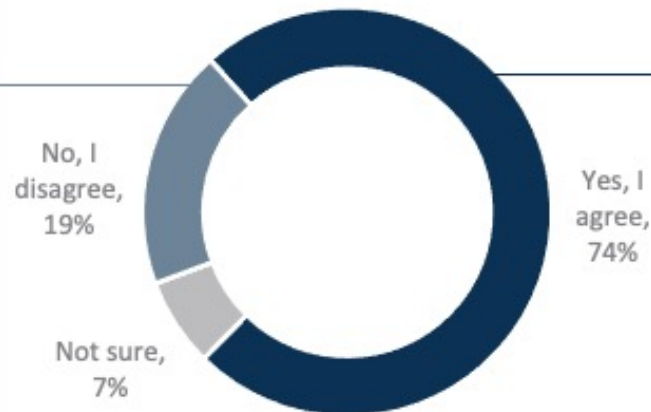
Age	18-34 (A)	44%
	35-54 (B)	67% A
	55+ (C)	66%
Education	High School or Less (D)	50%
	Some College (E)	48%
	College + (F)	74% DE
Ethnicity	Caucasian (G)	72% HI
	African American (H)	46%
	Hispanic/Other (I)	49%
Political Affiliation	Democrats (J)	73% KL
	Independents (K)	38%
	Republicans (L)	46%
Income	<\$50,000 (M)	46%
	\$50,000 - \$100,000 (N)	62%
	\$100,000+ (O)	78% MN
Gender	Female (P)	51%
	Male (Q)	71% P

# COVID-19: MASKS IN SCHOOLS

Three-quarters of respondents believe masks should be required at schools, with strong support from parents and Black residents

Should Schools Require Masks?<sup>†</sup>  
(N=700)

Parents vs. Non-Parents	Parents (A)	17%
	Non-Parents (B)	20%
Age	18-34 (C)	16%
	35-54 (D)	19%
	55+ (E)	22%
Education	High School or Less (F)	19%
	Some College (G)	19%
	College + (H)	18%
Ethnicity	Caucasian (I)	31% JK
	African American (J)	9%
	Hispanic/Other (K)	13%
Political Affiliation	Democrats (L)	6%
	Independents (M)	27% L
	Republicans (N)	52% LM

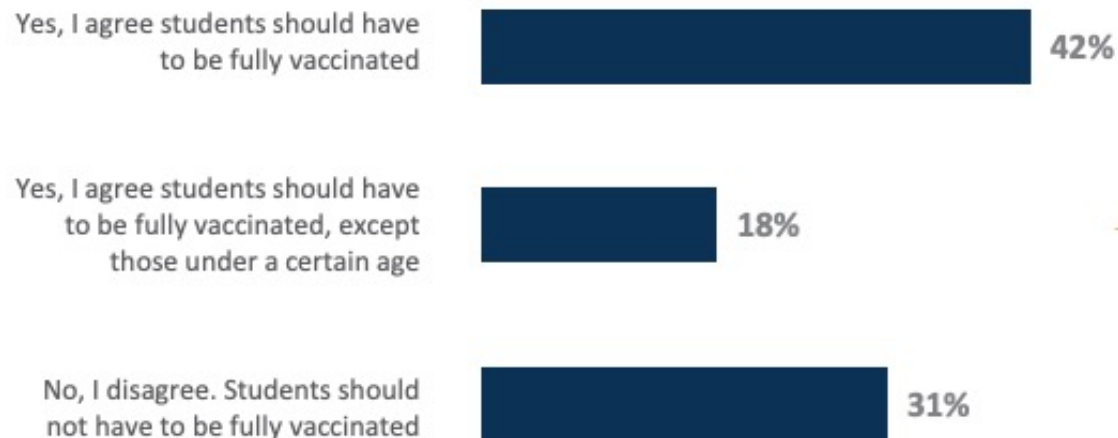


Parents vs. Non-Parents	Parents (A)	77%
	Non-Parents (B)	71%
Age	18-34 (C)	74%
	35-54 (D)	75%
	55+ (E)	71%
Education	High School or Less (F)	73%
	Some College (G)	72%
	College + (H)	77%
Ethnicity	Caucasian (I)	62%
	African American (J)	87% IK
	Hispanic/Other (K)	73%
Political Affiliation	Democrats (L)	89% MN
	Independents (M)	63% N
	Republicans (N)	43%

