



**CITY FORWARD**  
COLLECTIVE

# **2021 ANNUAL POLL: MILWAUKEE K-12 EDUCATION SENTIMENTS**

# OVERVIEW: KEY FINDINGS

## **Most respondents remain broadly unsatisfied with the state of K-12 education in Milwaukee, though we found significant improvements in the perception of the Milwaukee Parental Choice (voucher) Program**

- Just one-quarter (26%) of respondents rated the quality of Milwaukee's K-12 schools as good or excellent, and just 22% believed that the current system is working well for students
- Only 19% of respondents believe Milwaukee's schools are improving, while 41% believe the quality of schools is getting worse
- While perceptions of Milwaukee Public Schools (44% favorable, +22 net favorability) and public charter schools (50% favorable, +34 net favorability) remained stable, perceptions of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP or vouchers) experienced a significant improvement of +14 points in net favorability (56% favorable and +42 net favorability)
  - These gains were driven by significant positive shifts in perceptions of the MPCP among Black respondents (44% → 60% favorable) and younger respondents (42% → 57% favorable among respondents under 35, and 49% → 58% favorable among respondents between 35 and 55)

## **Among Milwaukee *parents*, we found greater levels of satisfaction with their child(ren)'s school(s), even as they are similarly dissatisfied with the overall state of K12 education in the city**

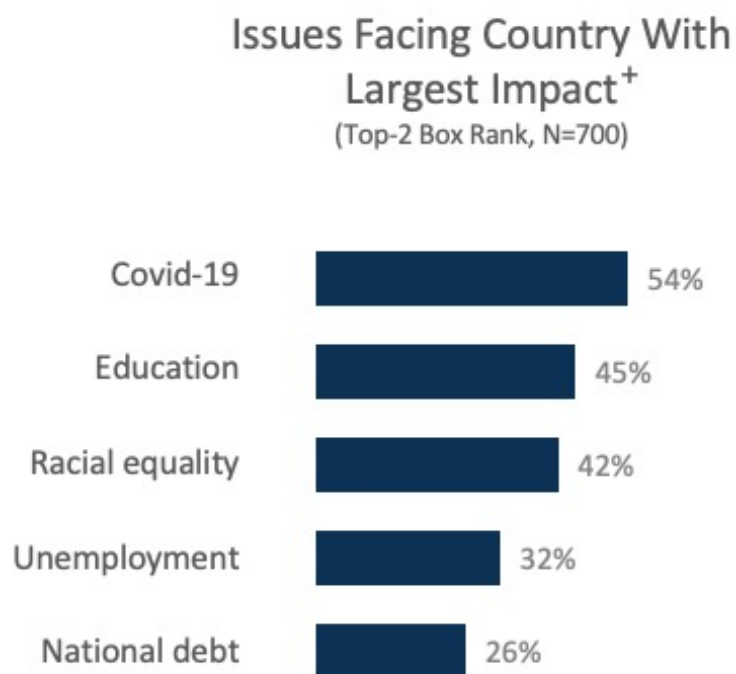
- 57% of parents expressed satisfaction with the choices of schools available for their child(ren)
- 71% of parents rated the quality of their own child(ren)'s school as good or excellent
- However, parents' overall perceptions of Milwaukee's K-12 schools are much lower, and in line with the findings for all respondents noted above:
  - 29% rated the overall quality of Milwaukee's schools as good or excellent, and 28% believe the system is working well for Milwaukee's students
  - 25% believe the quality of Milwaukee's schools is improving, while 39% believe schools are getting worse

## **There is broad agreement that the COVID-19 pandemic has been harmful to many students' learning**

- Fewer than 1 in 3 parents (32%) believe their children stayed on track during the pandemic
  - Many parents surveyed (46%) indicated that their child(ren) fell behind academically during the pandemic

# IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

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



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%

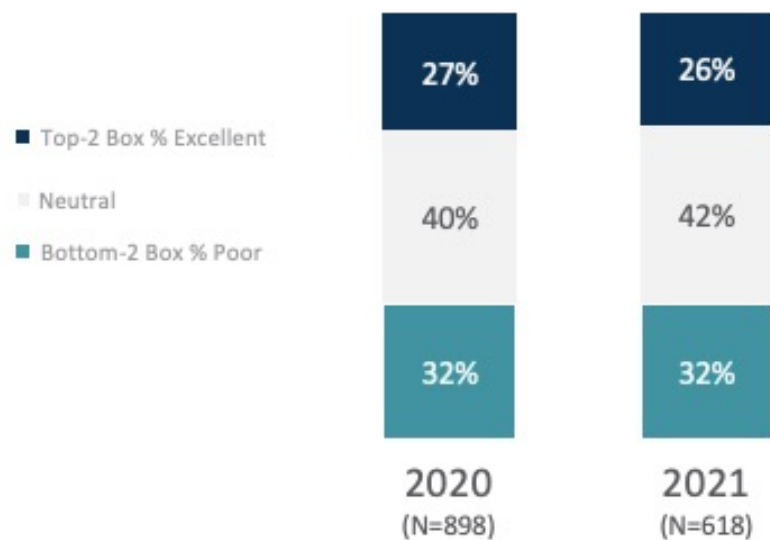
# PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL QUALITY

- 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
- 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)
  - 71% rated the quality of their own child(ren)'s school as good or excellent (up 9 pts from 2020)

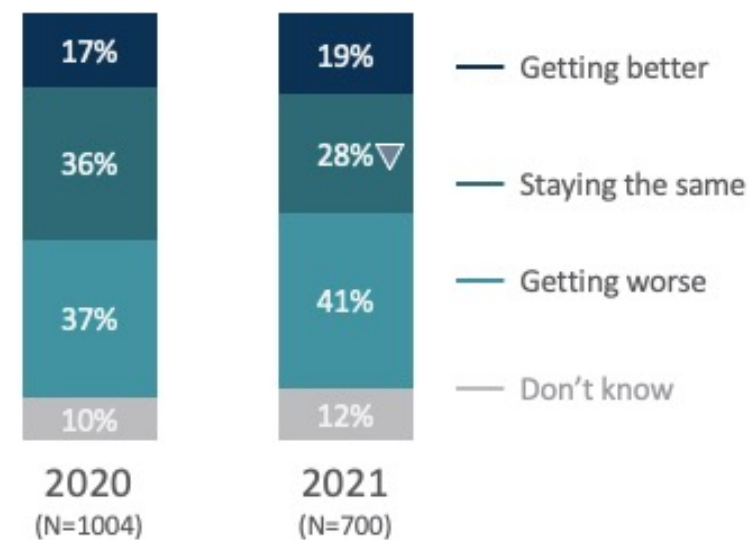
# PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL QUALITY

