

PARENT AND CHILD MENTAL HEALTH SURVEY

Findings from a Survey of
Public School K-12 Parents
December 2023



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Methodology



Nationally representative sample of **1,016 parents and guardians** with children in public school, grades K-12, including:

Race/Ethnicity

- 595 White parents* (59%)
- 207 Hispanic parents (20%)
 - **Acculturation status** [among Hispanic sample]
 - 79 acculturated (38%)
 - 104 bi-cultural (50%)
 - 24 unacculturated (12%)
- 130 Black/African American parents* (13%)
- 32 Asian or Pacific Islander parents* (3%)
- 32 Multiracial parents* (3%)
- 11 Native American parents* (1%)
- 4 parents preferred not to answer (1%)

Fielded December 2023 via a 48-question online survey using SurveyMonkey in English and Spanish

Sample comprised of the AFHK parent network

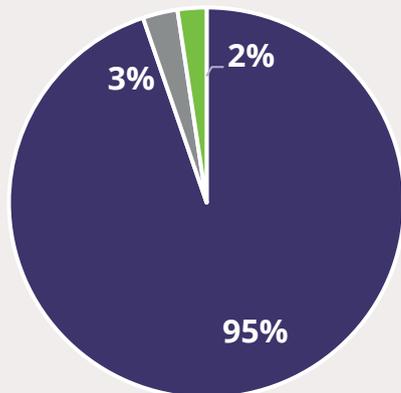
Throughout the report, **brown/blue** indicates statistically **higher/lower** differences between audiences (i.e., $p \leq .05$)

* = representative of parents who identified as non-Hispanic throughout report

Parent Demographics (N=1,016)

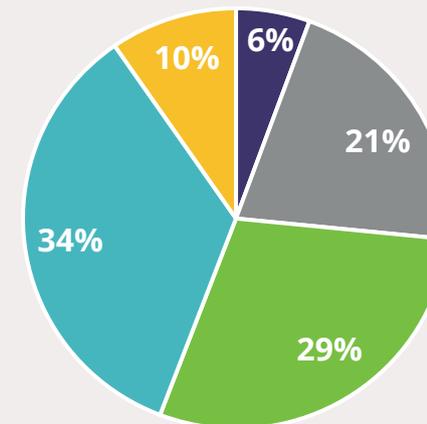
Relationship to Child

- Mother / Father / Biological Parent
- Step-parent / Legal guardian / Foster parent
- Relative or 'Other'



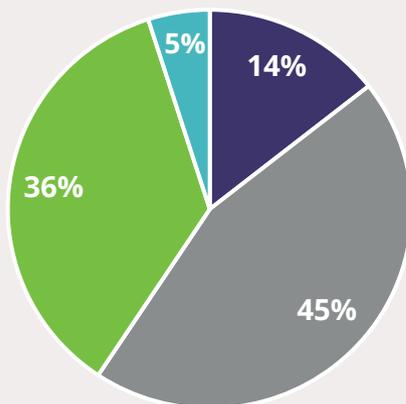
Educational Attainment

- Less than high school/high school graduate
- Some college/vocational training
- Four-year college degree
- Postgraduate degree



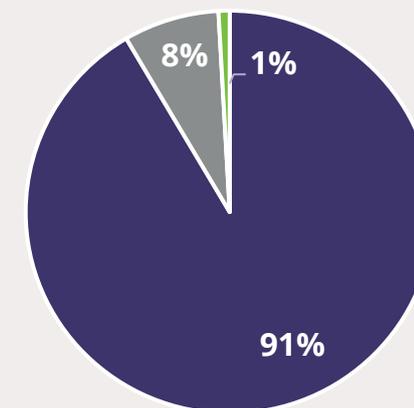
Age

- 18-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55+

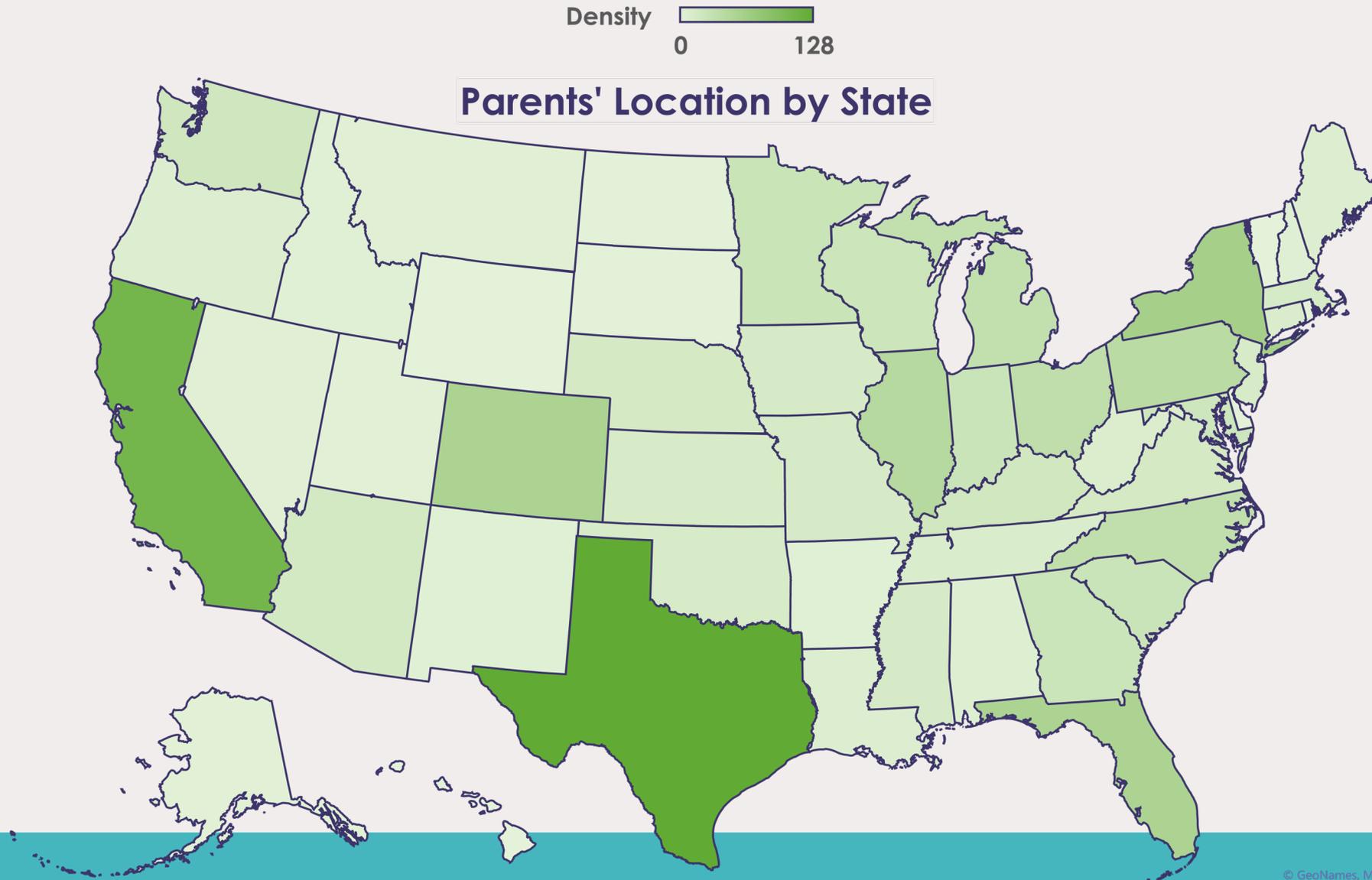


Immigration Status

- Born in U.S.
- Born outside U.S.
- I prefer not to answer



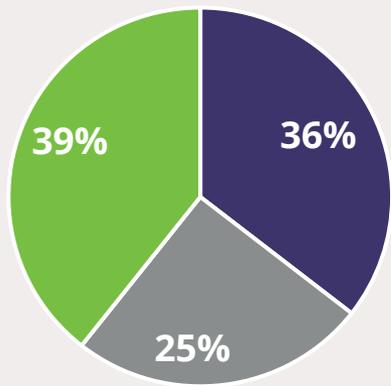
Parent Demographics (N=1,016)



Demographics of Parents' Child

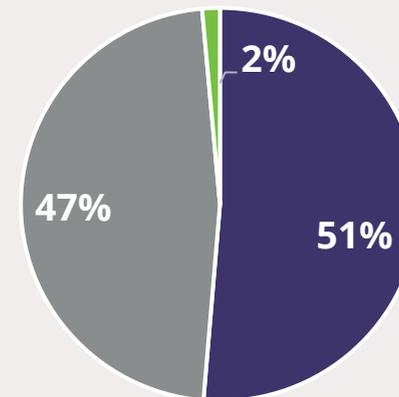
Grade Level

- Elementary school
- Middle school
- High school



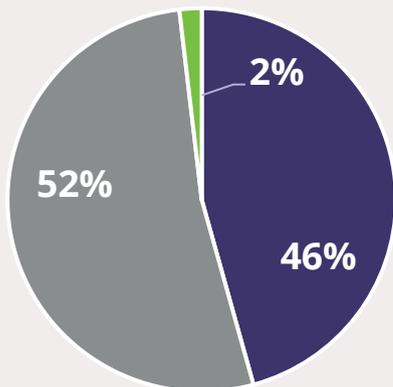
Gender

- Girl
- Boy
- Nonbinary/Gender Nonconforming



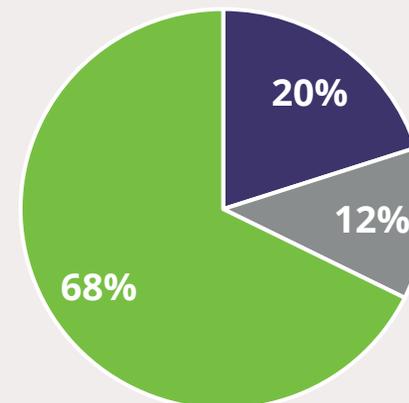
Free/Reduced-Cost Lunch

- Yes
- No
- Not sure



Individualized Education Plan (IEP)/504

- IEP
- 504
- None



Main Takeaways From Parental Feedback

1

Safe and supportive schools are **communicative** and **physically safe**, consider students' emotions, and **include trusted adults**.