# COVID-19: STUDENT VACCINE MANDATES

60% of respondents agree with mandating COVID-19 vaccines for students in some form, though opinions vary on the age at which students should have to be vaccinated

Agreement with Vaccine Requirement for In Person Students<sup>+</sup>  
(N=700)



Age at Which Students Should Have to be Vaccinated<sup>+</sup>  
(N=123)

A table with two rows and two columns. A yellow arrow points from the '18%' bar in the left chart to the '5-10' row in this table.

5-10	42%
11+	49%



# CITYWIDE GOVERNANCE & SCHOOL BOARD

- Respondents continue to demonstrate low levels of awareness of, and satisfaction with, the Milwaukee Board of School Directors
  - Only 10% correctly identified their school board member
    - 14% of Hispanic/Latino and 8% of Black respondents could name their school board member
  - Only 17% correctly identified the MPS Superintendent
    - 15% of Hispanic/Latino respondents vs. 20% of white respondents
  - Only 22% rated the performance of the School Board as good or excellent (-7 net favorable)
    - 24% of Black respondents, 23% of white respondents and 21% of Hispanic/Latino respondents believed the School Board is doing an excellent job

# CITYWIDE GOVERNANCE & SCHOOL BOARD

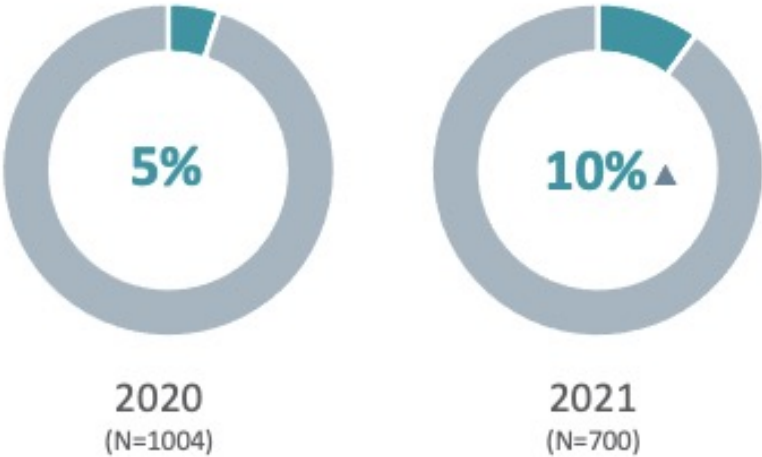
- Respondents also demonstrate openness to changes in the School Board's structure, though we find little support for a direct Mayoral takeover of MPS
  - A combined 62% of respondents expressed a preference for more School Board members to be elected on a citywide (at-large) basis
    - White respondents (69%) were more likely to support electing more citywide members than Black (56%) and Hispanic/Latino (61%) respondents
  - A combined 44% of respondents expressed a preference for at least some School Board members to be appointed by the Mayor & Common Council
    - Black (52%) and Hispanic/Latino (45%) were more likely to support appointment of school board members than white (39%) respondents
  - Just 6% of respondents favored the elimination of the School Board, with the Mayor directly appointing the superintendent
    - 4% of Black, 7% of white, and 9% of Hispanic/Latino respondents favored this option
  - Separately, 48% of respondents were favorable to the idea of moving School Board elections from the spring to the fall, in order to improve turnout
    - Black respondents were slightly less likely to favor this move at 42%

