



What Parents Want and Students Need: A Policy Conversation on College & Career Readiness

Findings from a survey of Grade 6-12 parents in Massachusetts

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Survey background

- Results based on a statewide survey of 1,018 parents of Grade 6-12 children in Massachusetts, including oversamples of Black, Latino, and Asian parents.
- The survey is the ninth wave in a series of polls of K-12 parents in Massachusetts going back to May 2020.
- The survey was conducted September 14 – October 1, 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.
- Sponsored by the Education Trust in Massachusetts with support from The Barr Foundation.

Key findings

- There are differences by socioeconomic status and race in parents' expectations and knowledge surrounding college and career pathways.
 - Parents see themselves as key influence holders when it comes to helping their children plan for the future. This is especially true of Black and Latino parents.
 - When asked about post high school, most parents say their children are interested in starting a bachelor's degree program. However, parents who attended college themselves, white, and Asian parents are much more likely to say their children are interested in attending college, while Latino parents and low-income parents are less likely to say their children are interested in attending college.
 - Parents who attended college and upper income parents are more likely to feel equipped to help their children with applications and financial aid, while Latino parents and low-income parents reported less awareness about the college application and financial aid process.
 - Black and Latino parents are relatively less likely to be aware of advanced placement programs available in their children's school.

Key findings

- The cost of tuition, room and board in higher education is a significant concern for all parents, regardless of race and income.
- A majority of parents say their child's school does not offer vocational training, while some are unsure. However, most parents think having voc tech options would benefit their child.
- As a whole, parents continue to overestimate their children's academic performance and readiness, following a common dynamic that extends back to the start of the pandemic.

Influences on future plans

- Parents see themselves as key influencers on their children's post-high school plans. Parents of color also identify a broader range of contributors.

Parents identify a range of influences on post high school plans

% of parents who say each is a "very important" influence on their child's plans.

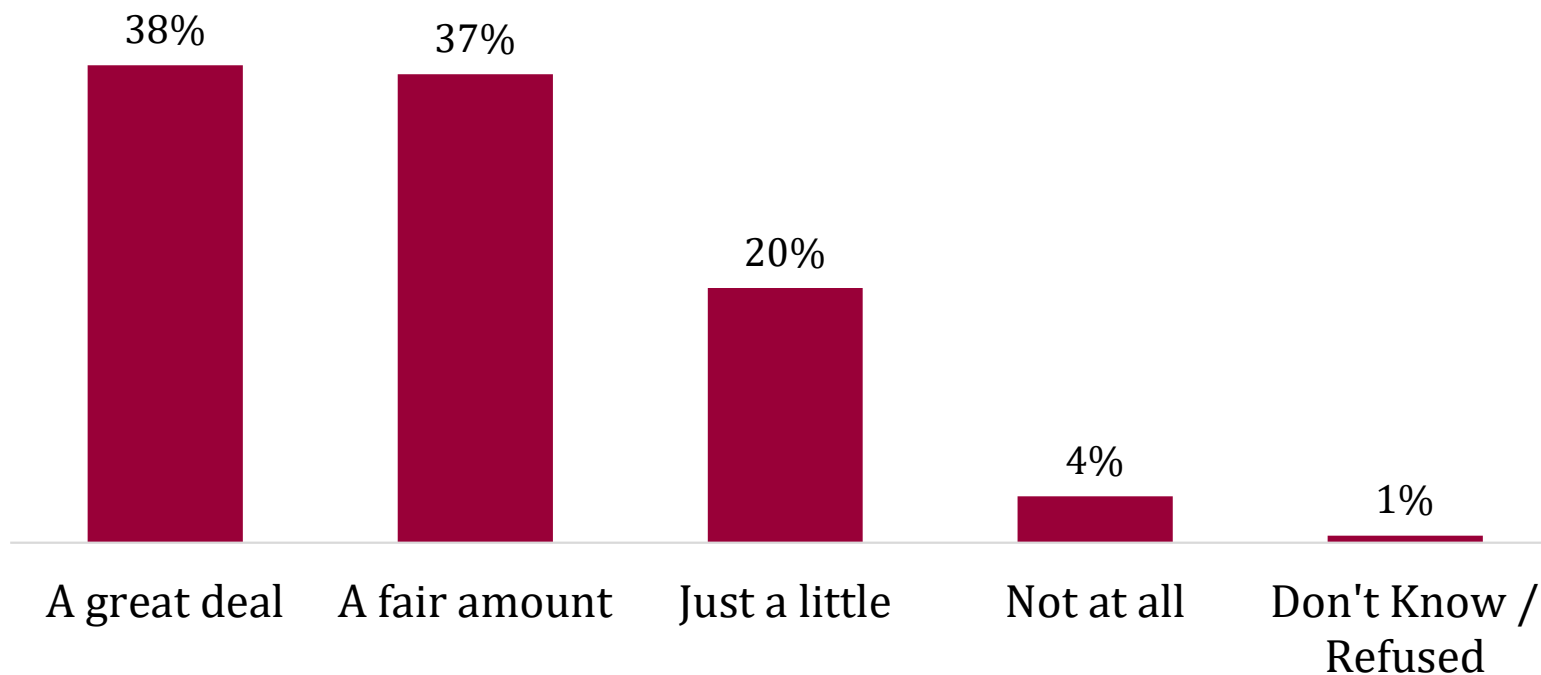
	Overall	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Your influence as a parent	79%	76%	88%	88%	76%
Teachers	61%	55%	69%	72%	70%
Family members	58%	55%	67%	69%	61%
Guidance counselors	51%	45%	61%	74%	55%
College prep programs	43%	33%	63%	65%	59%
Friends' and peers' plans	28%	22%	41%	40%	41%

Parental involvement

- Most say they have discussed post-high school hopes and plans with their children at least a fair amount.

Most parents say they have discussed plans with their child at least a little

% of parents who say they have discussed post high school plans

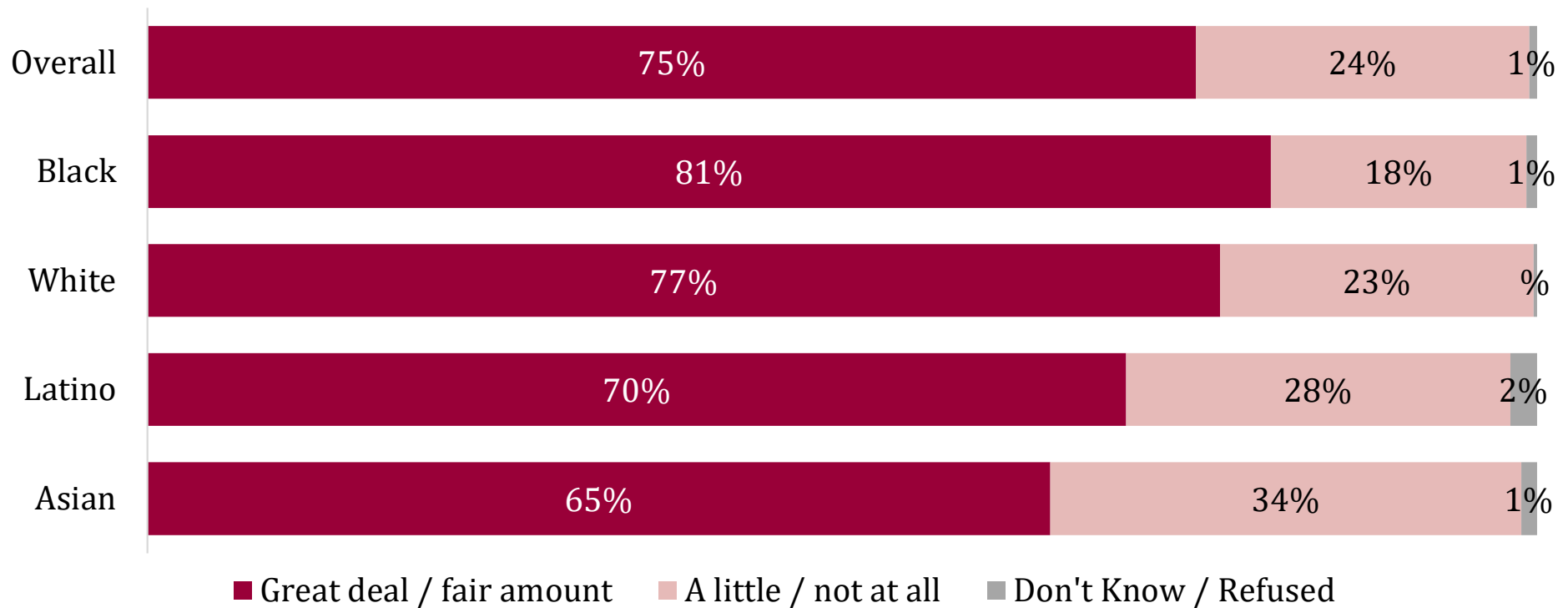


Post high school discussions

- Most parents say they have discussed post-high school plans with their children. Black parents were most likely to say so.