2

Parents worry most about their child's time spent on **electronics**, **physical safety**, and **mental health**.

3

Parents think **schools should provide more resources** to support youth mental health and well-being.

4

Parents report the **most common barrier** to accessing mental health-related resources is that **youth believe they're fine**.

5

Parents believe it is **most important** for schools to have **programs that teach social skills and promote inclusion**.

Parental Perceptions of Safe and Supportive Schools



We asked parents:

What does a safe and supportive school environment look like?

How do you know if your child feels safe and supported at school?

What can schools do to help your child / all children feel safe and supported?

What does a safe and supportive school environment look like to you?

Communication

- *“effective”*
- *“transparent/open” (between parents with school staff AND children and school staff)*
- *“clear expectations communicated”*

Counselors / Social Workers

- *“academic counseling”*
- *“counselors readily available”*

Consider Students' Emotions

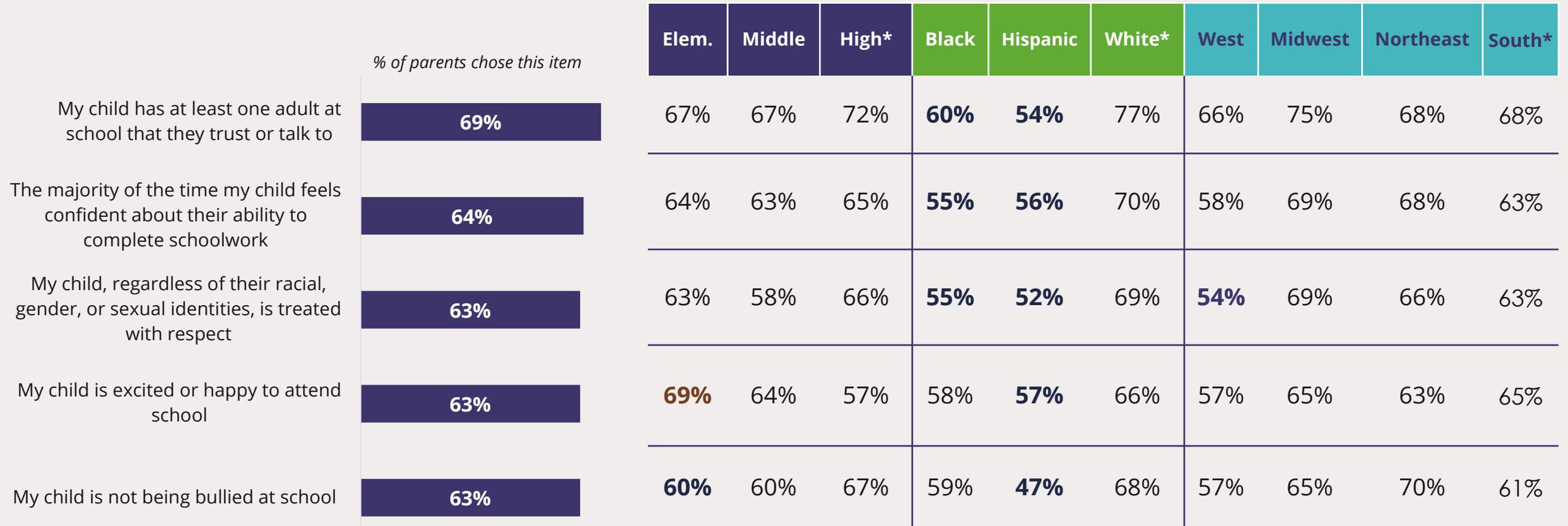
- *“emotionally secure”*
- *“teach social emotional skills”*
- *“helps shape positive emotions”*

Physical Safety

- *“No guns, two entrance secure doors, hi-tech cameras and active AI...”*
- *“metal detectors”*
- *“cameras”*

How do you know if your child feels safe and supported at school?

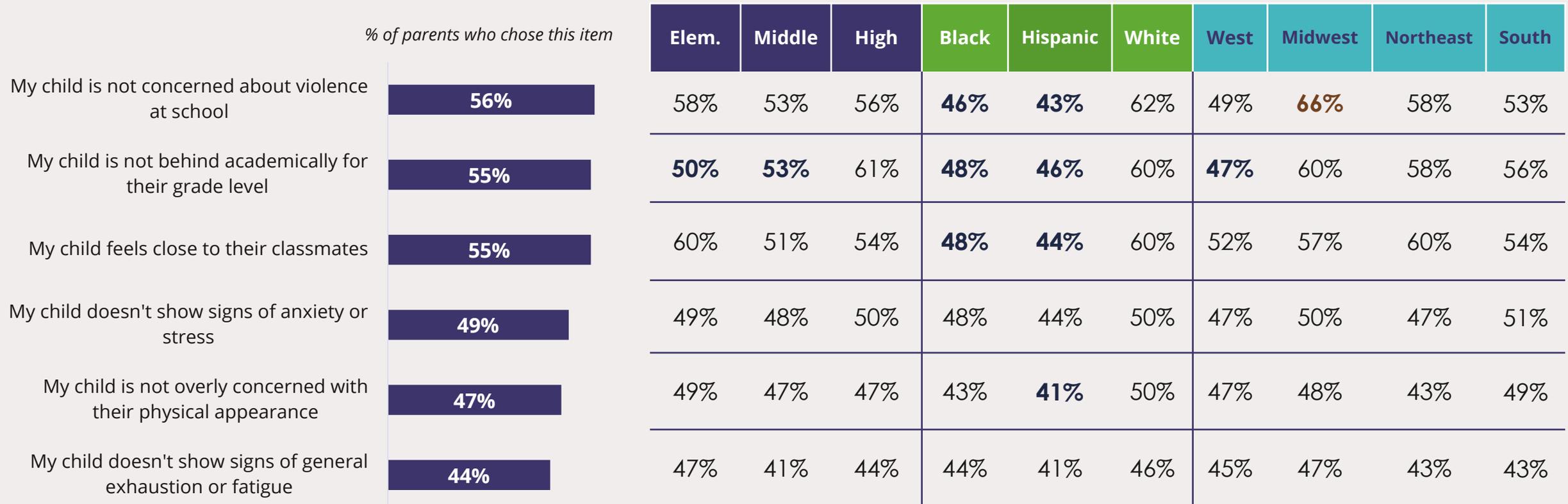
Black and Hispanic parents were less likely to report that their child has an adult at school that they trust or talk to and less likely to report that their child feels confident about their ability to complete schoolwork.



* = analytic comparison group used throughout the report

How do you know if your child feels safe and supported at school?

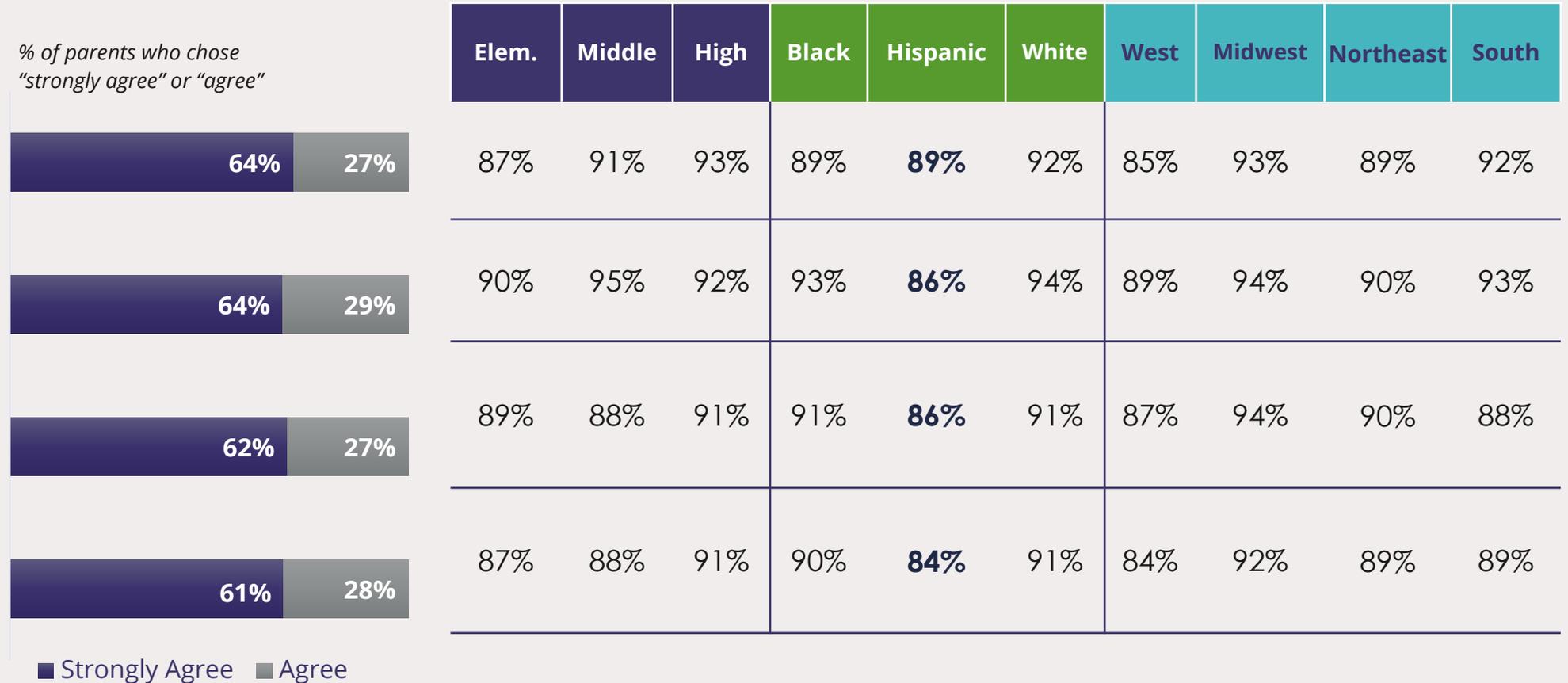
Black and Hispanic parents were more likely to be concerned about their child being behind academically.



