

# Voices of New Orleans Youth 2022:

How are our city's children doing after three unusual years?

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*Objective, rigorous, and useful  
research to improve students'  
experiences in schools and beyond.*

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# OVERVIEW

An essential component of any school system that is commonly left out in policy discussions is the thoughts and opinions of the students. We can easily access test scores and graduation rates, but the way students feel about their teachers, schools, neighborhoods, and themselves isn't publicly available information. Gathering such insights is essential to create initiatives that help New Orleans' youth succeed.

In this report, we discuss the findings from the second New Orleans citywide youth survey, completed in 2021-2022. In particular, we summarize the results from middle and high school students in the public schools of New Orleans. Where possible, these results are compared to those of the [2018-2019 citywide youth survey](#). As the first survey was conducted prior to the pandemic and greater attention to systemic racism, our research provides an opportunity to compare students' views of their schools, neighborhoods, and themselves before and after the COVID-19 pandemic began. We can also identify any disparities in experiences among different races/ethnicities. Our key takeaways are as follows:

## Good News

- In 2022, students reported better teaching quality, greater social support, and a feeling of being treated more fairly in school compared to 2019.

## Areas for Concern

- Since 2019, New Orleans students report valuing education less, exerting less self-control, and attending school less often.
- Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, roughly 40% of students have reported heightened concerns about their academic performance and mental well-being.
- There are disparities in how students of different races view their schools and neighborhoods. Black students report experiencing worse school and neighborhood environments and having fewer mental health resources in schools than white students.

The survey provided us with a wealth of data about what students were thinking and feeling. We grouped these data into six main topics: teaching quality, student academic beliefs and behaviors, school climate, neighborhoods, personal well-being, and COVID-19.

In this report, our aim is to amplify the voices of New Orleans students by informing communal and educational institutions about the issues that impact them. We want to advocate for policies and practices that elevate New Orleans students and help them to reach their potential in life.





## KEY CONCLUSIONS

### ACADEMICS

**Teaching Quality:** New Orleans students rate their teachers highly in some areas, such as the ability to challenge students, but lower in others, particularly classroom management and showing care and concern for students. Overall, New Orleans students in 2022 rate their teachers higher than in 2019, which is consistent with trends seen on this teaching quality survey in other districts. We see few differences among Black, Hispanic, and white students in their perceptions of teaching in 2022.

**Academic Beliefs & Behaviors:** New Orleans students frequently agree that there is value in education and that academic success is based on hard work, but fewer than half of students report consistently putting effort into their schoolwork and exerting self-control. Compared to 2019, New Orleans students report valuing education less, having lower self-control, and being absent more often. New Orleans middle school students are more uncertain about their future schooling in 2022 than in 2019. Black students report higher growth mindset beliefs than Hispanic students and lower self-control than white students.

**School Climate:** Though many students agree that they feel physically safe in their schools and that school discipline is fair, roughly 40% of students report that bullying is a problem in their school and not feeling emotionally safe. New Orleans students perceive more equitable treatment in schools in 2022 compared with 2019. Overall, Black and Hispanic students report worse school climate than white students.



## SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

**Neighborhoods:** New Orleans students frequently report having people who care for and support them and feeling safe in their neighborhoods. Compared to 2019, students report higher social support, but lower civic engagement. White students report higher social support and neighborhood safety than Black students, but Black students participate in more service activities than white students.

**Personal Well-being:** Only about half of New Orleans students report being satisfied with their lives and about a quarter report anxious behaviors. While more than half of New Orleans students report that they have mental health support in school, 18% of students say they would not speak with anyone if they were overwhelmed, stressed, or depressed. Most students with anxious behaviors report they would use more mental health resources in school if available to them. Black and Hispanic students in New Orleans report better life satisfaction overall, but less mental health support in schools than white students.



## EXPERIENCES WITH COVID-19

**COVID-19:** About 40% of New Orleans students report being much more concerned about their academic performance and emotional health since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Surprisingly, when asked about their learning experiences during the 2020-2021 school year, New Orleans students were almost evenly split between whether they feel they learned more or less. Forty-three percent of New Orleans students report wanting to return to all in-person instruction after the pandemic, compared with only 34% of students nationally. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Hispanic students report being more concerned about their family's emotional and financial health than white and Black students. Black and Hispanic students report learning more during COVID-19 and preferring hybrid instruction more than white students.