Black parents more likely to say they have discussed plans with their child

% of parents who say they have discussed post high school plans



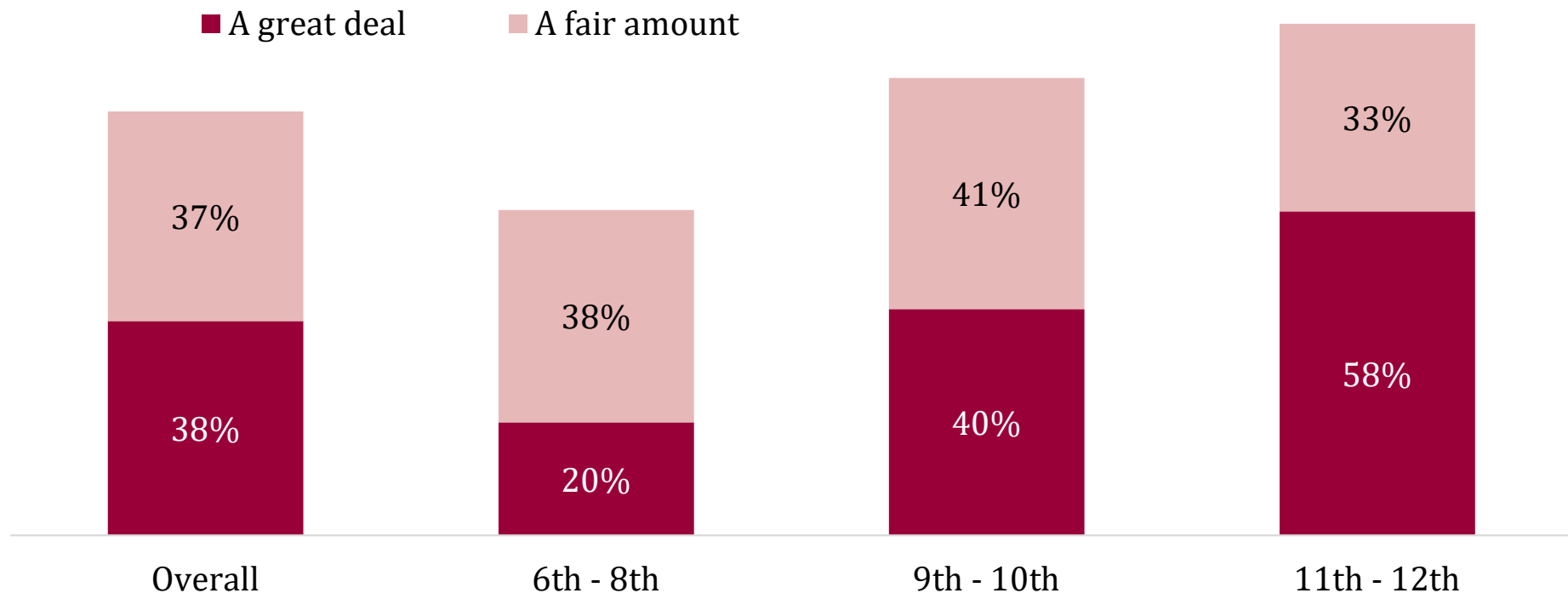
■ Great deal / fair amount ■ A little / not at all ■ Don't Know / Refused

Post-HS discussions increase over time

- Parents of older children are far more likely to report having extensive discussions about post-high school plans.

As children approach the end of high school, conversations increase

% of parents who say they have discussed post high school plans

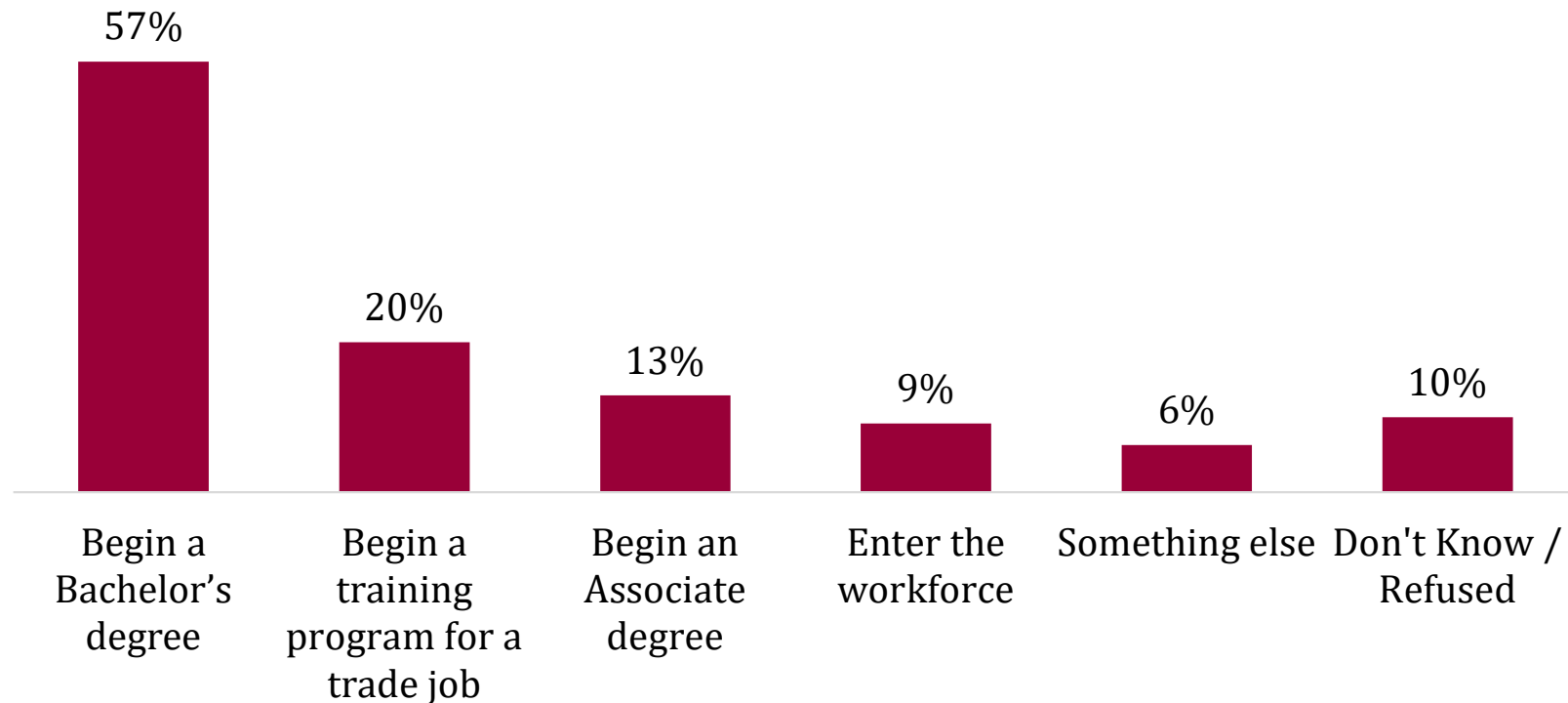


Post-high school plans

- When asked what their children would be interested in, starting a bachelor's degree program is the most common response.