What can schools do to help *all children* feel safe and supported at school?

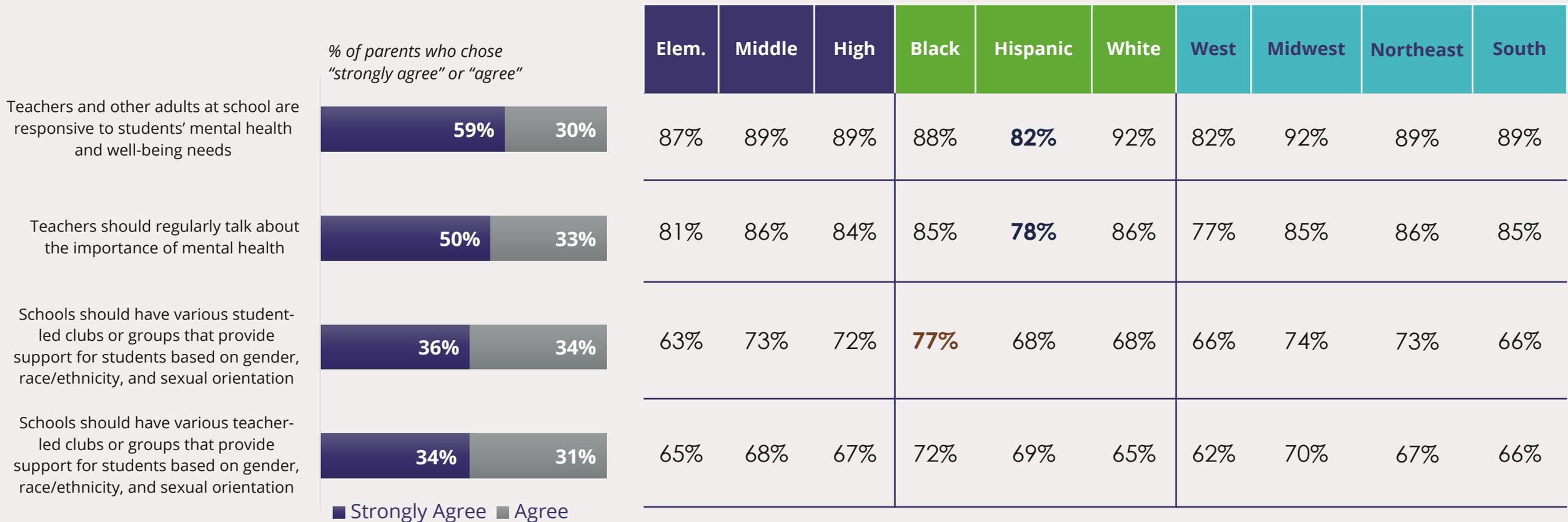
White and Black parents are similar in their beliefs about what schools can do to be safe and supportive.

% of parents who chose
"strongly agree" or "agree"



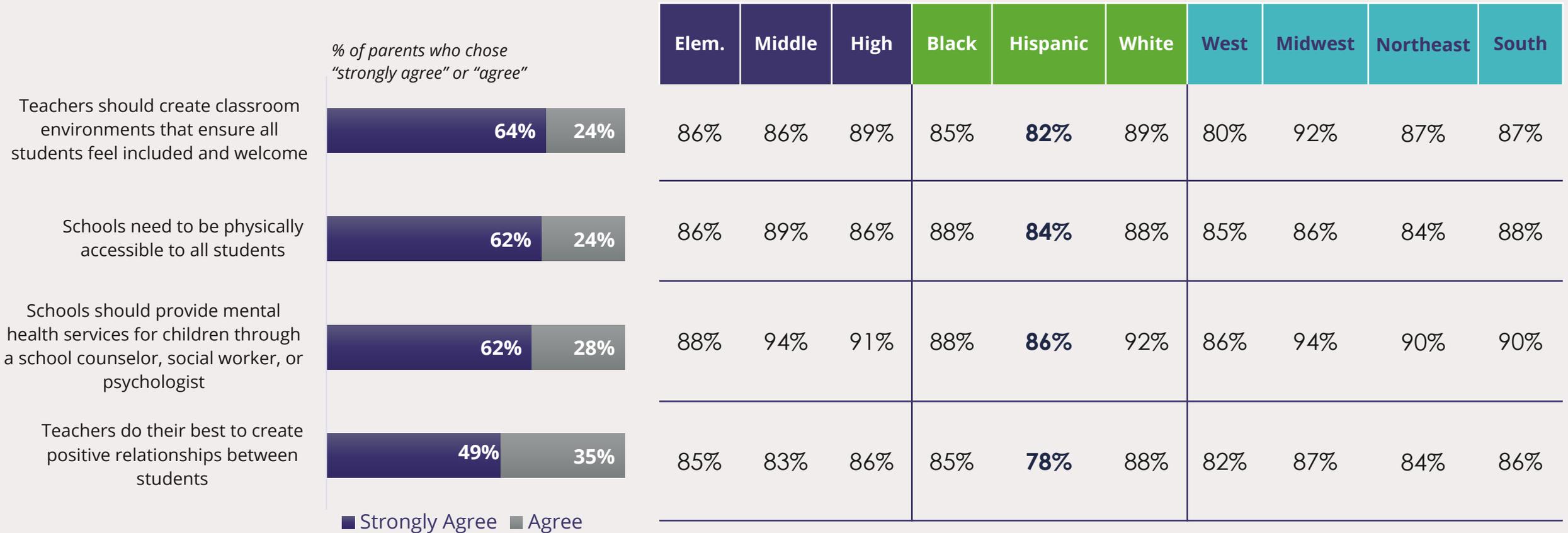
What can schools do to help *all children* feel safe and supported at school?

Black parents responded that they would like to see student led and teacher led clubs or groups based on gender, race/ethnicity and sexual orientation.



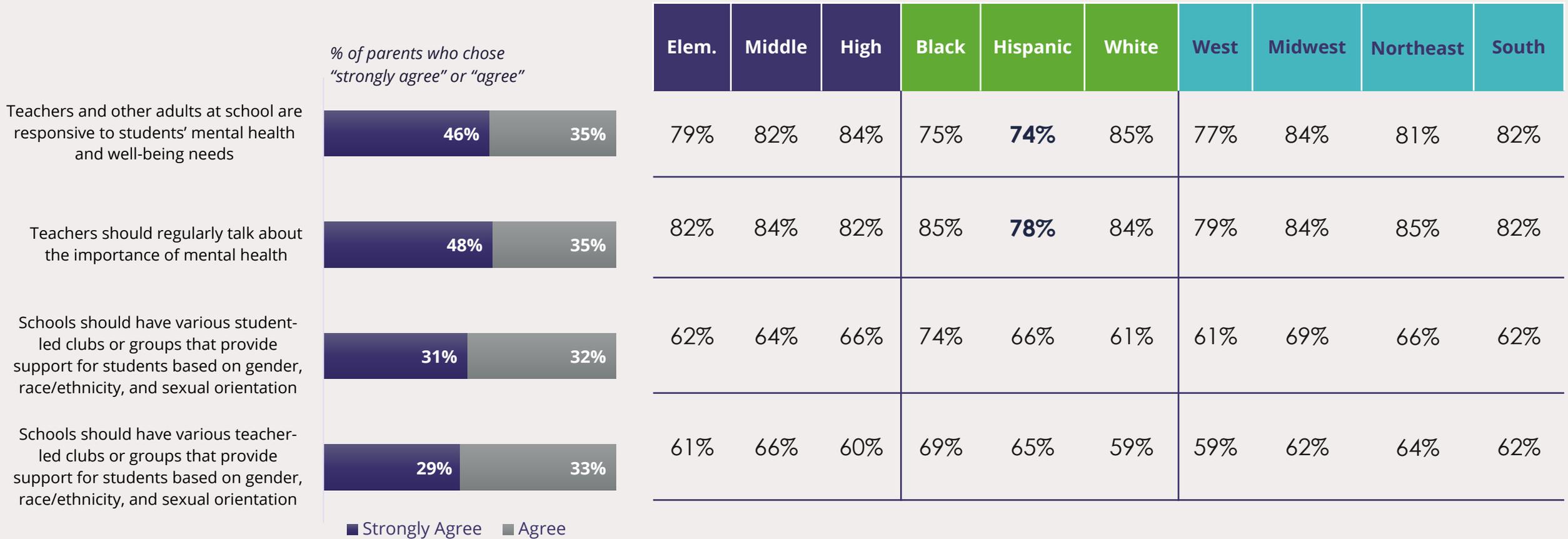
What can schools do to help *your child* feel safe and supported at school?

Black and White parents are similar in their beliefs about what helps their child feel safe and supported.



What can schools do to help *your child* feel safe and supported at school?

In general, parents have similar views about what schools can do to help their child feel safe and supported.