# BACKGROUND

When studying schools and communities, researchers often reach for statistics available from national, state, and local agencies, such as test scores, graduation rates, poverty rates, homelessness, etc. While this information is invaluable in understanding some important elements of young people's well-being, these measures provide little information about how they are experiencing their schools and communities or what they may need to thrive in school and in their later lives. [Students' perceptions of their own and others' behaviors impact their learning and growth](#), and they are experts in their own experiences, perceptions, and beliefs.

To bring student voices to the forefront, the Education Research Alliance for New Orleans (ERA-New Orleans) convened a team of diverse education and community organizations in 2016 to develop a survey with validated questions on the most pressing and under-examined issues in the city. We developed the first New Orleans citywide youth survey to capture students' perceptions of their teachers and schools, academic beliefs and behaviors, and experiences with safety and engagement within their neighborhoods.

The reports from the [first youth survey](#), administered to middle and high school students during the 2018-2019 school year, helped inform district- and school-level changes in policies and practices to better meet the needs of New Orleans students. For example, one charter management organization decided to include more opportunities for students to participate in decision-making after receiving their survey results. In addition, results pertaining to racial inequality in teaching and school quality have been used by advocates for better educational opportunities for Black students.

With so much interest in the first survey, we reconvened the Citywide Youth Survey Steering Committee in the summer of 2021 to administer a second survey and identify areas where the city has, and has not, made progress.

Starting with the list of questions from the 2018-2019 survey, the committee proposed additional questions concerning well-being, experiences with COVID-19, and experiences with Hurricane Ida. After compiling questions from existing surveys, ERA-New Orleans staff administered a pilot survey to two groups of high school students and determined the most relevant questions based on steering committee and student feedback. From February to April of 2022, 28 schools administered the survey to 3,110 6th through 11th grade students. The characteristics of these students are similar to those of students in publicly funded New Orleans schools overall. More details about the survey sample and representation are at the end of this report and in the technical appendix.

New Orleans students participated in this survey after two years of enduring the COVID-19 pandemic, which not only introduced new health and economic concerns for the New Orleans community, but also drastically changed how our city's students learned. Additionally, the murder of George Floyd in the summer of 2020 sparked increased national attention to issues of racial injustice and contributed to local efforts to address systemic racism in schools.

Hurricane Ida hit the city at the start of the 2021-2022 school year as well. About 75% of New Orleans students reported evacuating before or after the storm, and 46% reported some home damage, mainly to their roofs.

In addition, the landscape of New Orleans education has changed since the original survey administration in the 2018-2019 school year. The share of Hispanic students in New Orleans schools has increased and the share of Black students has decreased. In addition, the proportion of students who are from economically disadvantaged backgrounds has increased. Overall, standardized test scores for [New Orleans students](#), and [students nationally](#), have decreased as students transition back to full-time, in-person instruction. We consider these contextual factors while interpreting the results from the 2022 survey, especially in trying to draw conclusions about differences in the experiences of New Orleans youth between 2019 and 2022.

Almost all of the survey questions come from existing surveys that have been previously validated, and as a result, survey response scales vary by question. All measures in this report are defined so that higher values are considered more positive. For questions that were initially negatively framed, we reverse the scale so that negative answers (i.e. “disagree”) are assigned higher values. For some sections of this report, we simply report the percent of students who responded affirmatively (i.e., answered “agree” or “strongly agree”) to survey questions. In other sections, we combine students' responses across all of the questions within a given dimension and display the percent of affirmative responses. For example, students had five response options for the five questions about their growth mindset beliefs: Totally untrue, mostly untrue, somewhat true, mostly true, totally true. Looking at all responses to every item, we calculate how often students agreed with the statements by selecting either “mostly true” or “totally true” (66% of the time). More details on the individual items and how we report them are included in the technical appendix.