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

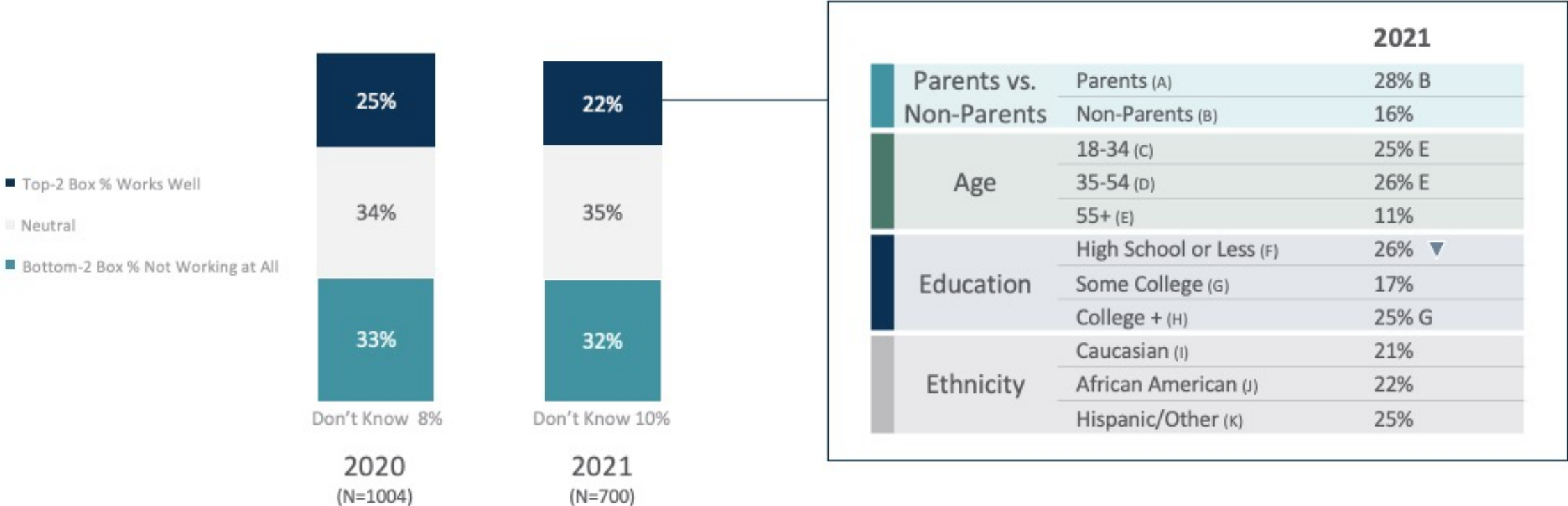




# PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL QUALITY

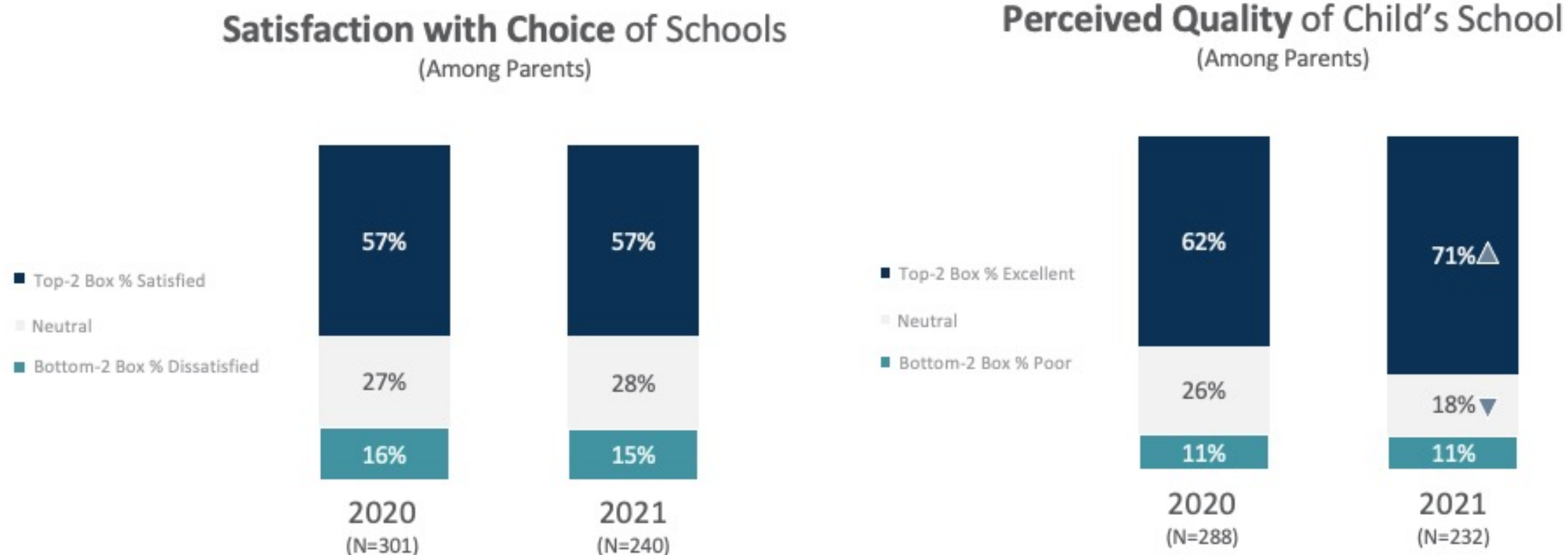
Only 2 in 10 believe the current Milwaukee educational system is working for students