Parental Worries and Concerns



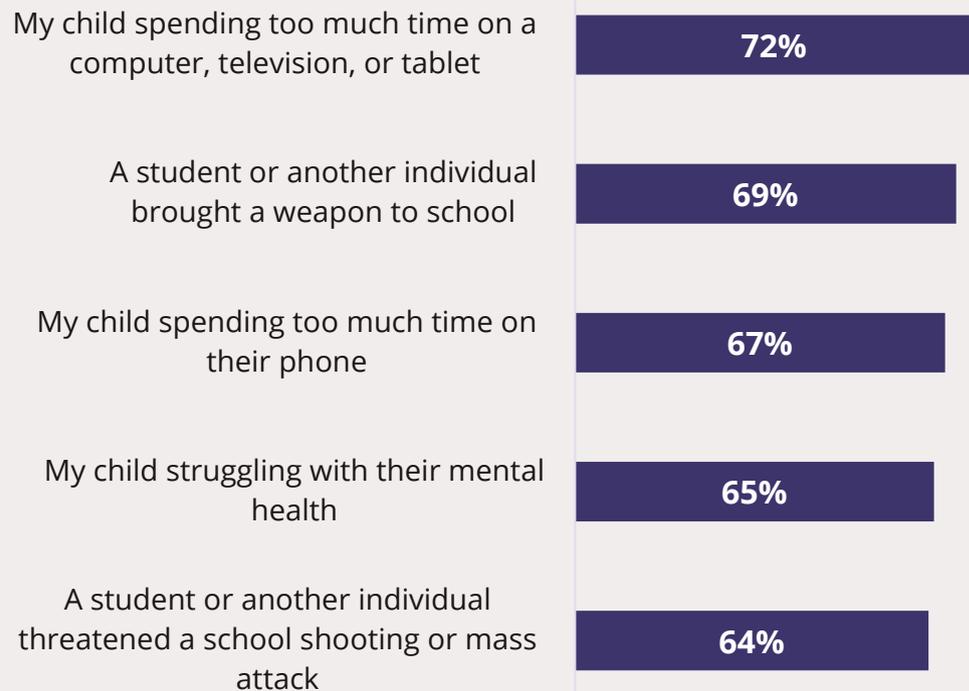
We asked parents:

How much do you worry about various aspects of your child's mental health and well-being?

Parents worry most about their child's time on electronics, physical safety, and mental health.

How much do you worry about the following?

% of parents who "worry a little bit," "worry some," or "worry a lot"

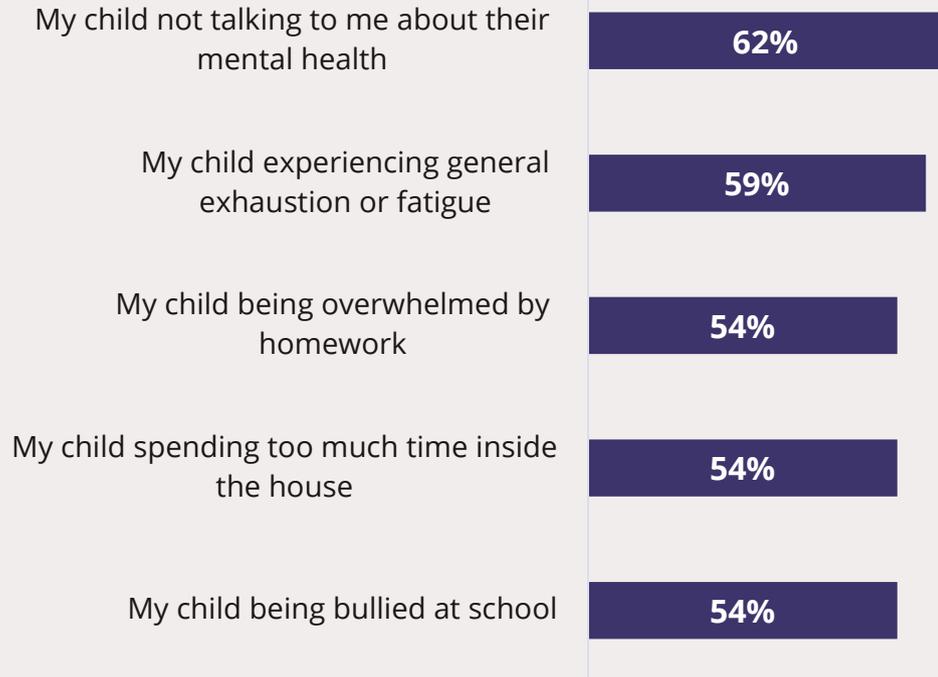


	Elem.	Middle	High	Black	Hispanic	White	West	Midwest	Northeast	South
My child spending too much time on a computer, television, or tablet	68%	75%	74%	70%	70%	74%	69%	72%	80%	71%
A student or another individual brought a weapon to school	63%	70%	74%	67%	67%	69%	68%	70%	67%	69%
My child spending too much time on their phone	50%	75%	77%	64%	64%	68%	59%	74%	69%	65%
My child struggling with their mental health	63%	64%	69%	64%	60%	68%	60%	65%	73%	66%
A student or another individual threatened a school shooting or mass attack	62%	64%	67%	69%	65%	62%	68%	65%	59%	64%

Overall, parents' worries are similar across grade level, race/ethnicity, and region.

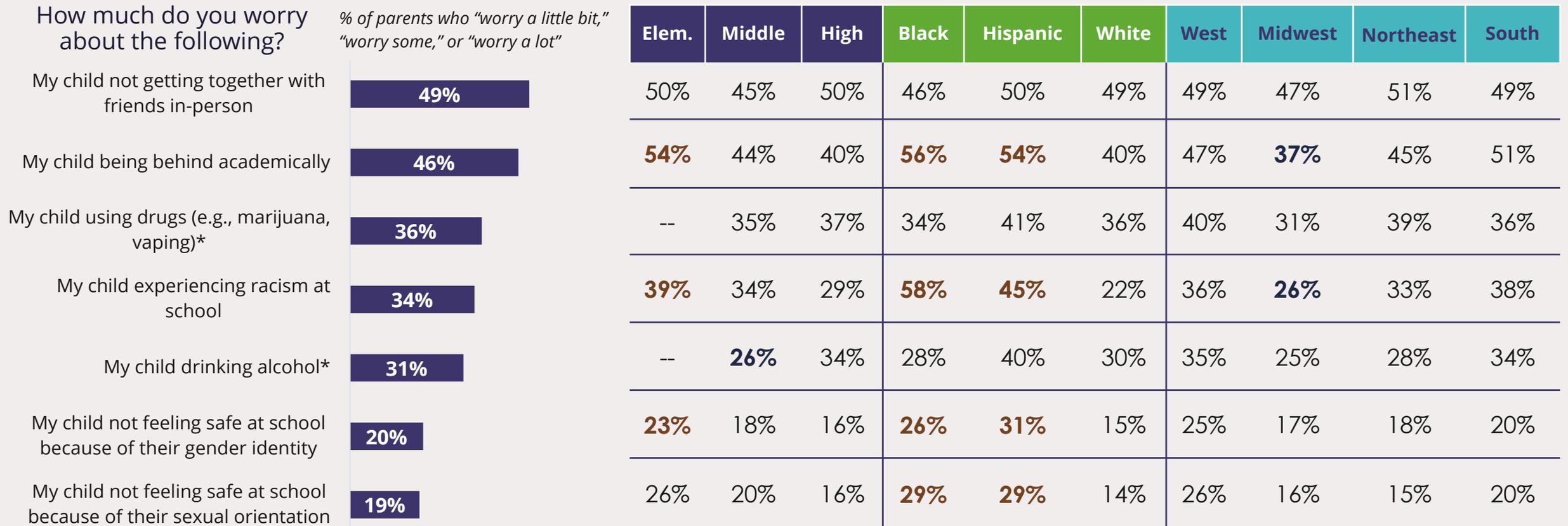
How much do you worry about the following?

% of parents who "worry a little bit," "worry some," or "worry a lot"



	Elem.	Middle	High	Black	Hispanic	White	West	Midwest	Northeast	South
My child not talking to me about their mental health	58%	61%	67%	56%	59%	64%	57%	63%	63%	65%
My child experiencing general exhaustion or fatigue	53%	60%	64%	57%	57%	60%	56%	60%	65%	57%
My child being overwhelmed by homework	52%	54%	56%	62%	55%	51%	50%	56%	56%	53%
My child spending too much time inside the house	55%	52%	54%	58%	54%	53%	51%	55%	56%	53%
My child being bullied at school	61%	55%	46%	60%	55%	52%	55%	53%	48%	55%

Black and Hispanic parents worry more about their child being behind academically, experiencing racism, and not feeling safe at school due to their gender and sexual identities.



* = Item presented only to parents of children in middle and high school

Parents also told us they worry about the actions of others and academic pressures.