Parents describe a range of post high school aspirations for their children

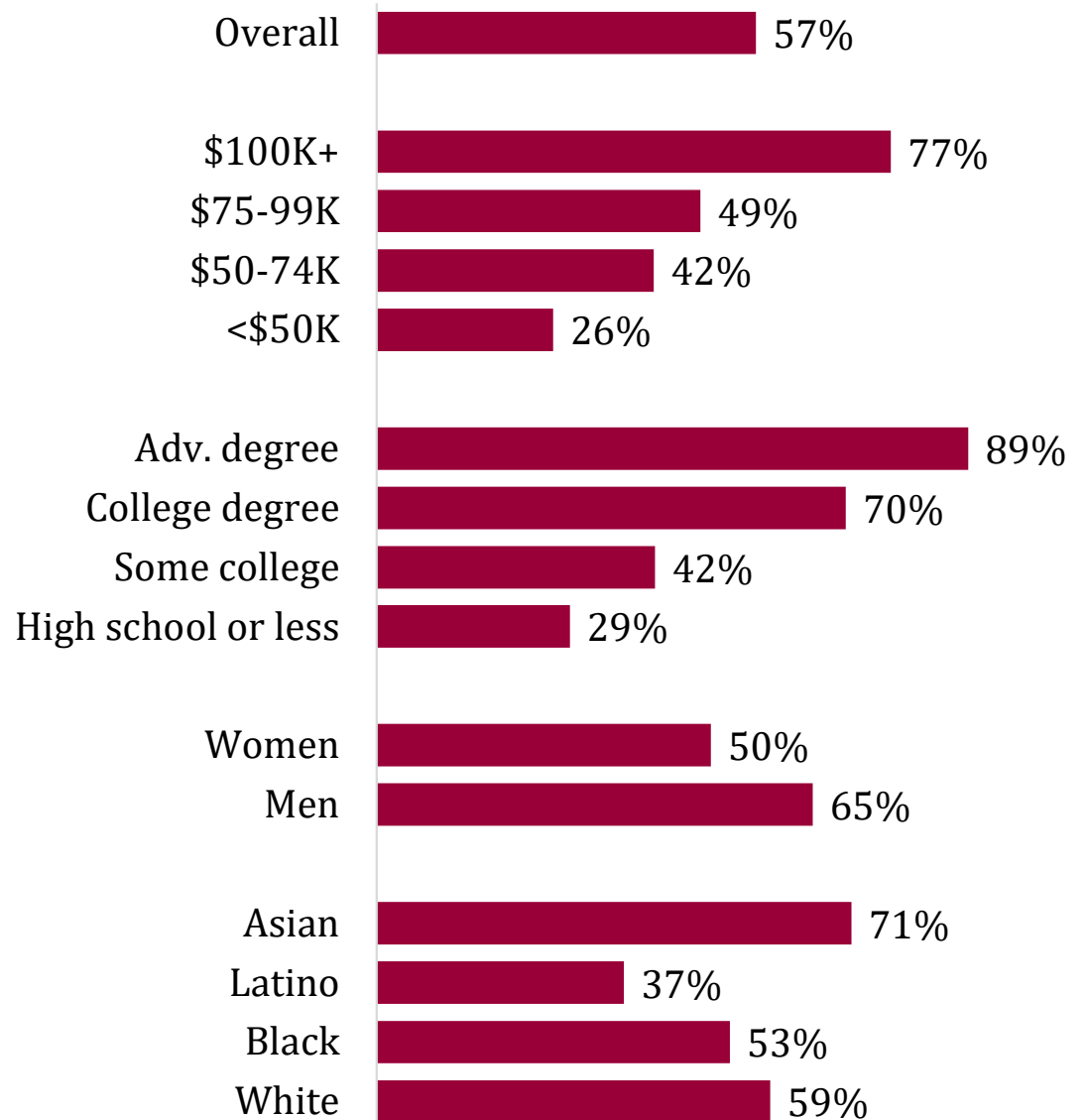
% of parents who say their child is interested in each possibility



Who is planning for a Bach. Degree?

- Parents who went to college themselves are far more likely to anticipate their own child will also be interested in attending.
- Latino parents, and low-income parents are least likely to say their child wants to go to college.

Parents who see their children starting a BA
% who say their children would like to start a Bachelors



Q: Which of the following do you think your GRADE LEVEL child would be interested in doing once they finish high school?

Post high school plan details

- Latino parents are least likely to say their child would be interested starting a Bachelor's degree program, and more likely than others to indicate interest in Associate degrees and trade job training programs.

Asian parents most likely & Latino parents least likely to say child interested in college
% of high school parents who say their child would be interested in ___ post-HS

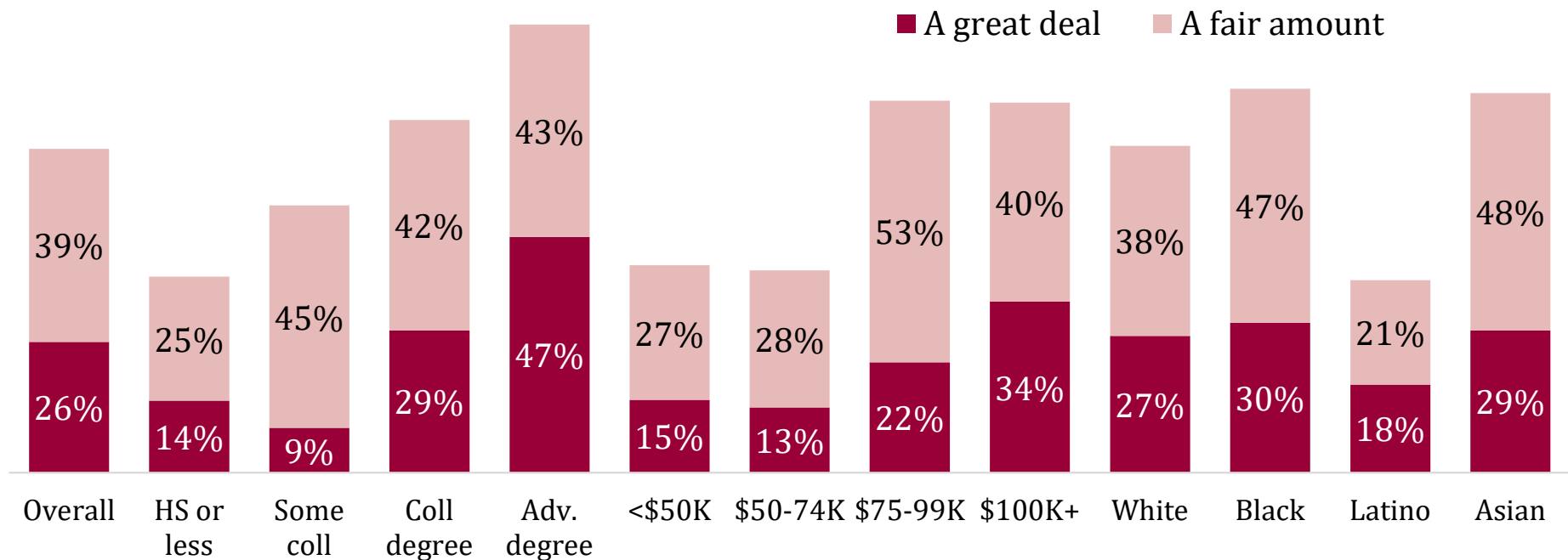
	Overall	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Begin a Bachelor's degree	57%	59%	53%	37%	71%
Begin a training program for a trade job	20%	20%	20%	28%	9%
Begin an Associate degree	13%	12%	11%	20%	11%
Enter the workforce	9%	9%	11%	12%	6%
Something else	6%	5%	12%	12%	5%
Don't Know / Refused	10%	8%	10%	13%	12%

Awareness of college process

- Parents with higher incomes and more education are more likely to say they know about the admissions process.

More parents who went to college say they know the admissions process

% of parents who say they know _____ about the college admissions process.