# CITYWIDE GOVERNANCE & SCHOOL BOARD

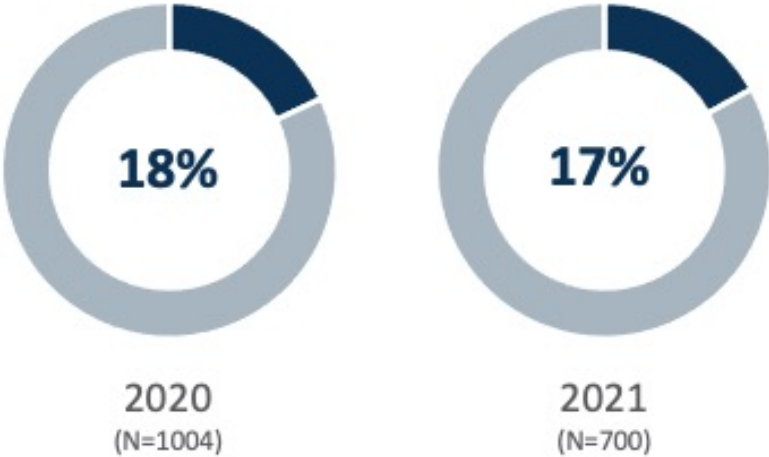
Respondents continue to demonstrate low levels of awareness of, and satisfaction with, the Milwaukee Board of School Directors