Actions of others

- "...bathroom violence"
- "...having no friends"
- "NEGATIVE social media posts..."
- "...other children being disruptive"
- "Having a black child is a worry for me, because of racism.."
- "My child experiencing anti-Semitism at school"
- "...associating with a peer group who engages in risky behaviors"
- "Other students saying racist/homophobic/misogynistic things and the adults ignoring it"

Academic pressures

- "missing out on art classes because there is no room on the schedule [because of] 'academics'"
- "...mental health due to the 'academic requirements'"
- "The pressure that is put on kids to do well on tests is overwhelming sometimes"

School Resources



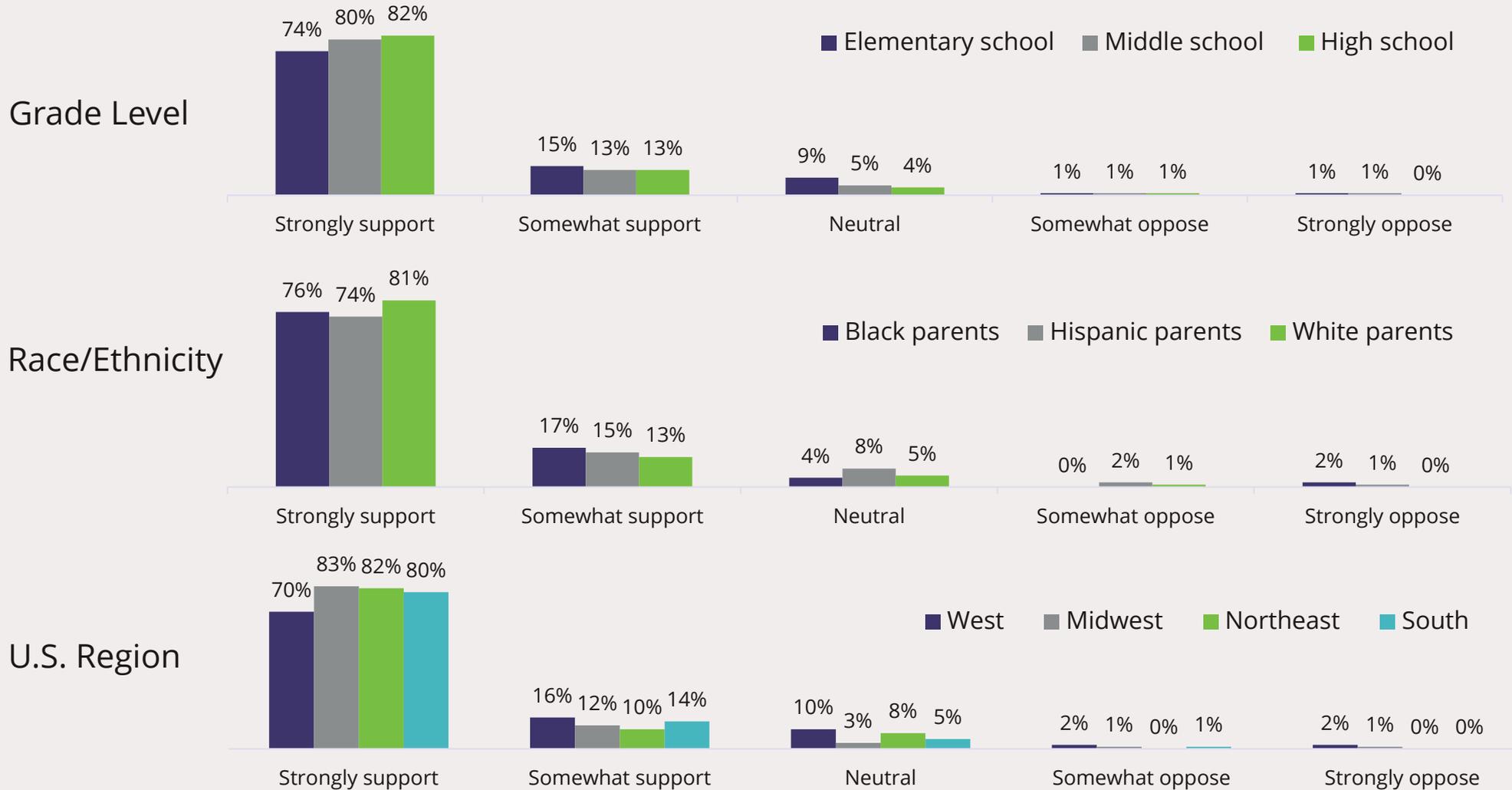
We asked parents:

If you support schools providing resources and services to support your child's emotional and mental health.

What resources should schools provide / are schools providing to help support your child's mental health and well-being?

What resources does your child want schools to provide to support their mental health and well-being?

Do you support or oppose the idea of schools providing resources and services to support your child's emotional and mental health?

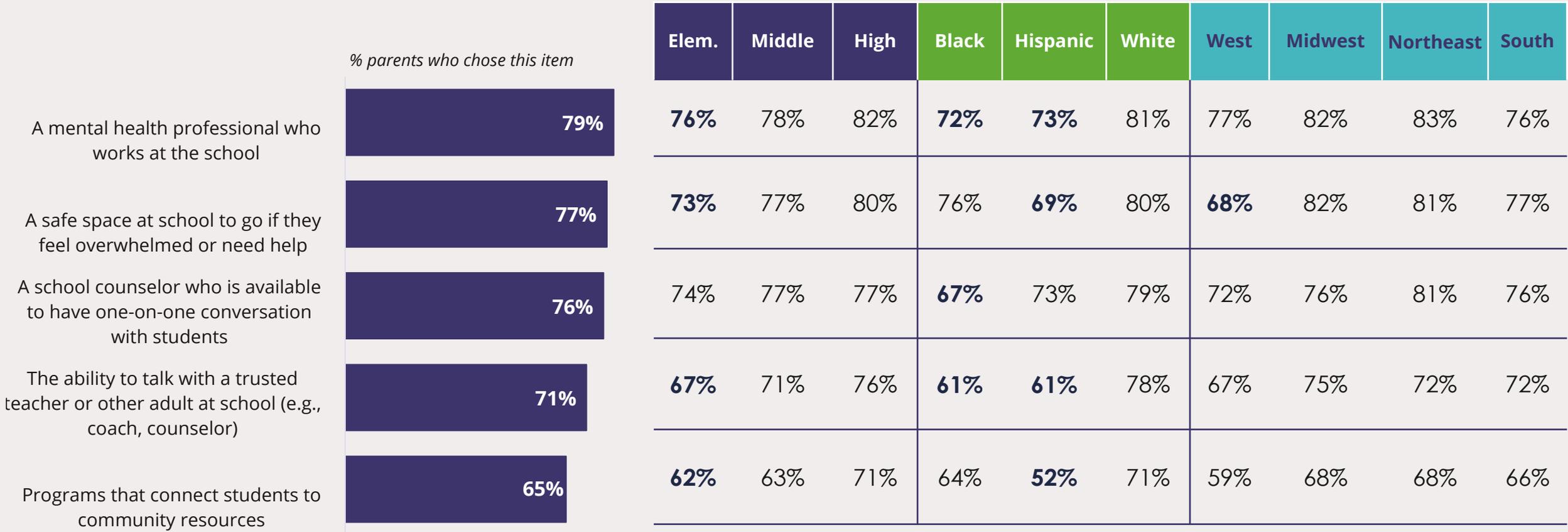


Elementary school parents and those **living in the West** are **less supportive** of schools providing resources to support their child's mental health.

No differences were documented based on race/ethnicity.

What resources *should* schools provide as it relates to supporting youth mental health and well-being?

Black and Hispanic parents were less likely than White parents to believe schools should provide mental health professionals, a safe space, ability to talk to an adult, and connections to community resources.



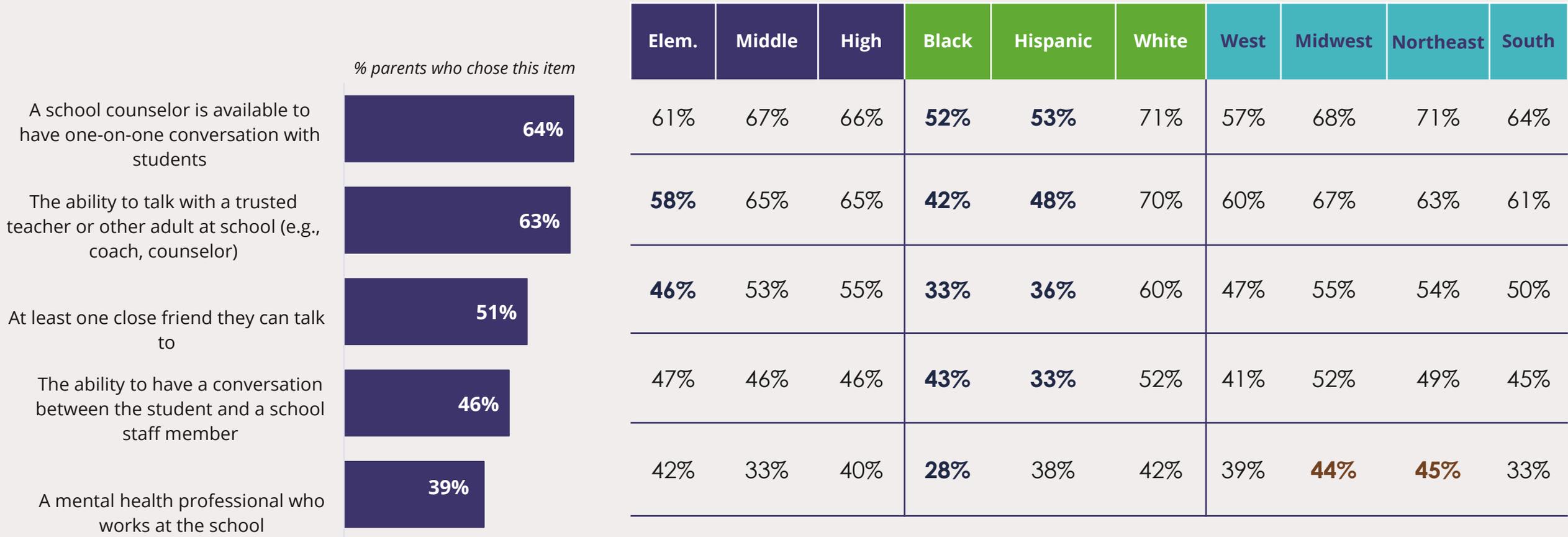
What resources *should* schools provide as it relates to supporting youth mental health and well-being?

Typically, parents believe schools should provide training for parents/caregivers to be able to better understand and support their child's mental health.