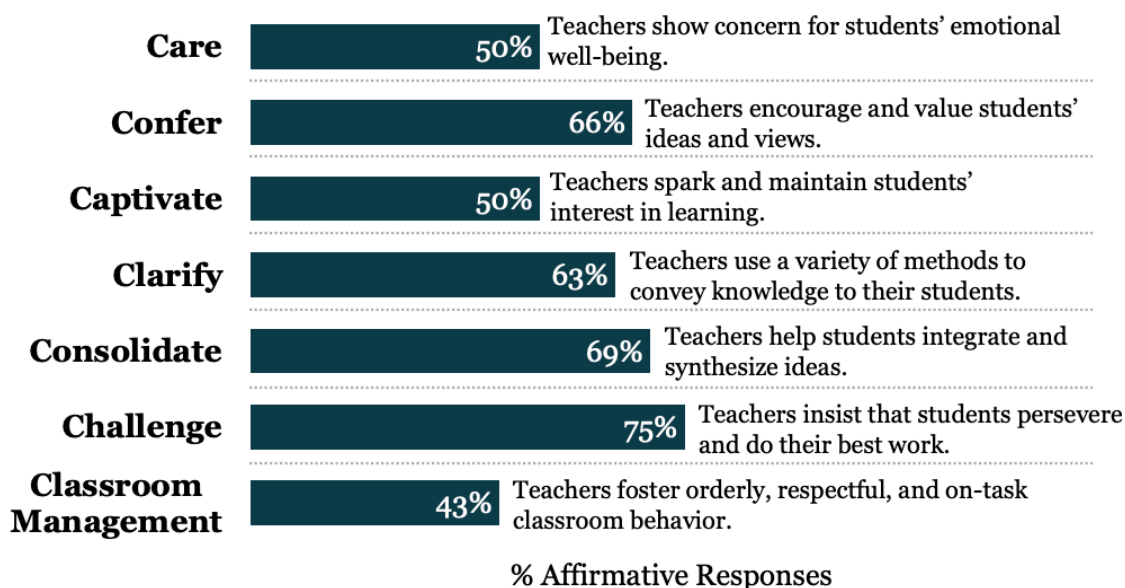
# WHAT DO NEW ORLEANS YOUTH THINK ABOUT THEIR TEACHERS?

A growing body of research finds that [teacher performance varies widely](#), even within a given school and that these [differences affect students' long-term life success](#). [Students' perceptions of teachers are particularly important for their motivation, engagement, and achievement](#). We examine the quality of teaching using students' perceptions of their teachers across seven areas provided by [Education Elements](#). These [Tripod 7Cs® measures](#) address the support students receive in the classroom—through how teachers attend to their emotional security (care & confer), intellectual stimulation (captivate), and understanding of material (clarify & consolidate)—as well as the focus on academic excellence—through whether teachers strive for rigorous instruction (challenge) and keep students focused on learning (classroom management). [Research](#) has found that it is necessary for students to feel both challenged and supported to learn and grow.

## ACADEMICS

Figure 1 displays New Orleans students' ratings of their teachers across the different aspects of teaching quality. Since the teaching quality dimensions include multiple questions, we display the percent of affirmative responses across all questions in a given dimension.