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



# PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL QUALITY

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



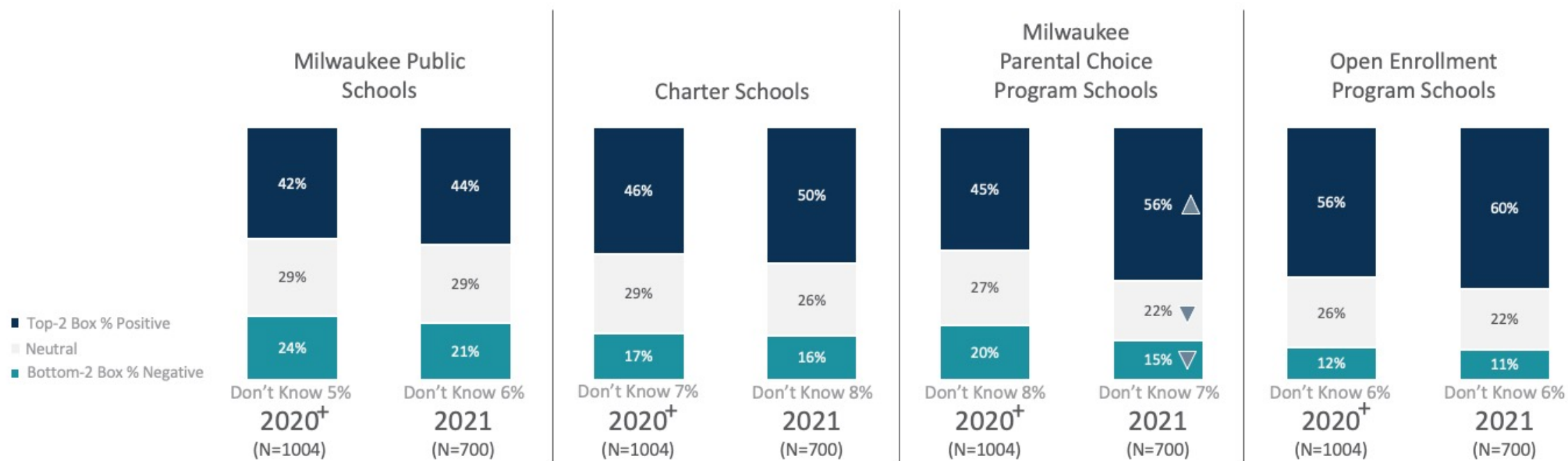
# PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOLS BY SECTOR

- 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
  - MPCP: 56% favorable, +42 net favorable (+14 points from 2020)
- 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

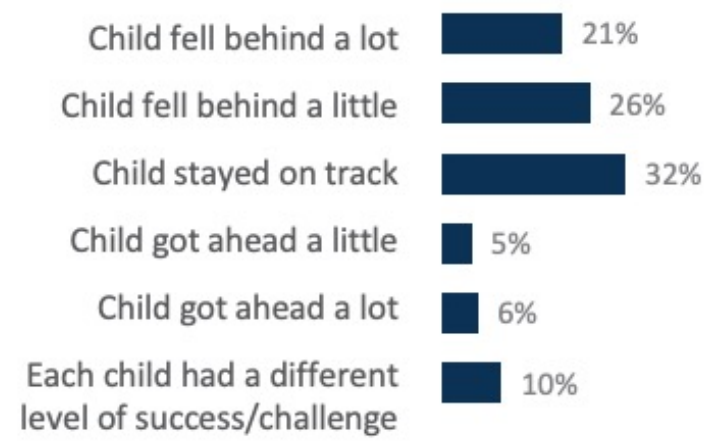
2021 Overall Opinion by Respondent Type  
(Top-2 Box Rating)