	<i>% parents who chose this item</i>	Elem.	Middle	High	Black	Hispanic	White	West	Midwest	Northeast	South
Training for parents/caregivers to be able to better understand and support their child's mental health	64%	62%	64%	67%	66%	52%	68%	57%	71%	64%	65%
The ability to have conversations between students and a school staff member	63%	62%	62%	64%	59%	54%	66%	56%	61%	66%	66%
At least one close friend they can talk to	58%	58%	53%	61%	45%	46%	64%	58%	61%	63%	54%
Flexibility to allow for mental health days	57%	56%	57%	58%	62%	54%	56%	57%	57%	58%	56%
Student-led inclusion-oriented clubs and alliances	44%	41%	45%	47%	48%	37%	45%	48%	44%	49%	41%
Teacher-led inclusion-oriented clubs and alliances	44%	42%	45%	44%	48%	34%	46%	42%	42%	49%	22%

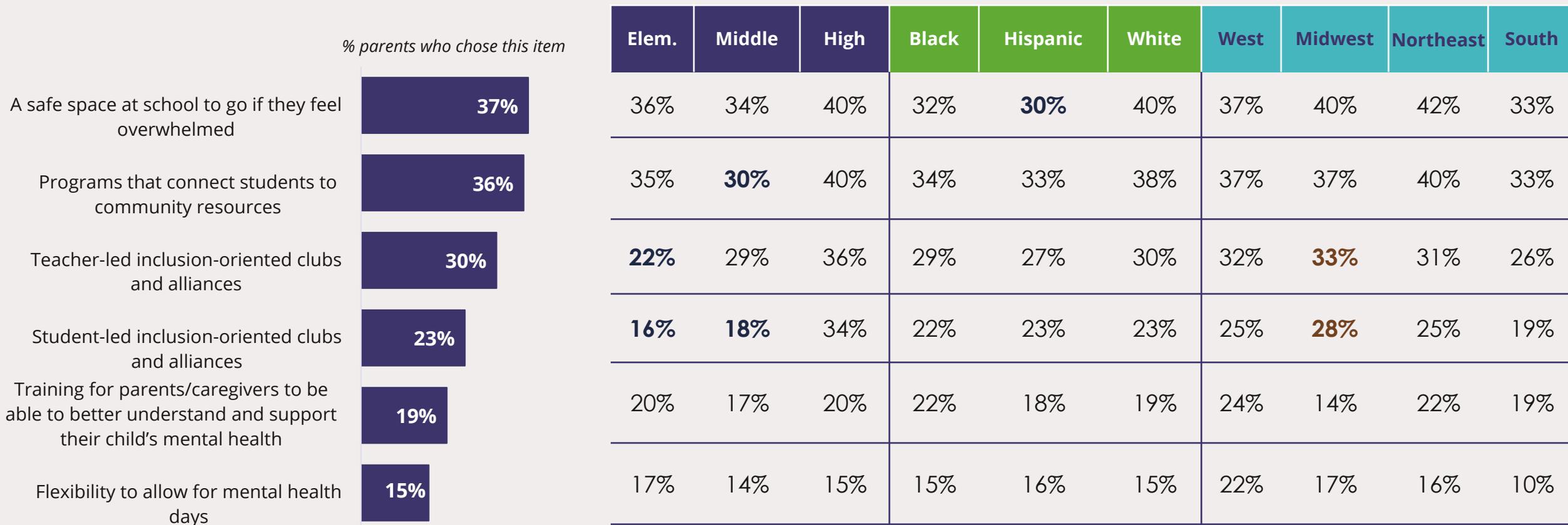
What resources *are* schools providing as it relates to supporting youth mental health and well-being?

Overall, Black and Hispanic parents are less likely to report the availability of mental health resources at their child's school.



What resources *are* schools providing as it relates to supporting youth mental health and well-being?

Elementary and middle school parents are less likely to report schools provide student-led inclusion-oriented clubs.



What resources does your child want schools to provide as it relates to supporting youth mental health and well-being?

According to parents, youth want a safe place at school and a close friend.

% of parents who chose this item

		Elem.	Middle	High	Black	Hispanic	White	West	Midwest	Northeast	South
A safe place they can go at school if they feel overwhelmed	35%	36%	37%	34%	41%	36%	34%	40%	35%	32%	34%
At least one close friend they can talk to	34%	38%	35%	30%	20%	30%	37%	36%	39%	35%	30%
Flexibility to allow for mental health days	34%	26%	33%	41%	28%	30%	35%	30%	38%	34%	33%
The ability to talk with a trusted teacher or other adult at school (e.g. coach, counselor)	26%	28%	24%	27%	20%	23%	28%	30%	28%	27%	23%
A school counselor who is available to have one-on-one conversations with students	24%	27%	23%	22%	16%	28%	25%	26%	23%	26%	23%

What resources does your child want schools to provide as it relates to supporting youth mental health and well-being?

Overall, Hispanic parents were more likely to report that their child wants schools to provide resources related to supporting youth mental health and well-being.

	% parents who chose this item										
		Elem.	Middle	High	Black	Hispanic	White	West	Midwest	Northeast	South
A mental health professional who works at the school	23%	24%	22%	24%	25%	29%	21%	24%	23%	26%	22%
The ability to have conversations between the student and a school staff member	15%	18%	14%	12%	19%	19%	12%	18%	12%	16%	14%
Programs that connect students to community resources	14%	15%	16%	12%	15%	22%	11%	16%	13%	16%	13%
Student-led inclusion-oriented clubs and alliances	13%	14%	13%	11%	15%	18%	10%	16%	11%	14%	12%
Teacher-led inclusion-oriented clubs and alliances	11%	12%	14%	8%	8%	16%	10%	14%	8%	10%	11%
Training for parents/caregivers to be able to better understand and support their child's mental health	11%	13%	10%	10%	12%	18%	7%	15%	9%	11%	9%

Perceived Barriers to Access for Resources



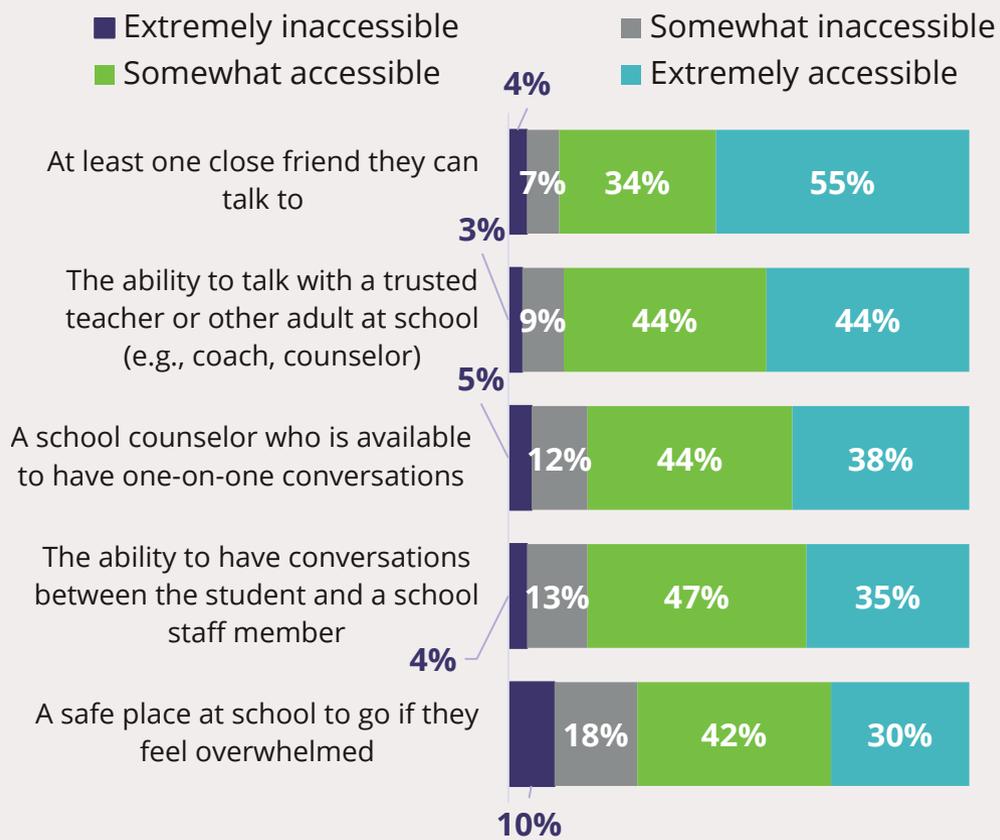
We asked parents:

How accessible to your child are school resources that can help their mental health and well-being?

What barriers does your child encounter when trying to access mental health and well-being resources provided by their school?

How accessible are the following resources to your child?

Parents report, having a close friend and trusted adult are the most accessible resources for their child. The ability to talk to a trusted adult is less accessible for Black and Hispanic parents' children.