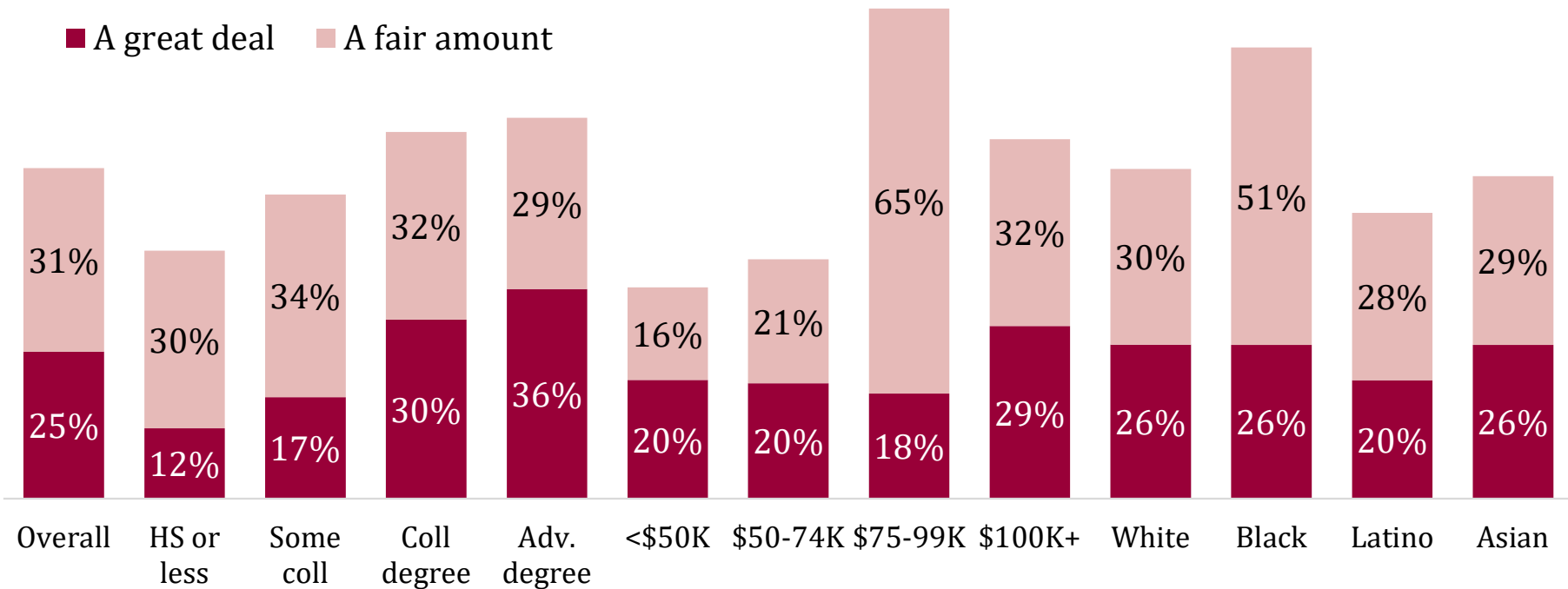


Awareness of financial aid process

- More parents with higher incomes and education report awareness of the financial aid process.

More parents who went to college say they know the financial aid process

% of parents who say they know _____ about the financial aid process



Awareness of advanced coursework

- There are considerable knowledge differences when it comes to knowledge of advanced course offerings.

Parents with higher education / income are more familiar with AP/IB offerings

% of parents who say their children's school offer each of the following

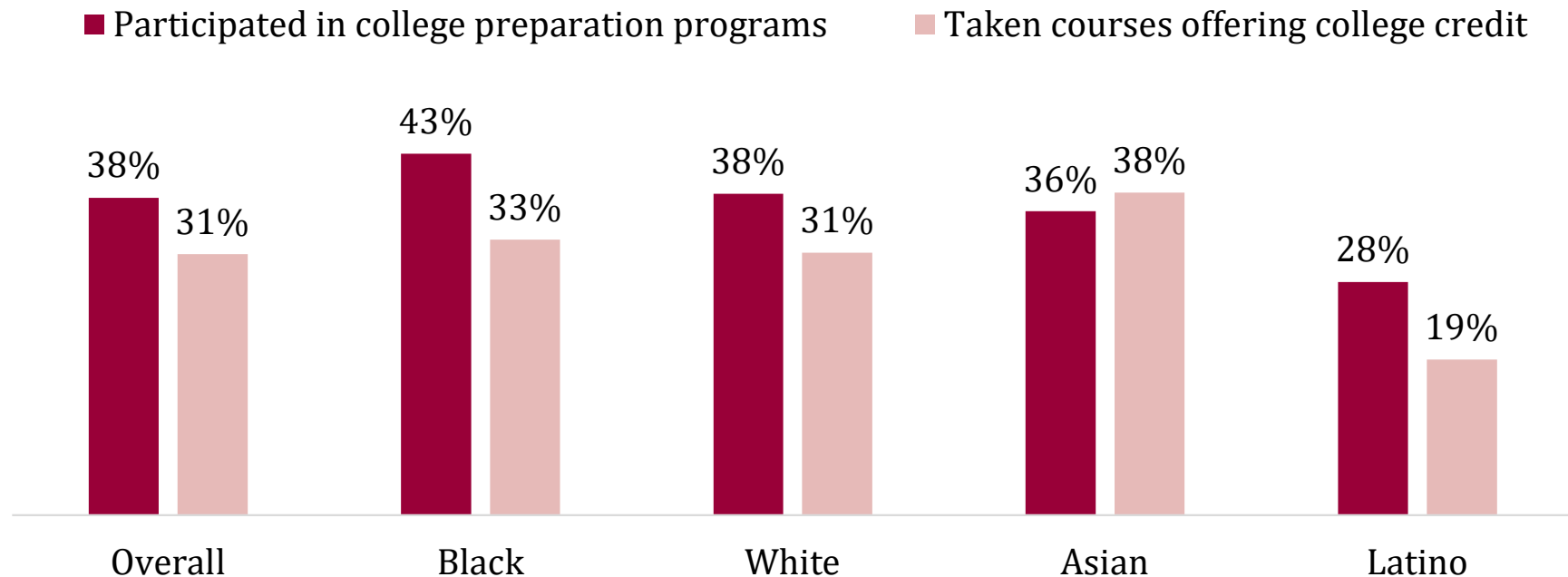
	Overall	HS or less	Some college	College degree	Adv. degree	<\$50K	\$50-74K	\$75-99K	\$100K +	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses	55%	28%	46%	67%	79%	27%	40%	59%	69%	60%	36%	30%	64%
Dual enrollment courses	26%	20%	20%	36%	28%	18%	30%	47%	24%	29%	22%	10%	29%
Early college courses	37%	39%	41%	38%	32%	31%	40%	57%	36%	34%	45%	45%	47%
Work-based learning or internship opportunities	29%	23%	26%	39%	29%	31%	27%	45%	26%	31%	30%	24%	27%
Don't Know / Refused	21%	34%	26%	12%	12%	32%	23%	19%	14%	19%	26%	33%	13%

College prep / course offerings

- Latino parents are least likely to say child participated in college prep programs (28%) or classes offering college credit (19%).

Latino parents less likely to say child participated in college prep courses/classes

% of high school parents who say their child has _____



Higher education cost concerns

- The cost of tuition, room, and board are major concerns for parents across the board, while there are differences in concern level over the cost of books and application costs.

Tuition, room and board costs are concerns to broad majorities of parents

% of parents who called each item a major concern

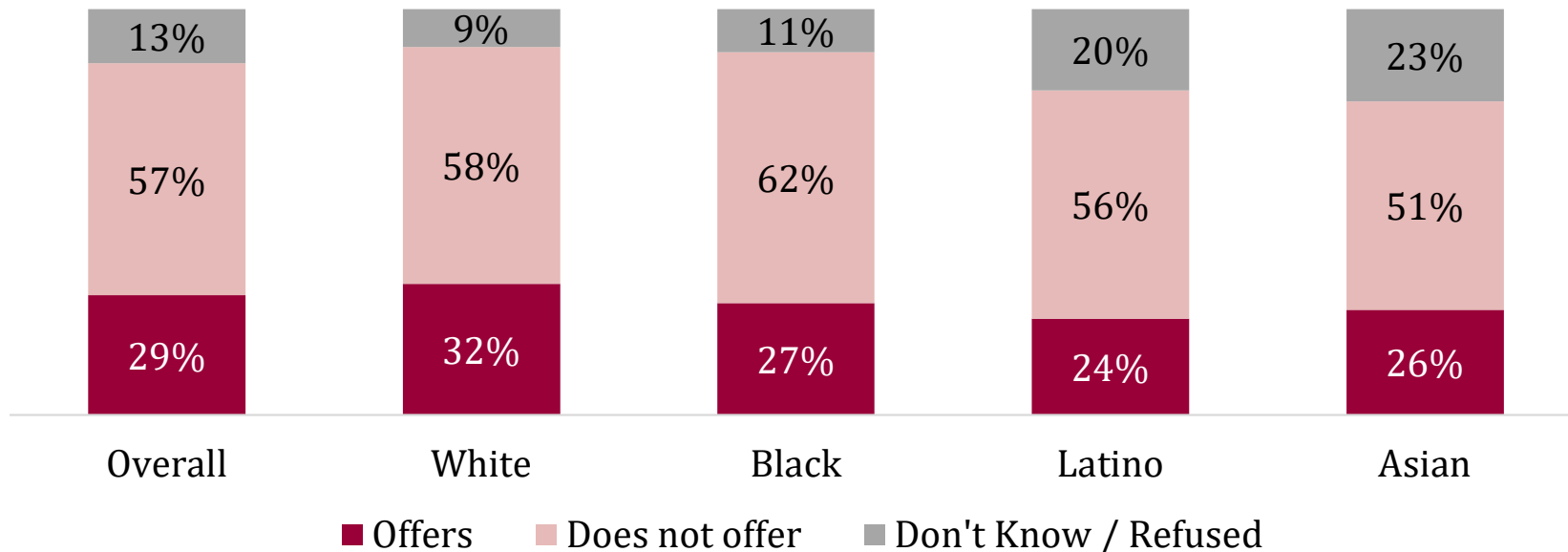
	Overall	White	Black	Latino	Asian	<\$50K	\$50-74K	\$75-99K	\$100K+
Total tuition cost	68%	70%	63%	65%	59%	67%	69%	72%	69%
The cost of room and board	58%	58%	57%	64%	51%	61%	60%	57%	57%
The cost of books	33%	31%	38%	43%	31%	50%	40%	31%	24%
The cost of applying to college	35%	30%	41%	49%	36%	50%	48%	33%	25%