**Figure 1: Students rate teachers the highest in 'Challenge' & the lowest in 'Classroom Management'**

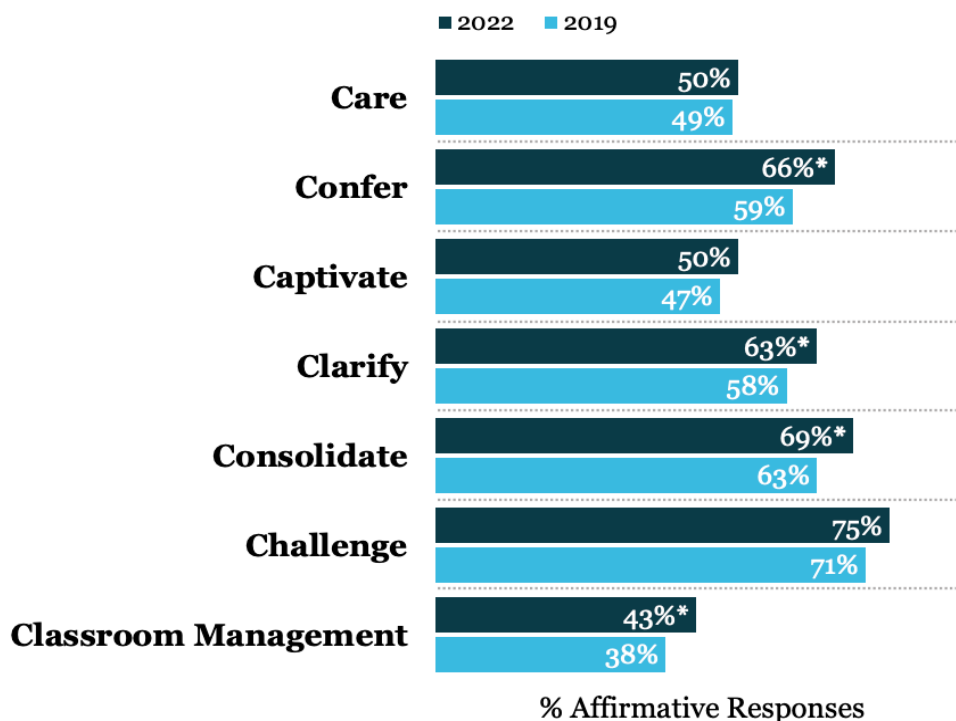




Students frequently agree that their teachers challenge them (75%) and help them to integrate and synthesize ideas (69%). However, only half of students agree that their teachers care about their emotional well-being or that they spark and maintain students' interest in learning. Even fewer students (43%) agree that their teachers foster orderly, respectful, and on-task classroom behavior.

New Orleans students in 2022 rate their teachers higher on average than in 2019, as shown in Figure 2. In particular, students rate their teachers significantly higher in consolidating and clarifying information, encouraging and valuing students' ideas and views, and managing the classroom effectively. These trends align with what EdElements has seen in other districts since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is possible that teachers, nationally and in New Orleans, had to adjust their teaching strategies to connect more with students during distance learning, and that is now improving students' experiences in the classroom. It is also possible that students in 2022 are viewing their classroom experiences through a different lens given the school disruptions experienced over the past few years, leading to more positive views of their in-person classroom experience.

**Figure 2: On average, students report higher teacher quality in 2022 than in 2019, consistent with national trends**

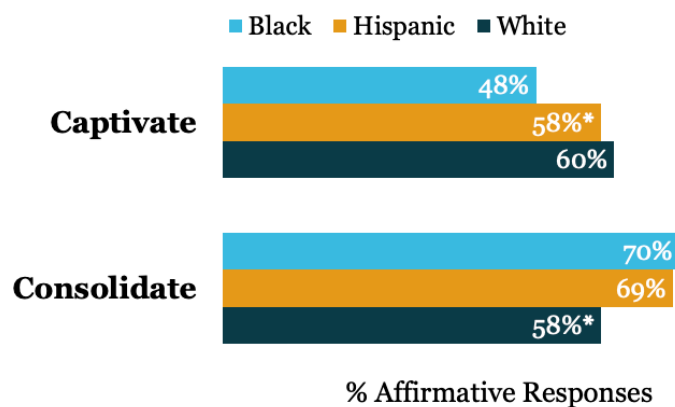


*Note: \* indicates the difference between responses in 2019 and 2022 is significant ( $p < .05$ ).*

# HOW DO STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS VARY BY RACE?

We also analyzed whether students of different races and ethnicities have different classroom experiences and perceptions. Figure 3 displays the two teaching quality measures where student racial/ethnic differences emerged. We do not find any significant racial/ethnic differences in students' perceptions of the remaining teacher quality measures: teachers' caring, valuing of students' ideas, clarifying information, challenging students, and classroom management. We did find that Black and Hispanic students report that their teachers help them to integrate and synthesize ideas (consolidate) more often than white students report. However, Black students are less likely than Hispanic and white students to report that their teachers maintain students' interest in learning (captivate.)