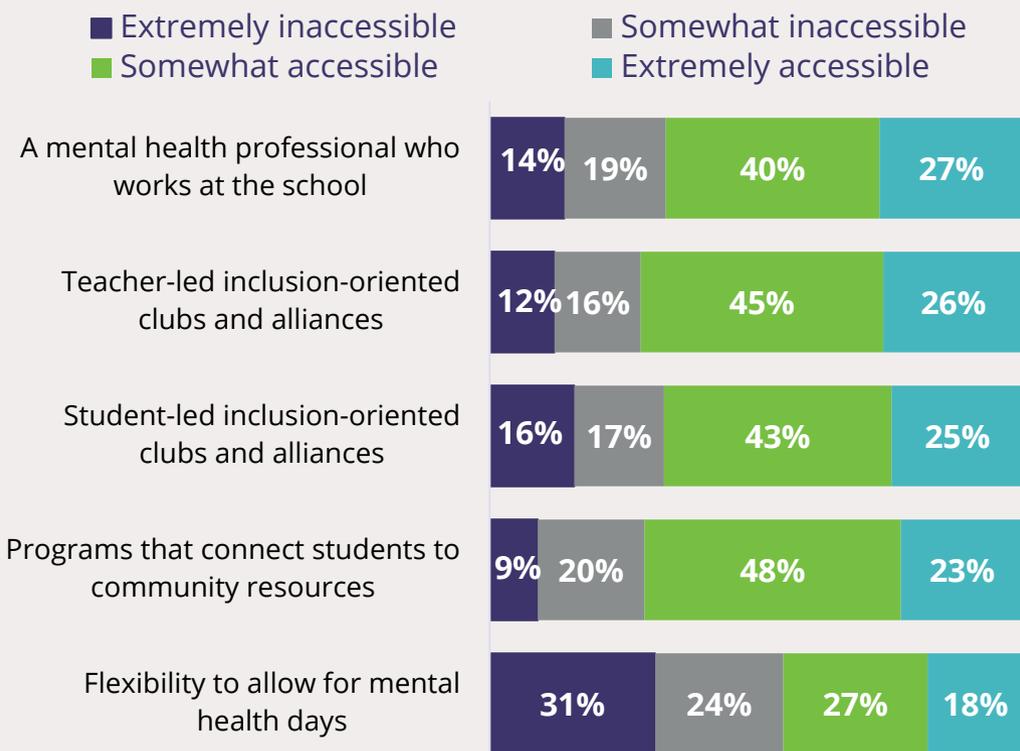


	Elem.	Middle	High	Black	Hispanic	White	West	Midwest	Northeast	South
At least one close friend they can talk to	90%	91%	87%	88%	82%	92%	86%	89%	92%	89%
The ability to talk with a trusted teacher or other adult at school (e.g., coach, counselor)	88%	89%	88%	82%	87%	90%	88%	89%	88%	88%
A school counselor who is available to have one-on-one conversations	82%	84%	82%	81%	79%	84%	77%	83%	87%	85%
The ability to have conversations between the student and a school staff member	84%	80%	83%	79%	78%	85%	81%	85%	79%	83%
A safe place at school to go if they feel overwhelmed	75%	67%	71%	74%	71%	71%	71%	73%	70%	71%

Note. Percentages in this table represent parents who responded "somewhat accessible" and "extremely accessible"

How accessible are the following resources to your child?

Parents report, the least accessible resource for their child is mental health days.

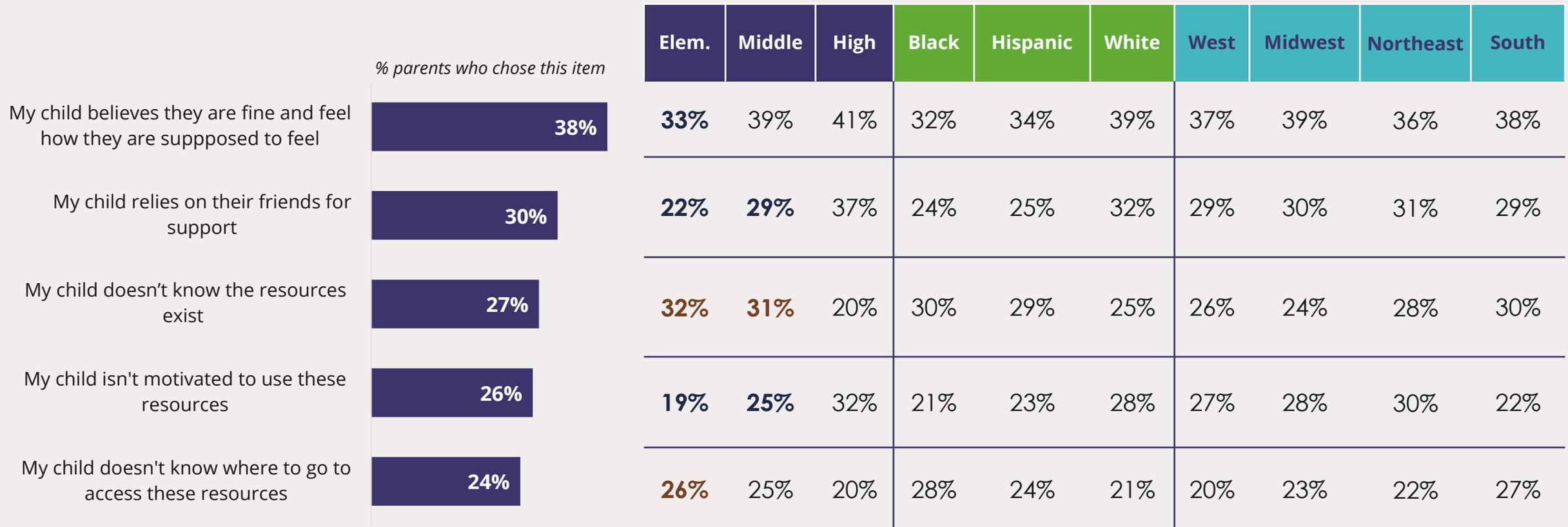


	Elem.	Middle	High	Black	Hispanic	White	West	Midwest	Northeast	South
A mental health professional who works at the school	72%	62%	66%	61%	69%	68%	66%	73%	72%	61%
Teacher-led inclusion-oriented clubs and alliances	63%	74%	77%	71%	74%	69%	74%	71%	75%	69%
Student-led inclusion-oriented clubs and alliances	56%	66%	77%	72%	65%	67%	68%	68%	74%	64%
Programs that connect students to community resources	70%	70%	72%	70%	72%	70%	74%	70%	71%	69%
Flexibility to allow for mental health days	46%	46%	45%	47%	55%	41%	57%	49%	41%	38%

Note. Percentages in this table represent parents who responded “somewhat accessible” and “extremely accessible”

Which of the following are barriers for your child accessing mental health and well-being resources provided by their school?

Elementary and middle school parents are less likely to report their child relying on friends and lack of motivation as barriers to accessing resources. The most common barrier to accessing mental health-related resources is that youth believe they're fine.



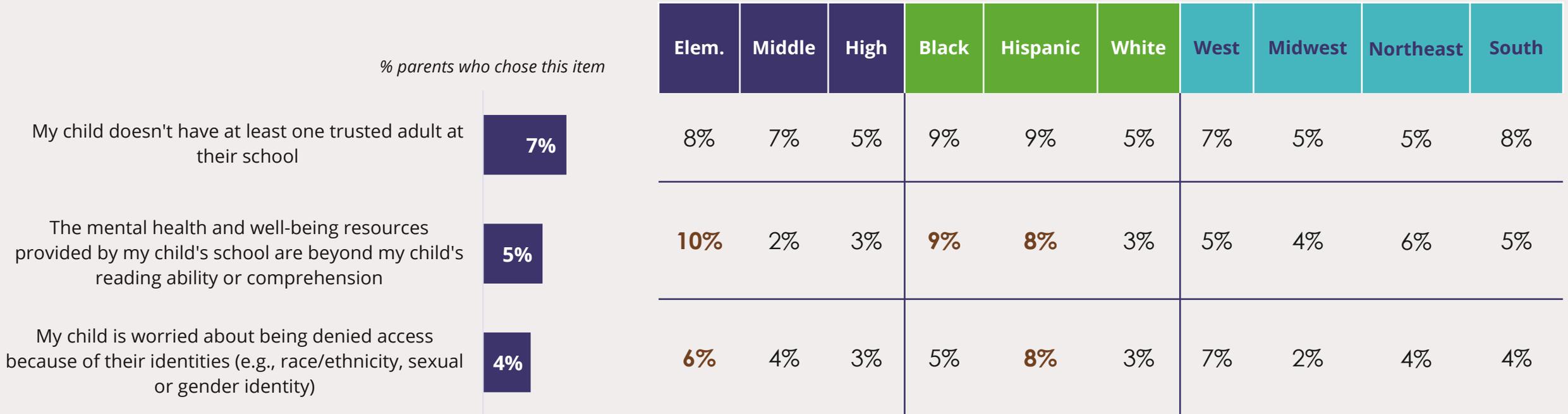
Which of the following are barriers for your child accessing mental health and well-being resources provided by school?

Black parents were more likely to report that their child doesn't feel connected to their school.



Which of the following are barriers for your child accessing mental health and well-being resources provided by school?

The least common barrier to accessing mental health-related resources is youth being worried about being denied access due to their identities. Parents of elementary school children are more likely to report their child being worried about denial of resources due to their identities as a barrier to resource access.