## Awareness of MPS Education Policymakers

Know the Name of their School Board Member



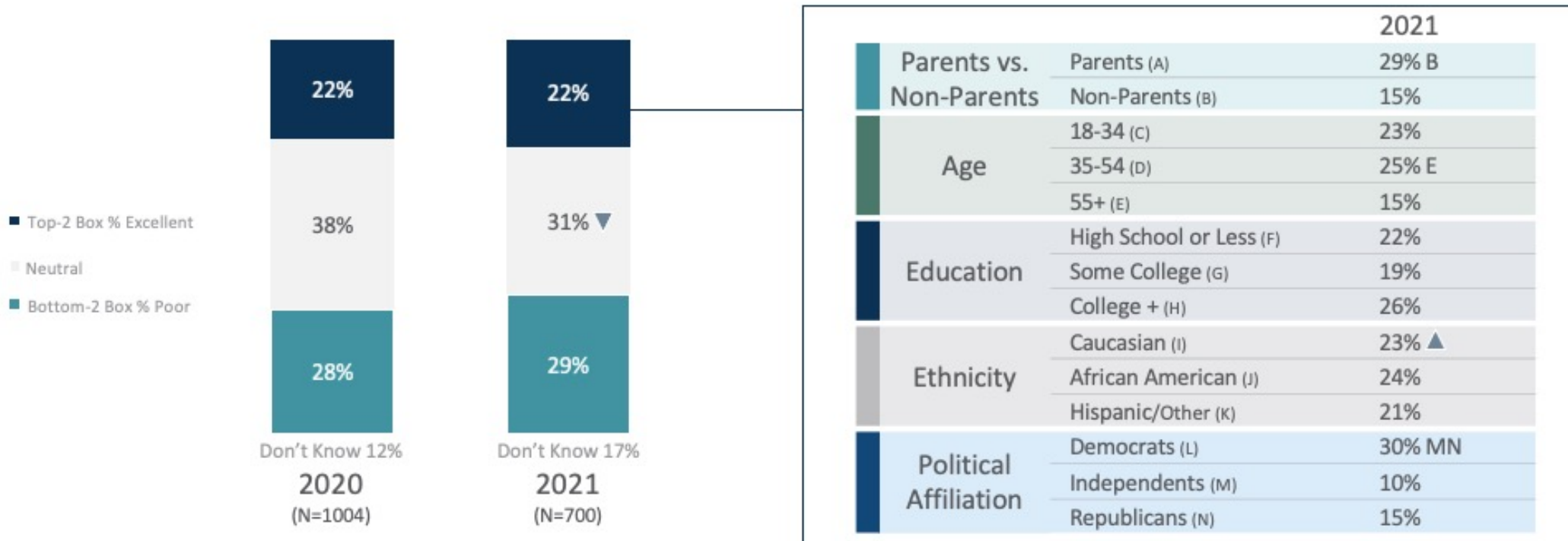
Know the Name of the MPS Superintendent



# CITYWIDE GOVERNANCE & SCHOOL BOARD

Only 22% rated the performance of the School Board as good or excellent (-7 net favorable)

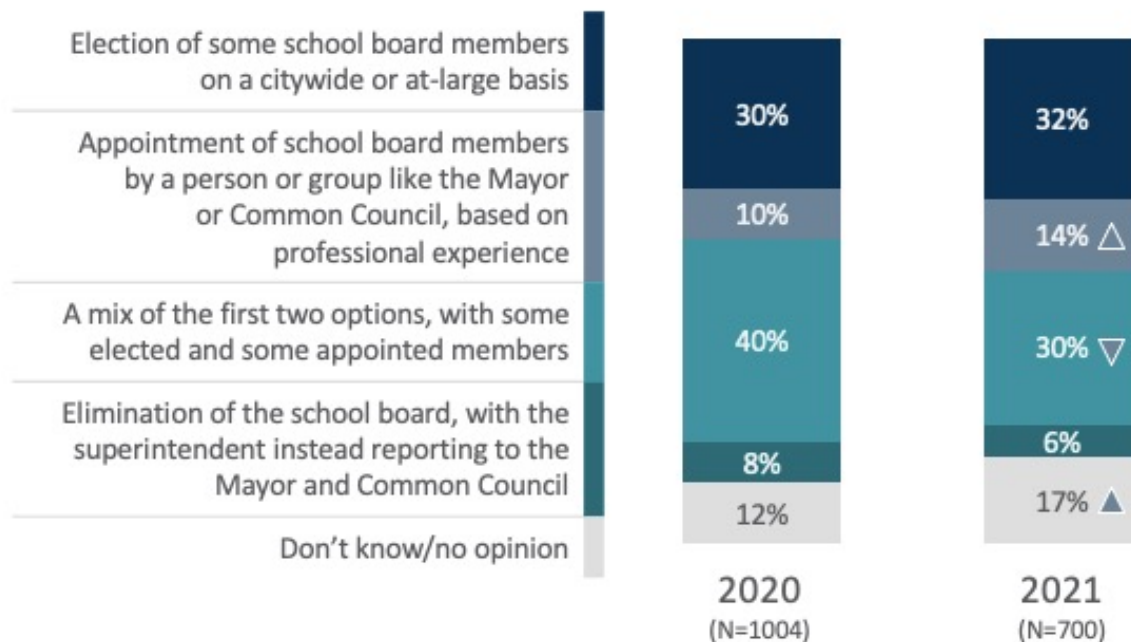
Perceptions of the Milwaukee Board of School Directors