	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%

# 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+  
(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)



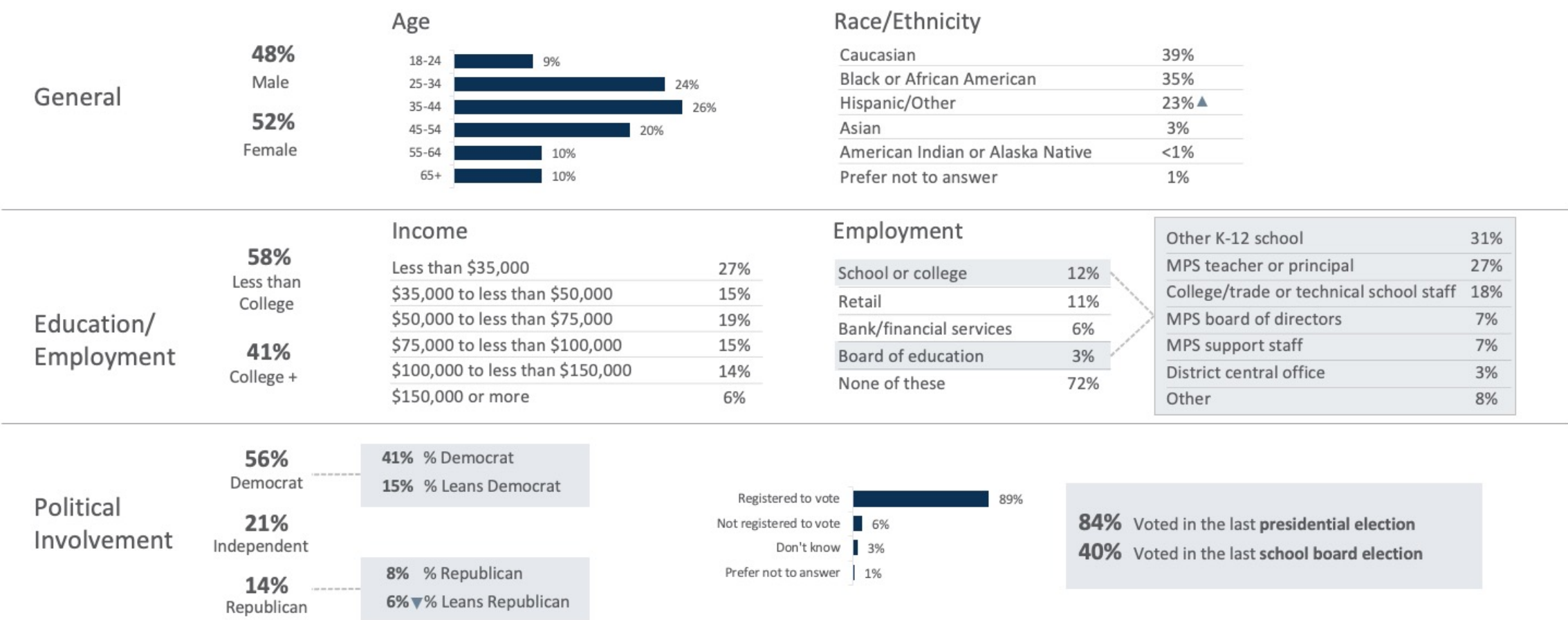
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# **APPENDIX: STATISTICAL & DEMOGRAPHIC CONSIDERATIONS**



# BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

## Demographics



# 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 (see Appendix for full sample information):
  - 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%