Awareness of voc training offerings

- Some parents are unsure if their child's school offers vocational training, particularly among Latino (20%) and Asian (23%) parents.

Most parents say their children's schools do not offer vocational training

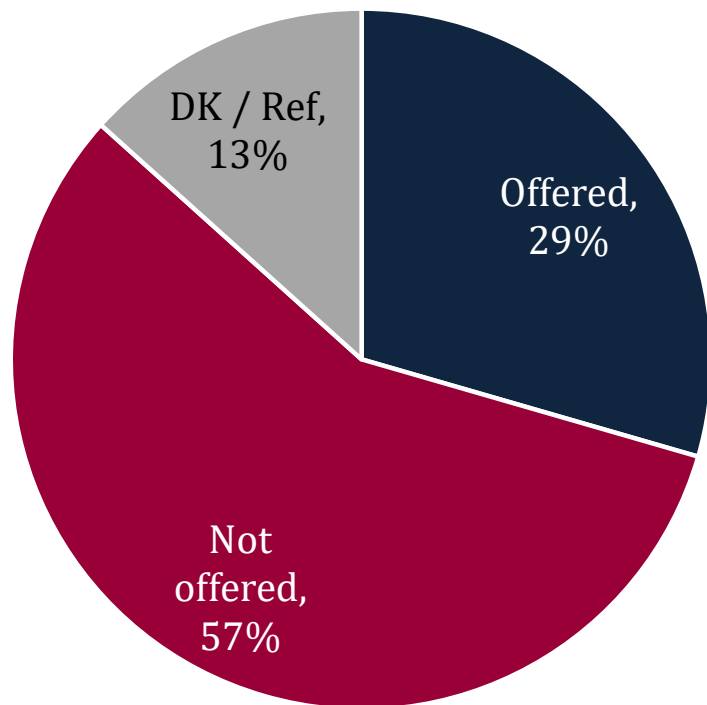
% of parents who say child's school ___ vocational training



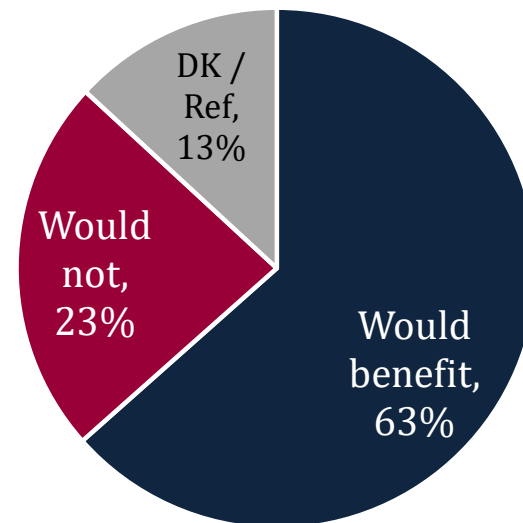
Voc tech consideration

- Most parents say voc tech programming is not currently offered. Among that group, a majority say their child would benefit if voc tech programs existed at their schools.

Voc tech offered now?



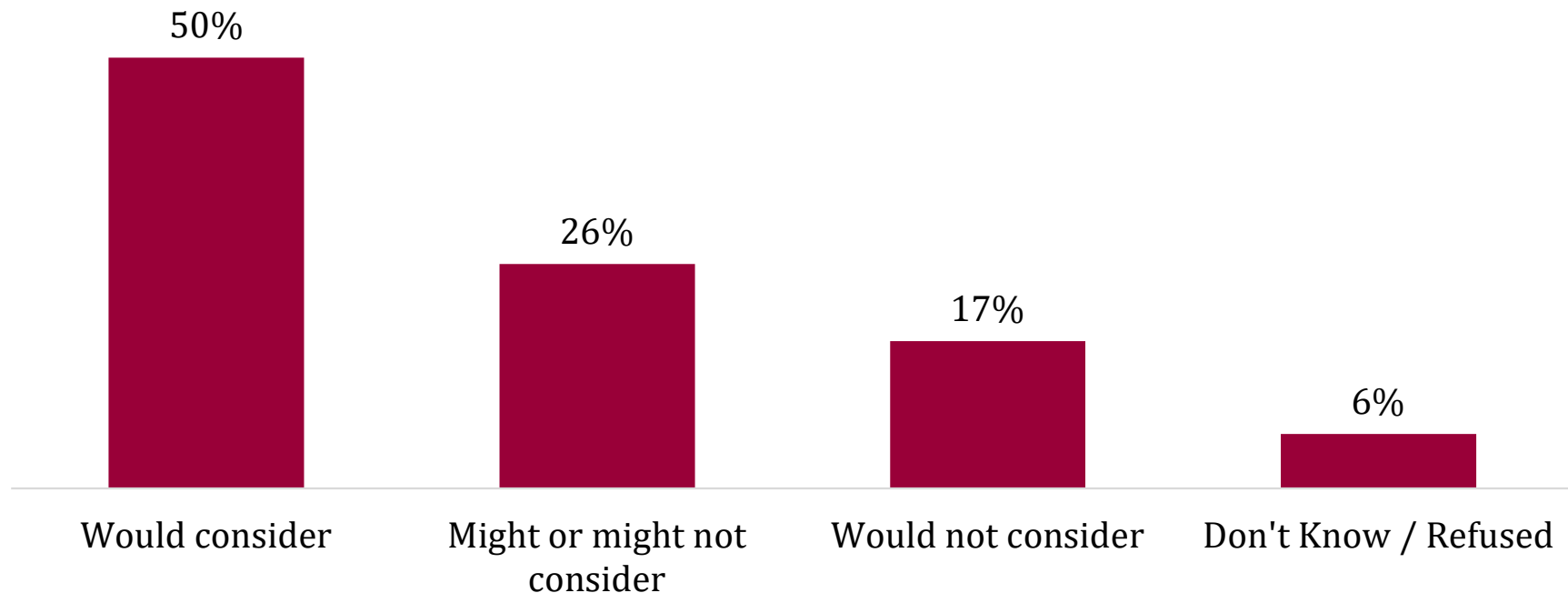
Would benefit my child if offered



Exploring vocational programs

- Most parents would be open to considering voc tech programs for their children after high school.