**Figure 3: Black students rate teachers higher in 'Consolidate' & lower in 'Captivate' than white students do**



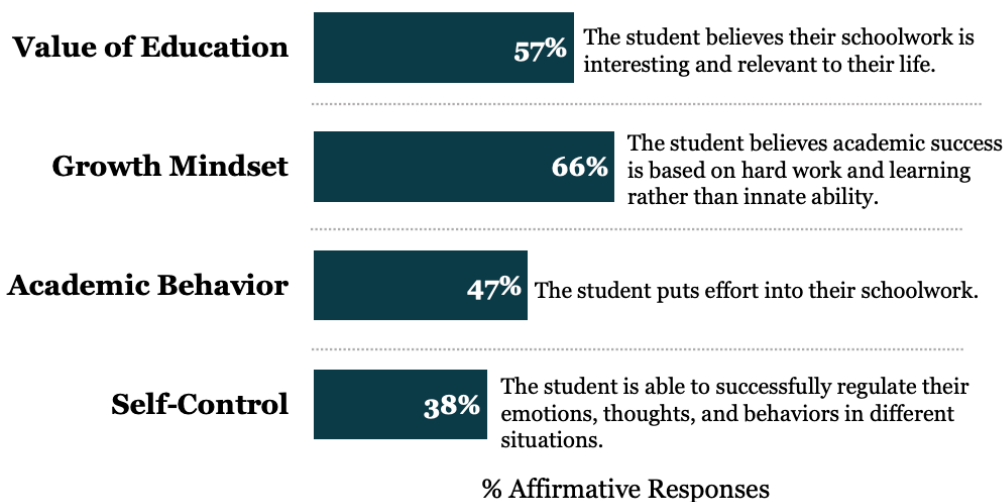
*Note: \* indicates responses are significantly different from Black students' responses ( $p < .05$ ).*

# WHAT ARE THE ACADEMIC BELIEFS AND BEHAVIORS OF NEW ORLEANS YOUTH?

We asked students to report on six aspects of their academic beliefs and behaviors: value of education, growth mindset, academic behavior, self-control, educational expectations, and attendance.

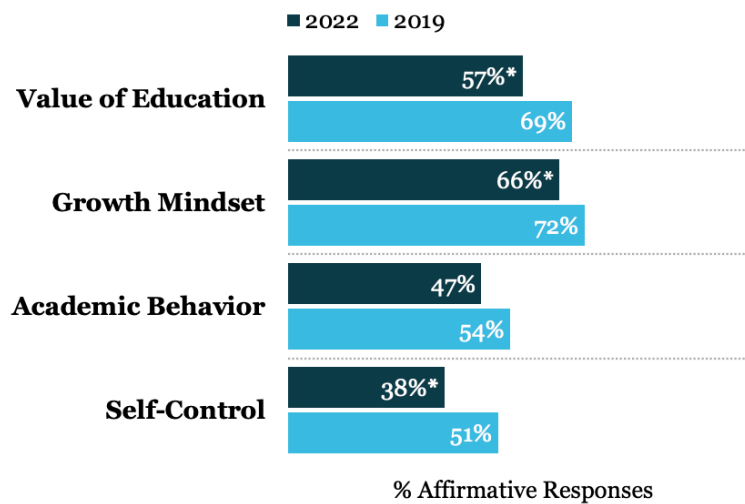
For each of the academic belief dimensions, we display the percent of affirmative responses across all questions in a given dimension. As shown in Figure 4, New Orleans students frequently agree that their schoolwork is interesting and relevant (57%) and that the effort they put into their schoolwork pays off (66%). However, only 47% of New Orleans students report engaging in behaviors to support their learning and only 38% report being able to regulate their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors.

**Figure 4: Most students value education & believe effort pays off, but report low academic behaviors & self-control**



Unlike what we found with student reports of teaching quality, students in the 2022 survey on average report lower academic beliefs and behaviors than students in the 2019 survey. In particular, students report valuing education less and having lower self-control (Figure 5). It is possible that these decreases in students' academic beliefs are due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some research in other contexts has found similar [decreases in students' certainty about the value of education in their lives](#) and [in their self-control](#).

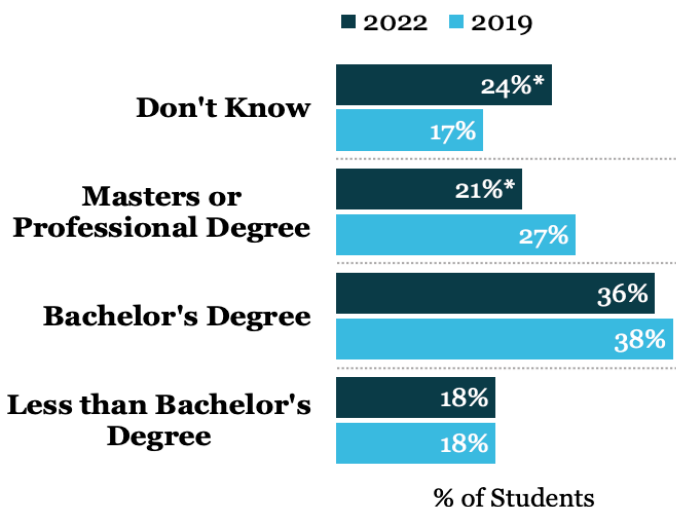
**Figure 5: Academic beliefs and behaviors decreased between 2019 and 2022**