Parental Opinions



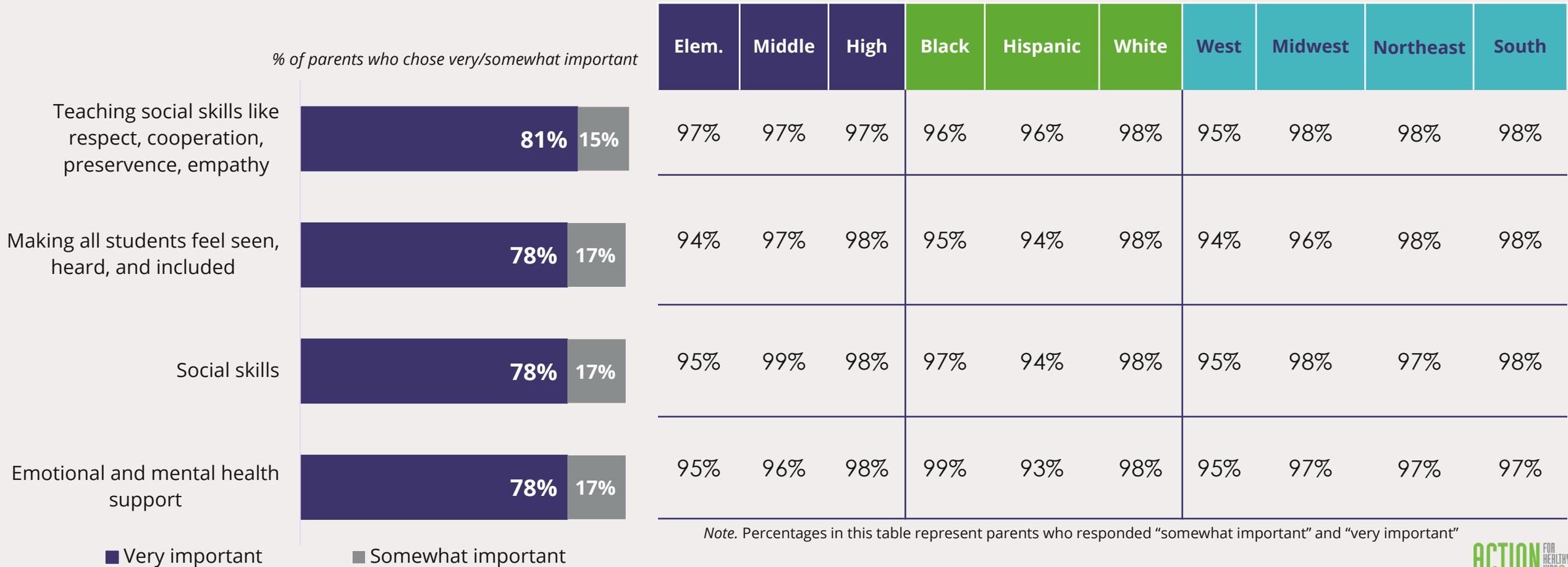
We asked parents:

How important is it that schools have various programs and policies?

How comfortable would you be if programs such as art, music, theater were removed from their child's school?

How important is it for your child's school to have programs or policies to address or provide each of the following?

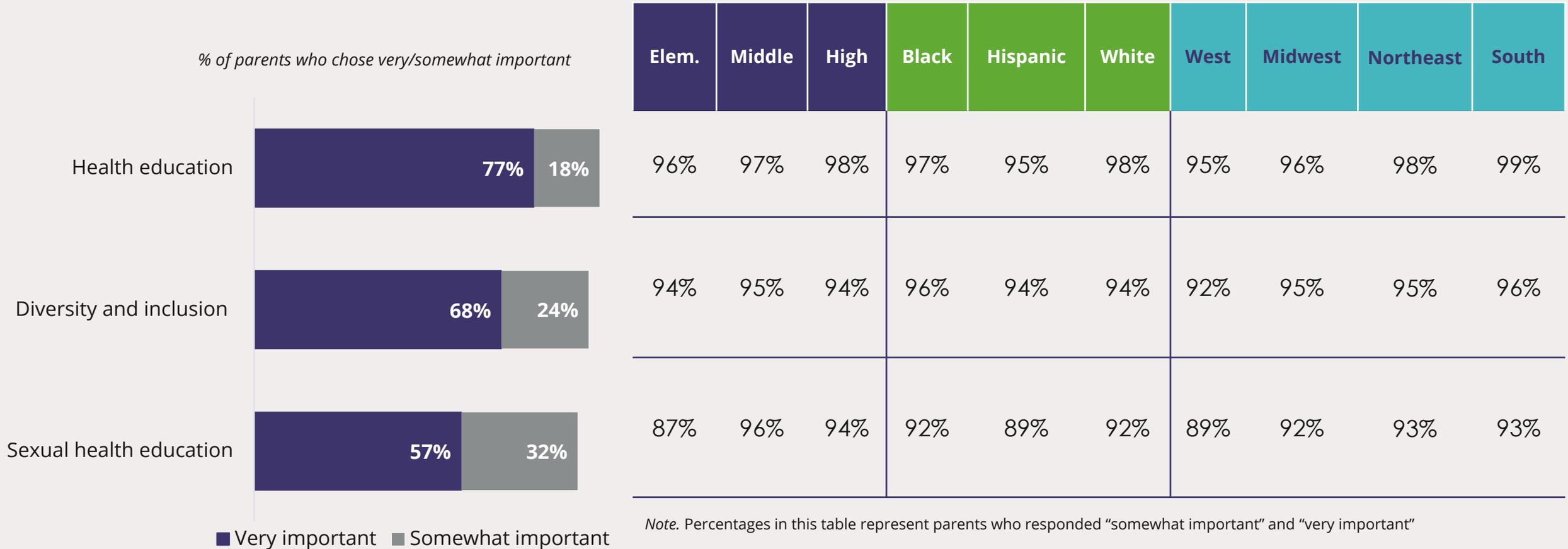
Across demographics, parents believe it is most important for schools to have programs that teach social skills and promote inclusion.



How important is it for your child's school to have programs or policies to address or provide each of the following?

Parents believe it is important for their child's school to have programs or policies around health education, diversity and inclusion, and sexual health education.

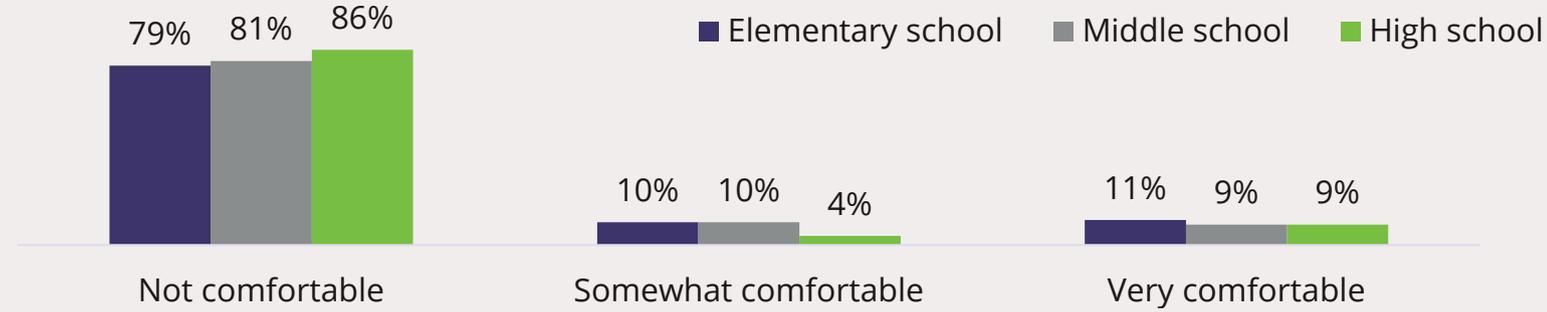
% of parents who chose very/somewhat important



Note. Percentages in this table represent parents who responded "somewhat important" and "very important"

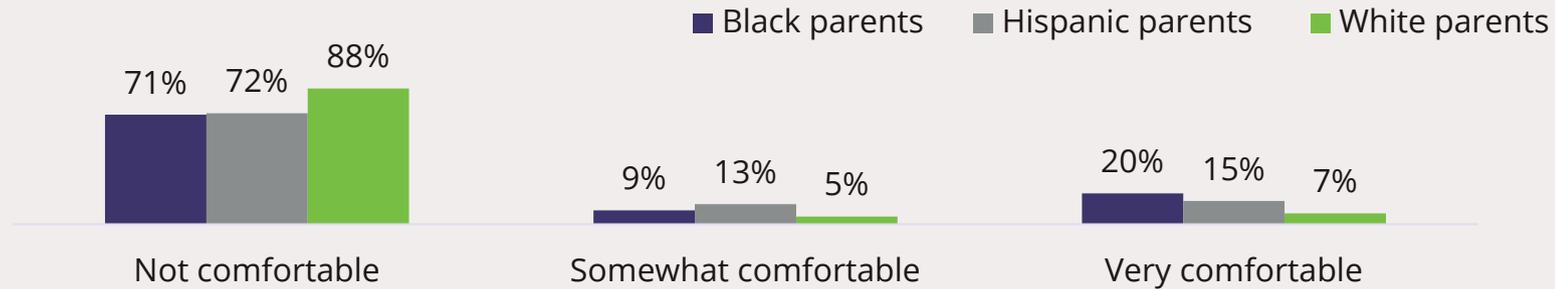
How comfortable would you feel if your child's school removed programs, such as art, music, theater, etc?

Grade level



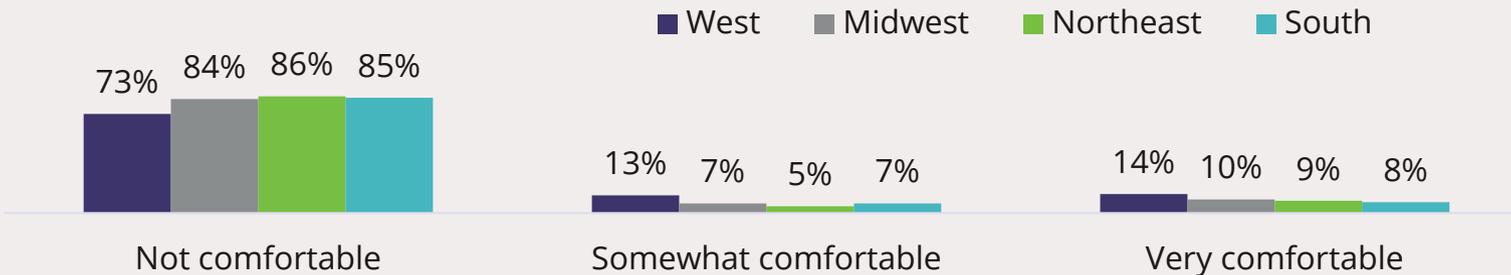
No differences were documented based on grade level.

Race/Ethnicity



White parents would be the most uncomfortable if schools removed art-related programs.

U.S. Region



Parents living in the West would be the most comfortable if schools removed art-related programs.



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