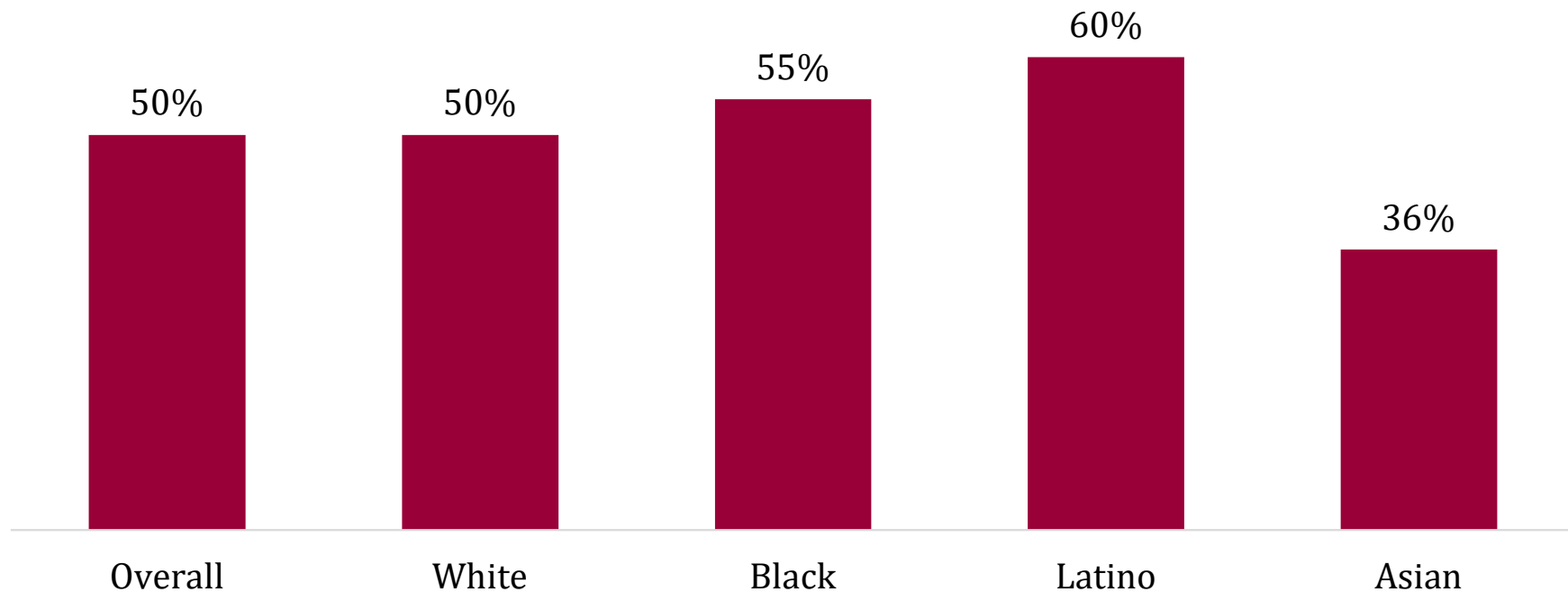
Most parents would consider voc tech programs, or are open to the possibility
% who say they ___ voc tech programs for after high school.



Considering vocational programs

- Latino (60%) parents are most likely to say they would consider vocational programs for their child after high school and Asian parents are least likely.

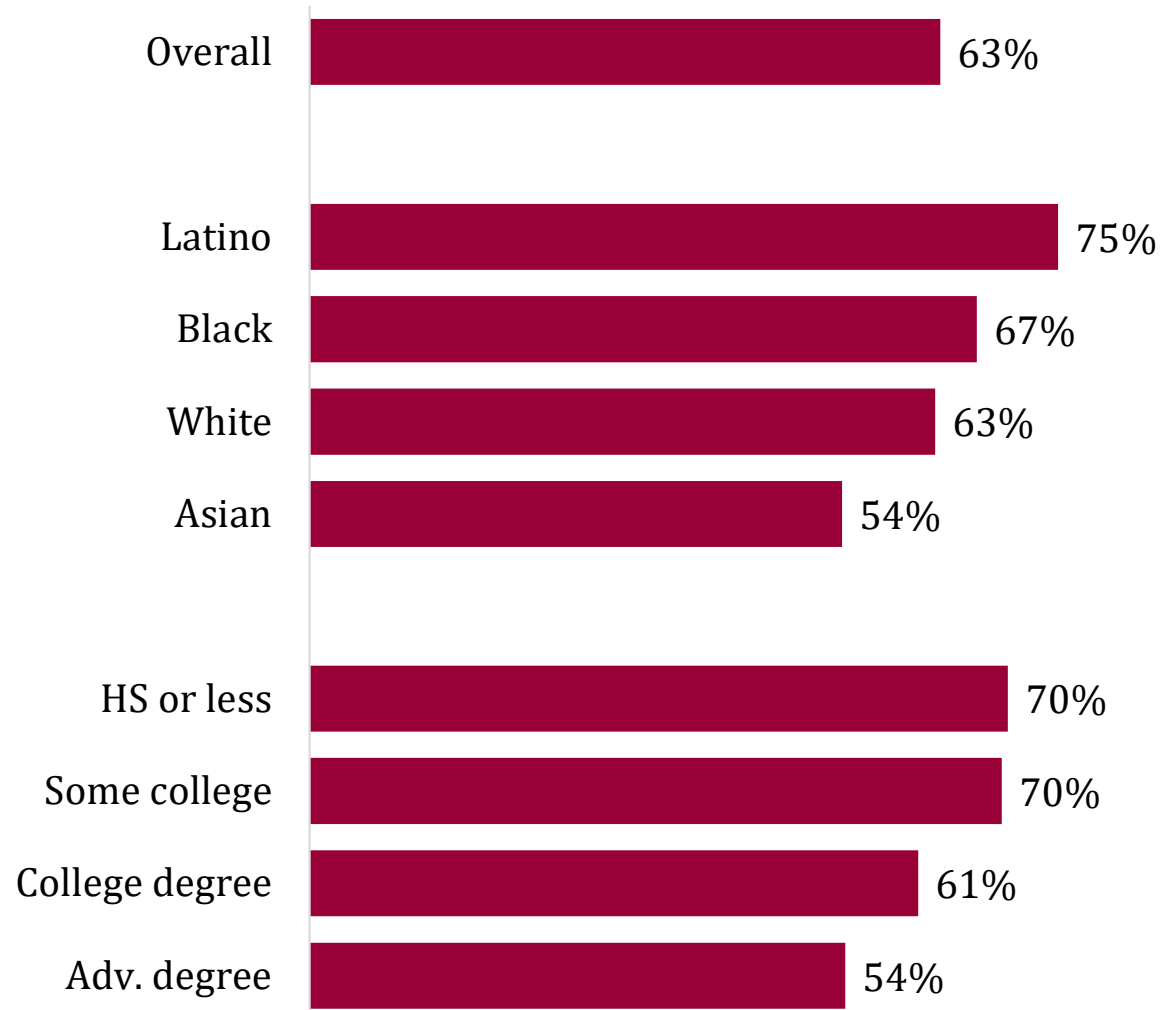
Latino parents more likely to consider post-high school vocational programs
% who say they would consider voc tech programs for after high school.



Voc tech future career benefits

- A majority (63%) say voc tech programs would benefit their child's future career.
- Parents without college degrees levels are more likely to say voc tech training would benefit their child's future careers.
- Latino parents are most likely to say voc tech programs will benefit their child.

Majority say voc tech programs would benefit child *% who say their children would benefit from vocational training*



Voc tech hesitations – open ends

- Parents cite a range of potential concerns when it comes to considering voc tech programs for their children.

Concerns about vocational programs

% of parents citing each concern (open end)

Description of hesitation	%
No hesitations	29%
What child wants / Best fit	16%
Child isn't interested (prefers another path, college, career, sports)	15%
Bad fit (capability, intelligence, age, mental health, disability, IEP)	7%
Not enough career or college prep / Limited learning / Opportunities	6%
Resource limitations (cost, location, transportation, acceptance, availability, access)	6%
Don't know / Needs to do research / unaware of available programs	6%
Parent prefers college / Another path	6%
Perceptions (income, social concerns, stigma, quality)	3%
Other	9%

Q: What would your hesitations be about considering vocational programs for your GRADE LEVEL child? OPEN-END, RECORD VERBATIM.

**Note: asked of all respondents*

Note: Results may add to more than 100% as responses could be coded into multiple categories.

Training program pathways

- Among parents who say their child would be interested in trade jobs after high school, just 38% say their children's school offers such programming though 89% say it would be beneficial.