*Note: \* indicates the difference between responses in 2019 and 2022 is significant ( $p < .05$ ).*

We also found (Figure 6) that New Orleans middle school students' educational expectations changed between 2019 and 2022. Note that these questions were not asked of high school students. Although over half of New Orleans middle school students report expecting to receive a bachelor's degree or above, about a quarter report not knowing the highest level of education they will reach. These responses reflect a drop in expectations to receive a graduate degree of about 6 percentage points and an increase in educational uncertainty of about 7 percentage points between 2019 and 2022.

**Figure 6: Fewer middle school students expect a graduate degree, and more are uncertain about their schooling in 2022 compared to 2019**

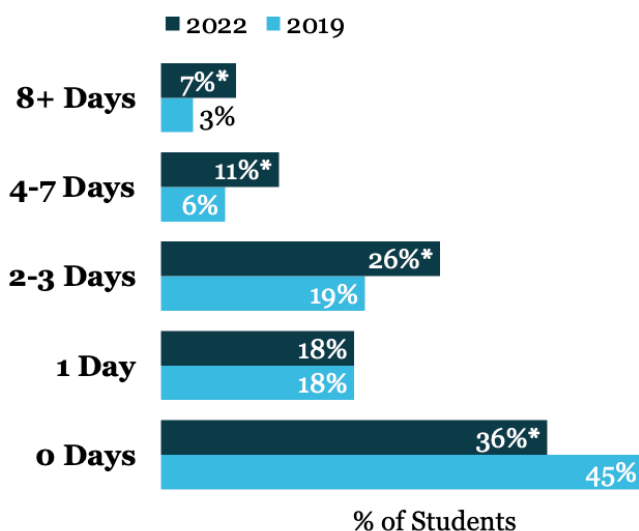


*Note: \* indicates the difference between responses in 2019 and 2022 is significant ( $p < .05$ ).*



One area that has been garnering a lot of attention since the COVID-19 pandemic is student attendance. [Across the country, schools are reporting that chronic absences—defined as missing 10% or more school days—have doubled since before the COVID-19 pandemic began.](#) New Orleans students report a similar pattern (Figure 7). When asked how many school days they missed over the past 4 weeks, only 36% of students report missing no days, compared with 45% in 2019, and 26% report missing 2-3 days, compared with only 19% in 2019. About twice the percentage of New Orleans students report missing 4-7 days and 8 or more days in 2022 versus in 2019. Although COVID-19 infections and isolation could be related to the attendance gaps, we collected this information from students when infection rates were low and quarantining requirements had been relaxed.

**Figure 7: Students report missing more school days during the four weeks preceding the survey in 2022 versus 2019**



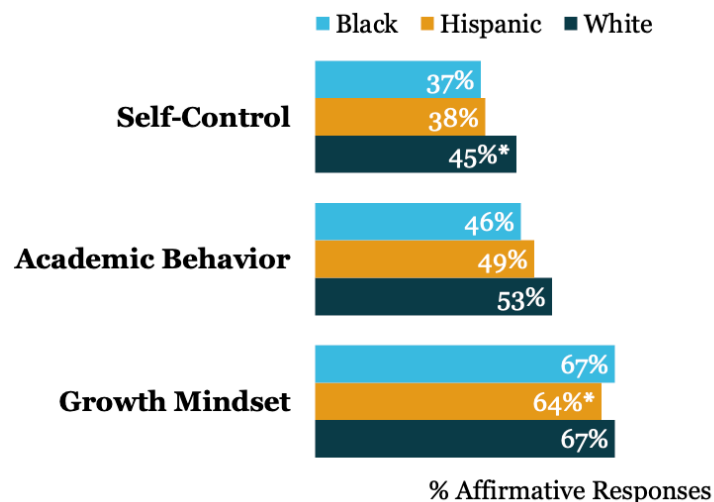
*Note: \* indicates the difference between responses in 2019 and 2022 is significant ( $p < .05$ ).*



# HOW DO STUDENTS' ACADEMIC BELIEFS AND BEHAVIORS VARY BY RACE?

When examining students' academic beliefs and behaviors by race/ethnicity, we found only a few significant differences. As shown in Figure 8, Black students agree less frequently than white students that they exercise self-control and report higher growth mindset beliefs than Hispanic students. Black students also agree less frequently than white students that they engage in behaviors that support learning. We did not find significant differences in students' value of education by race/ethnicity.