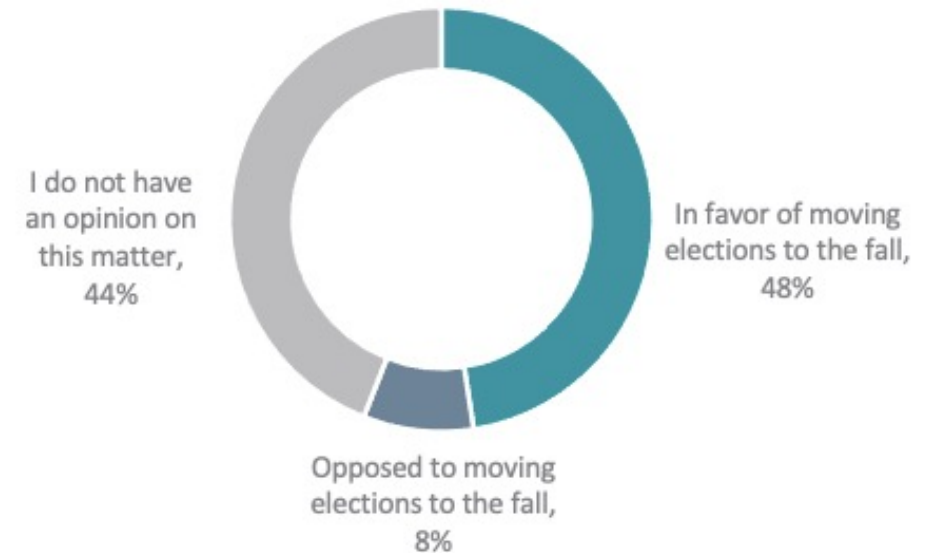
# CITYWIDE GOVERNANCE & SCHOOL BOARD

83% of respondents demonstrated openness to changes in MPS governance, with 77% open to changing the current School Board structure

### Formation of the Milwaukee Board of School Directors



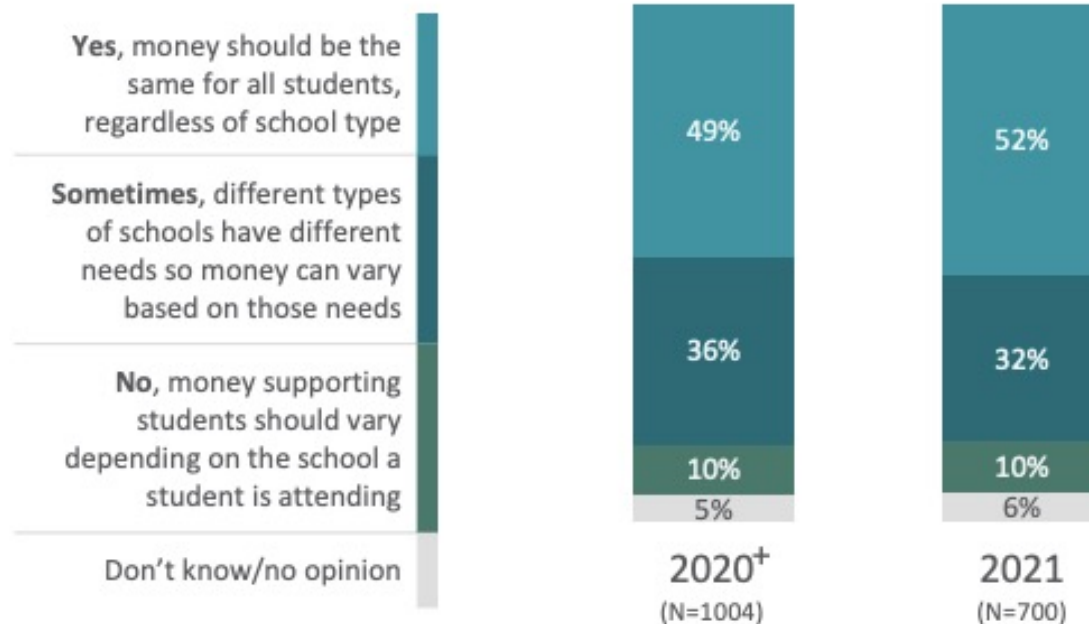
### Moving School Board Elections to Fall<sup>+</sup>



# SCHOOL FUNDING

About half of respondents agree public funding should be equal regardless of school type

Attitudes Toward Type of School and Amount of Tax Money Spent Per Child







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COLLECTIVE

# APPENDIX: STATISTICAL & DEMOGRAPHIC CONSIDERATIONS

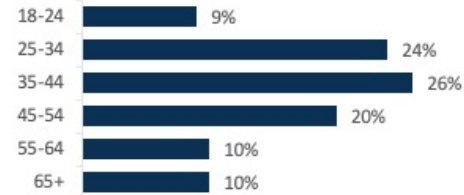
# BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