Parents of children interested in trade jobs post HS, not accessing voc programs

% of parents who say child would be interested in training program for a trade job and say ____

Question	%
Voc tech programs would benefit future career opportunities	89%
School offers voc tech training	38%

*Q: Which of the following do you think your **GRADE LEVEL** child would be interested in doing once they finish high school?*

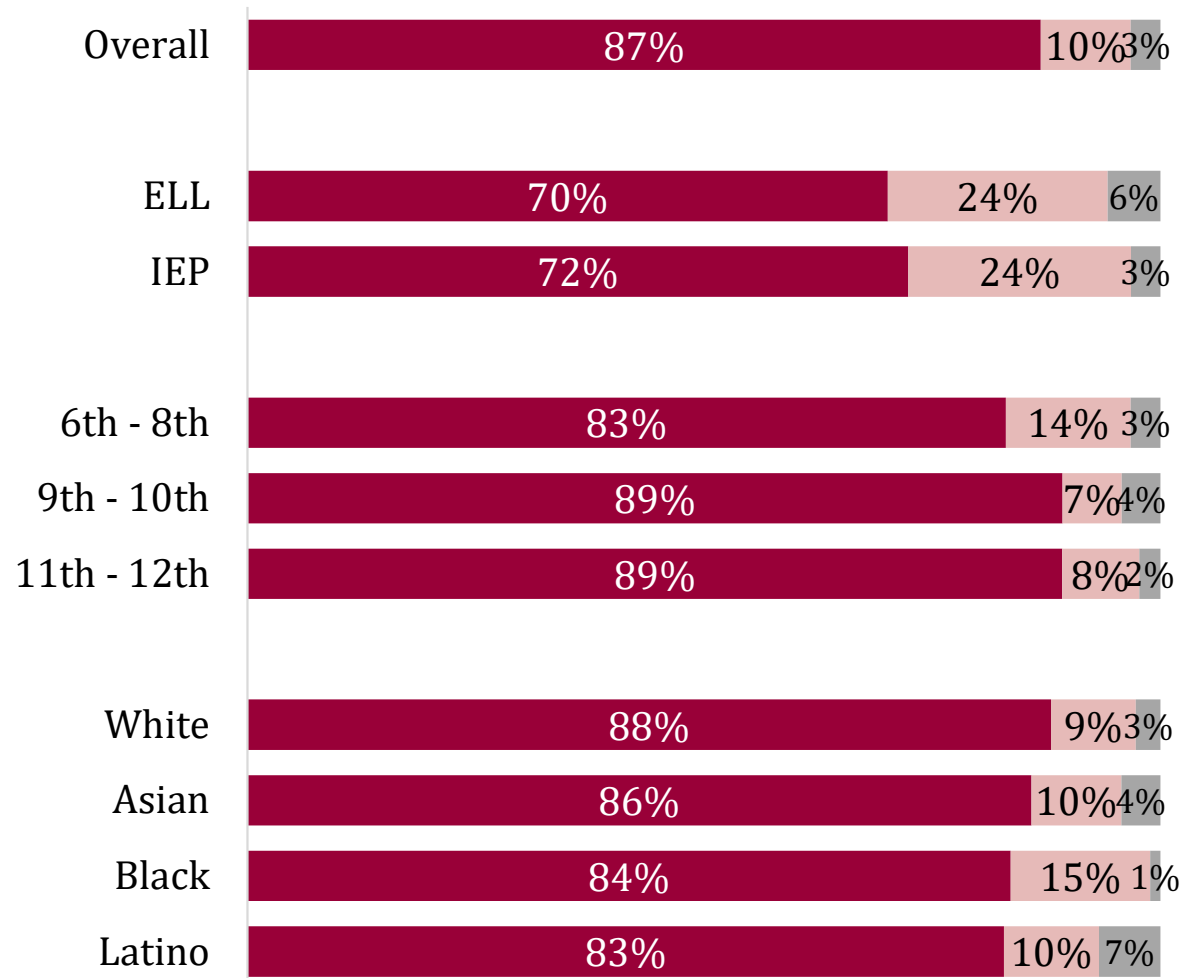
*Q: Do you think vocational technical programs in your **GRADE LEVEL** child's school would benefit your child's future career opportunities, or not?*

*Q: As you may know, vocational-technical or voc tech programs provide hands-on skills and training for future careers. Does your **GRADE LEVEL** child's school offer vocational training?*

Perceptions of reading, ELA levels

- Overall, the vast majority of parents believe their children are reading at expected levels.
- However, in reality only 44% of 8th graders and 58% of 10th graders were “meeting or exceeding” expectations on the 2023 ELA MCAS.

Majority of parents say child reading at expected level
% of parents who say their child is/is not at expected reading levels



*Q: To the best of your knowledge, is your **GRADE LEVEL** child reading at the level expected for students in their age group?*

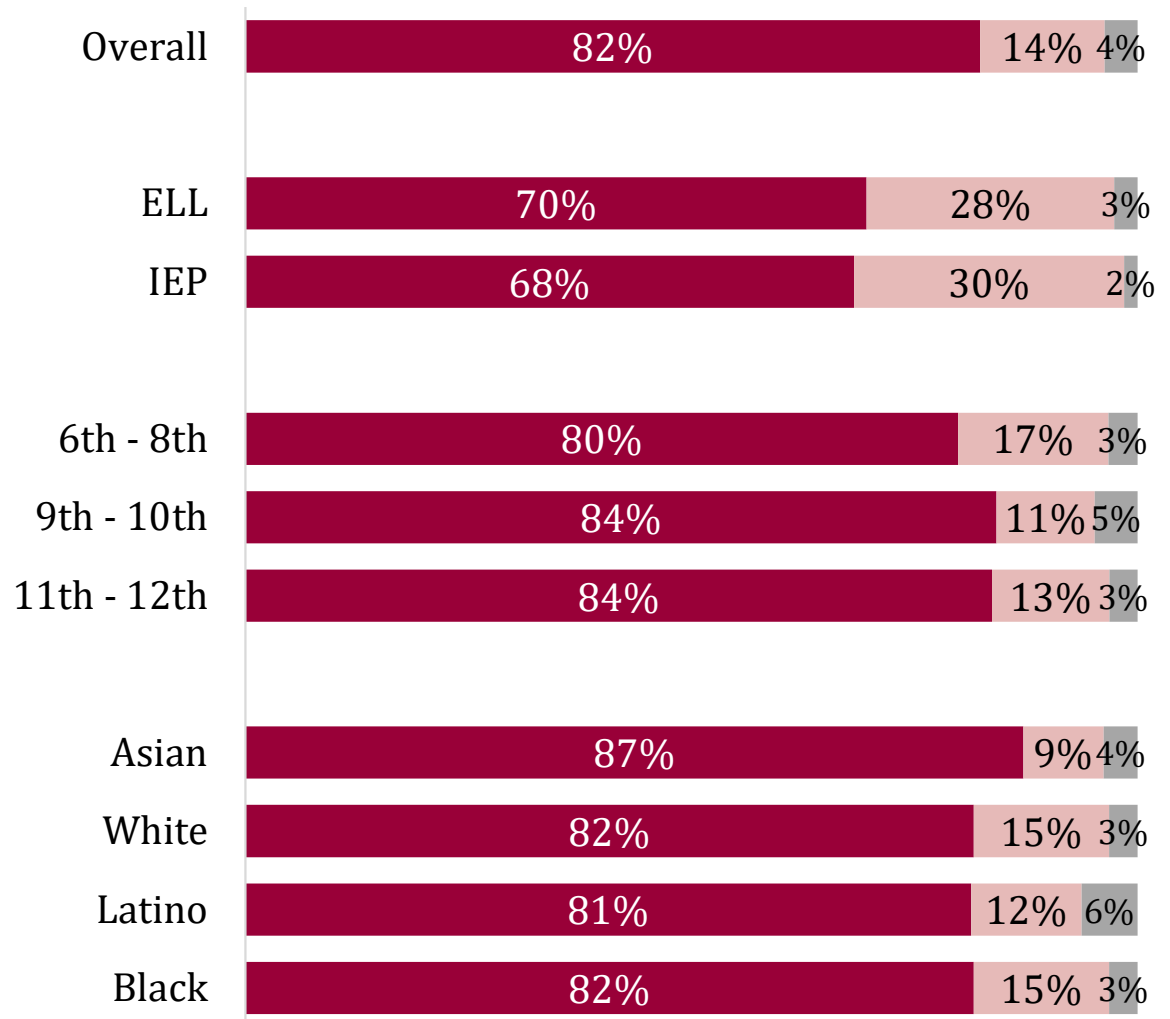
■ Yes, they are ■ No, they are not ■ Don't Know / Refused

Perceptions of math levels

- A large majority of parents say their children are on level for math across grade levels.
- However, in reality, only 38% of 8th graders and 50% of 10th graders were “meeting or exceeding” expectations on the 2023 Math MCAS.

Q: How about in terms of math? Is your GRADE LEVEL child working at the level expected for students in their age group when it comes to math?

Most see their children at expected level for math
% of parents who say their child is/is not at expected math levels

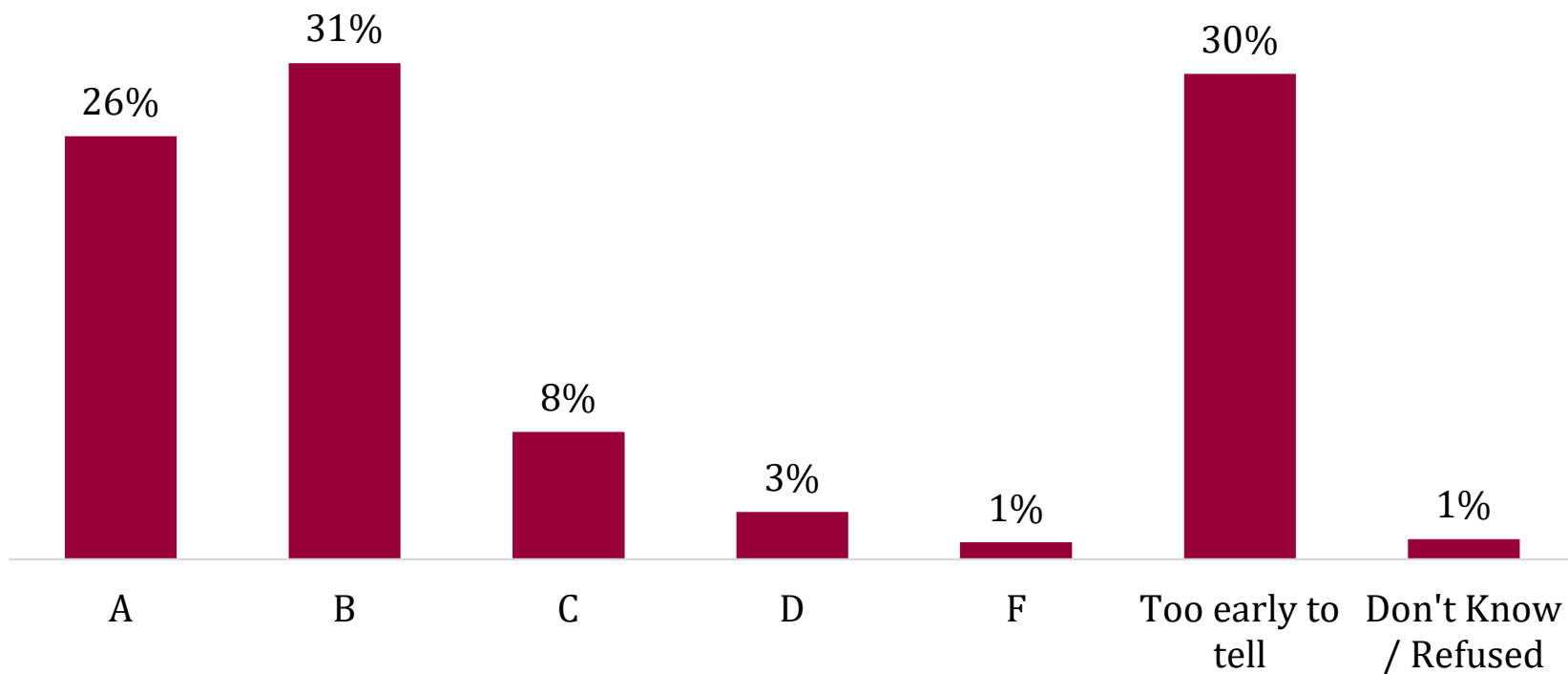


■ Yes, they are ■ No, they are not ■ Don't Know / Refused

Overall school grades

- Most parents offer positive grades to their children's schools, though 30% say it's too early in the year to give a grade.

Most parents give their children's schools high marks, many say it's too early to tell
% of parents who give their children's school each grade



School grades - open end

- Most parents base grades on the curriculum, their child's performance and the teachers and administration at school.

Curriculum, performance & teachers are top of mind

% of parents who say they were thinking of ___ when grading school

Topic	%
Workload / curriculum	22%
Grades / student performance	21%
Teacher / administration performance	20%
School resources (academic support, shortages, AP classes, extracurriculars, infrastructure etc.)	17%
Communication / support among staff and parents	13%
Individualized attention / meeting child's needs	9%
General comments	6%
School community / environment	4%
School safety	2%
Other (lack of diversity, politics, location, IEP support ...)	10%
Don't know / too early to tell / school just started	5%

Q: Thinking about the letter grade you just gave to your GRADE LEVEL child's school, what were you thinking of in particular when you gave the grade you did? OPEN-END, RECORD VERBATIM.

Note: Results may add to more than 100% as responses could be coded into multiple categories.

School grade factors – open end

- Among parents who did not provide a grade for their child's school, quality of education & teachers and post HS life skills are the most important factors they will consider.

Quality of education and teachers will be most important

% of parents who say __ will be most important factors

Topic	%
Quality of education (content of curriculum, workload, specific classes, etc.)	40%
Quality teachers	20%
Learning life skills & post HS preparation	15%
Communication	14%
Environmental norms (supportive, no bullying, community, respect, fairness, DEI etc.)	13%
School resources (extracurriculars, counselors, staffing etc.)	12%
Grades / student performance / academic standing	11%
School safety	9%
Support for students with IEP's & disabilities	6%
Other / don't know	9%

Q: When thinking about a grade for your child's school, what factors will be most important to you? OPEN-END, RECORD VERBATIM.

**Note: Asked among parents who did not select a letter grade.*

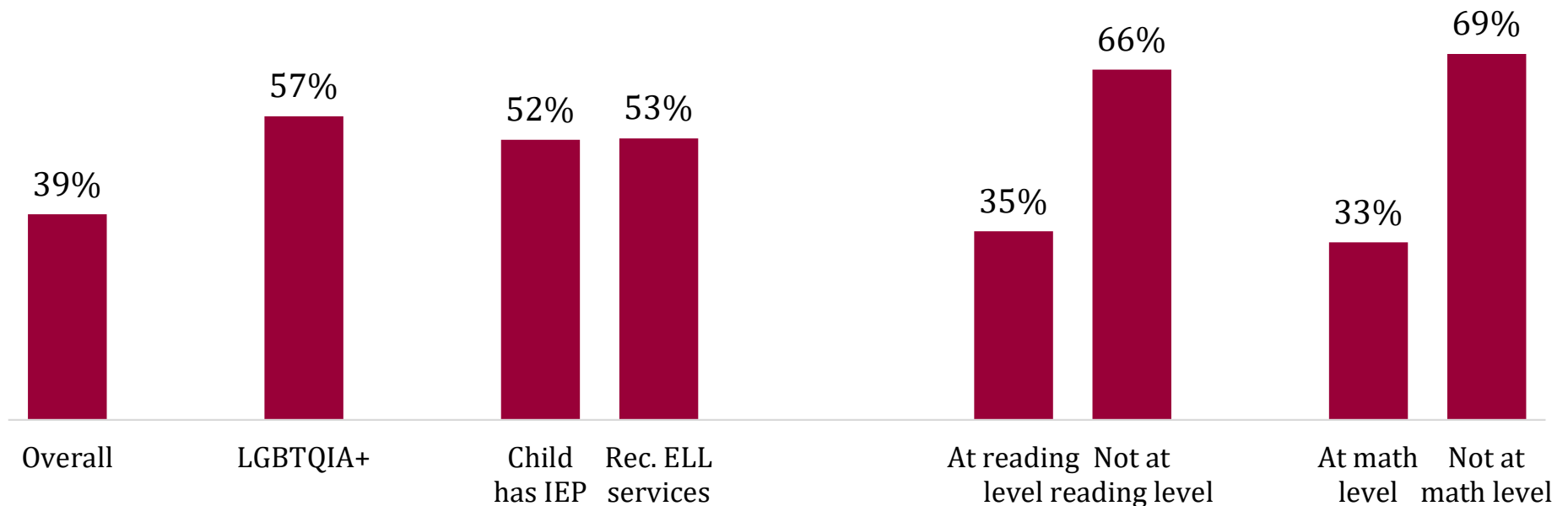
Note: Results may add to more than 100% as responses could be coded into multiple categories.

Mental health concerns

- Mental health concerns are related to other factors, with more parents of IEP / ELL students, LGBTQIA+ students expressing concerns.
- Mental and emotional health are also closely linked to academic concerns.

Concerns about mental health more common among some groups of parents

% of parents who are very / somewhat concerns about their student's mental health





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