## Demographics

### General

**48%**  
Male  
**52%**  
Female

### Age



### Race/Ethnicity

Caucasian	39%
Black or African American	35%
Hispanic/Other	23%▲
Asian	3%
American Indian or Alaska Native	<1%
Prefer not to answer	1%

### Education/ Employment

**58%**  
Less than  
College  
**41%**  
College +

### Income

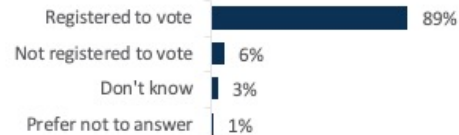
Less than \$35,000	27%
\$35,000 to less than \$50,000	15%
\$50,000 to less than \$75,000	19%
\$75,000 to less than \$100,000	15%
\$100,000 to less than \$150,000	14%
\$150,000 or more	6%

### Political Involvement

**56%**  
Democrat  
**21%**  
Independent  
**14%**  
Republican

**41%** % Democrat  
**15%** % Leans Democrat

**8%** % Republican  
**6%**▼ % Leans Republican

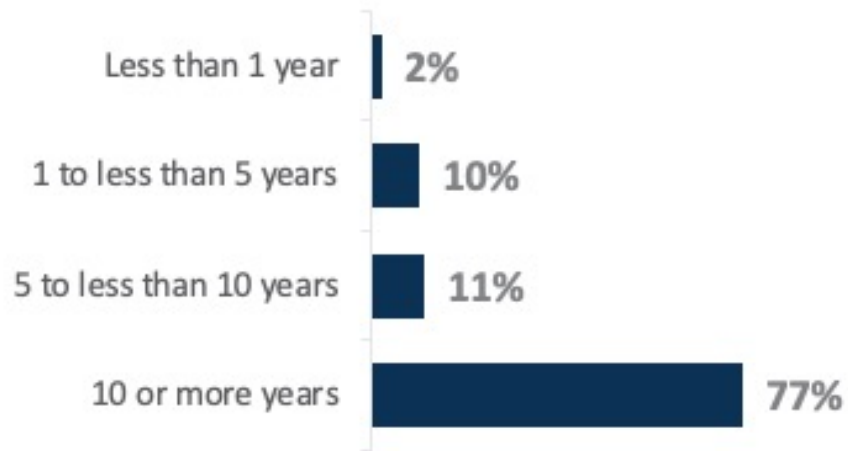


**84%** Voted in the last **presidential election**  
**40%** Voted in the last **school board election**

# BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

## Residents of Milwaukee

Tenure in Milwaukee

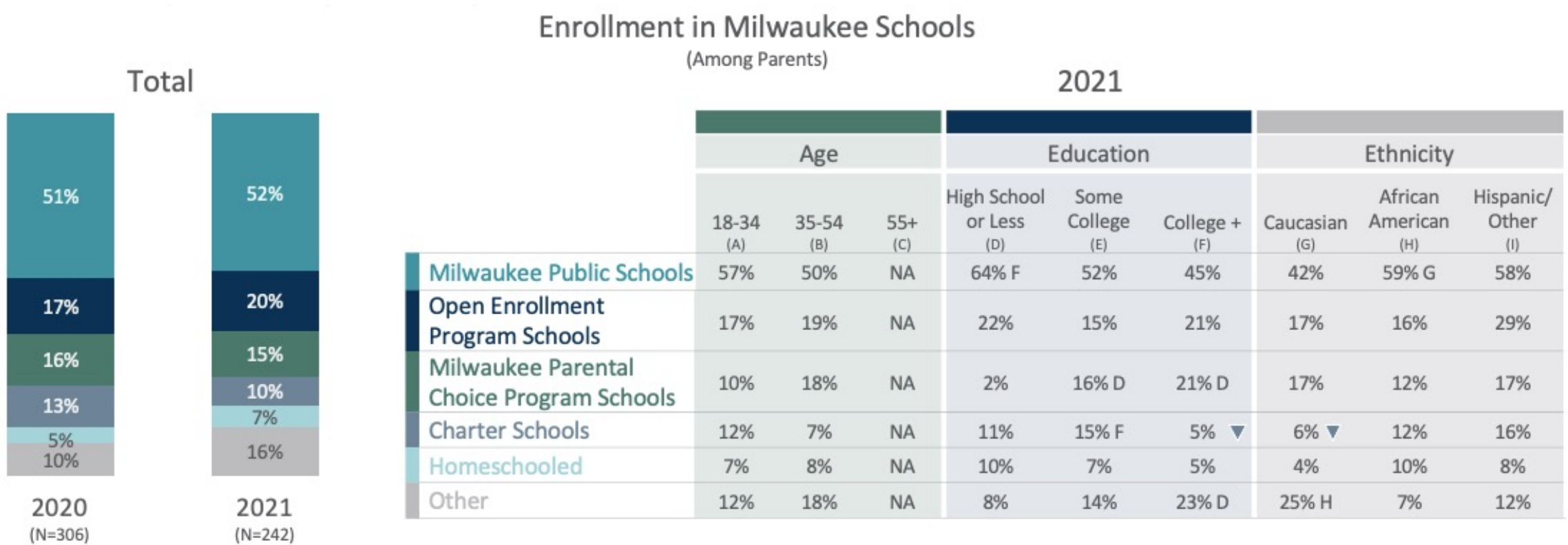


Presence of Children in the Home\*

	Parents vs. Non-Parents	
	Parents	Non-Parents
<b>Parents with children in school</b>	<b>52%</b>	
- Elementary school	31%	
- Middle school	17%	
- High school	20% ▼	
<b>Parents with children not in school</b>		<b>19%</b>
- School age, pre-school		14%
- School age, not enrolled		10%
<b>Non-Parents</b>		<b>45%</b>
- No children		45%
- Prefer not to say		1%

# BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

## School enrollment of the children of parents surveyed



# BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

- City Forward Collective worked with a local polling/market research firm (Deringer Research Group) to conduct research on K-12 education sentiments in the city of Milwaukee
- This is the second annual poll conducted, and included a number of repeated questions to track changes in sentiments over time
- Polling parameters:
  - 700 respondents, targeting City of Milwaukee residents in field Oct-Nov 2021
  - Sampling and weighting to align to citywide demographics (race/ethnicity, income, political affiliations)
  - Oversampling techniques employed to more accurately model results from parents of K-12 students, including representative subsets of students by sector (MPS, public charter, and voucher/MPCP) and by race/ethnicity



# Statistical Reliability and Limitations

- Reliability is the degree to which survey sample data reflects the actual population and the true parameters of that population. It is dependent primarily upon survey sample size, along with other factors, including the degree of representativeness of the original sample selection, types of questions asked, answers received, and respondent quality.
- For the Education Sentiment Research, with a sample of 700 respondents in the City of Milwaukee, yielding overall data reliable with 95% confidence, the result would be a +/- 3.70% sampling error interval.
  - That is to say, if a similar survey were conducted repeatedly in Milwaukee, results within plus or minus 3.70% would occur for any one question 95 out of 100 times. Looking at it another way, if a question received a “yes” answer by 60% of the 700 respondents, the chances are 95 out of 100 that between 56.30% and 63.70% of the targeted population would answer a similar “yes” response, if asked.
- Surveys should also never be viewed as 100% reliable. A small difference between two statistics or findings cannot be considered necessarily meaningful; however, as the sample size or market segment increases, the margin of error (sampling error) decreases, thereby providing more conclusive and reliable data.

Sample Size: 700

Confidence Level: 95%

Margin of Error: +/-3.70%