**Figure 8: Black students report lower self-control than white students & Hispanic students report lower growth mindset beliefs than Black students**



*Note: \* indicates responses are significantly different from Black students' responses ( $p < .05$ ).*

Overall, Black students report being absent more often than white and Hispanic students (results in technical appendix). For students' educational expectations, we do find some evidence that Black middle school students report expecting a bachelor's degree more often than white and Hispanic students, but we do not have an adequate number of middle school students in each racial/ethnic category to draw strong conclusions about these results (results in technical appendix).

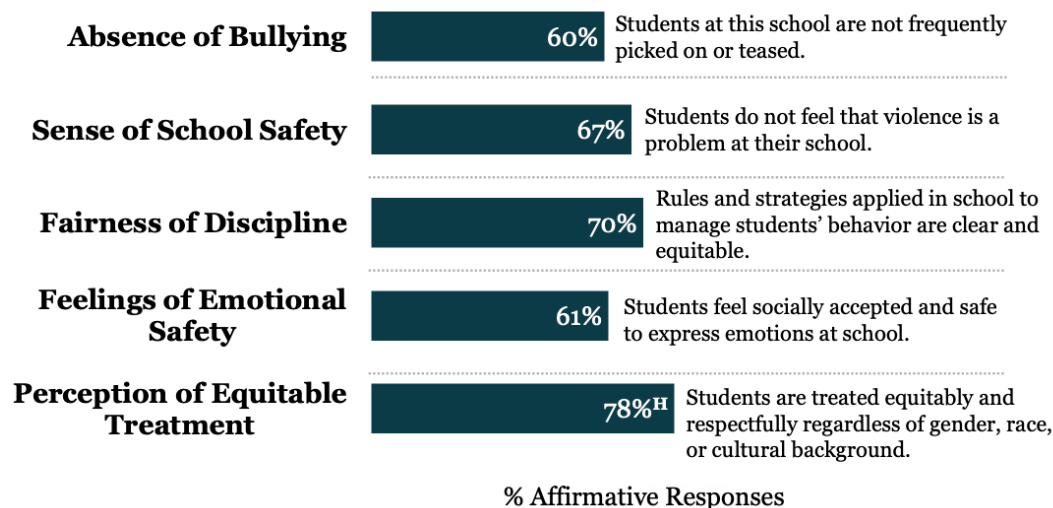
# WHAT DO NEW ORLEANS YOUTH THINK ABOUT THEIR SCHOOLS' CLIMATE?

Students' school environment is an important aspect of their learning. While academic rigor and support are important in the classroom, students' interactions with their peers, teachers, and other adults in the school both inside and outside the classroom also impact their well-being and ability to learn and grow. We measure five aspects of school climate, drawn from the [U.S. Department of Education's School Climate Surveys](#): absence of bullying, sense of school safety, fairness of discipline policies, feelings of emotional safety, and perceptions of equitable treatment. These dimensions of school climate [are associated with student engagement, academic achievement, and violence prevention](#). For each dimension, we display the percent of affirmative responses across all questions.

**SCHOOL &  
COMMUNITY  
ENVIRONMENT**



**Figure 9: Most students feel positively about their school, but 40% report that bullying is a problem & that they feel emotionally unsafe**



*Note: H indicates the dimension was only asked to high school students.*

Overall, students tend to answer school climate questions positively. As shown in Figure 9, over two-thirds of students report feeling safe in school and believe that discipline practices are fair. Although about 60% of students report that bullying is not a frequent problem in their school, and that they feel emotionally safe in their school, 40% of students do not. Among high school students, 78% report believing that students in their school are treated equitably and respectfully regardless of their gender, race, or cultural background. This was the only school climate measure that changed between 2019 and 2022; high schoolers' perceptions of equitable treatment increased by almost 9 percentage points between 2019 and 2022.

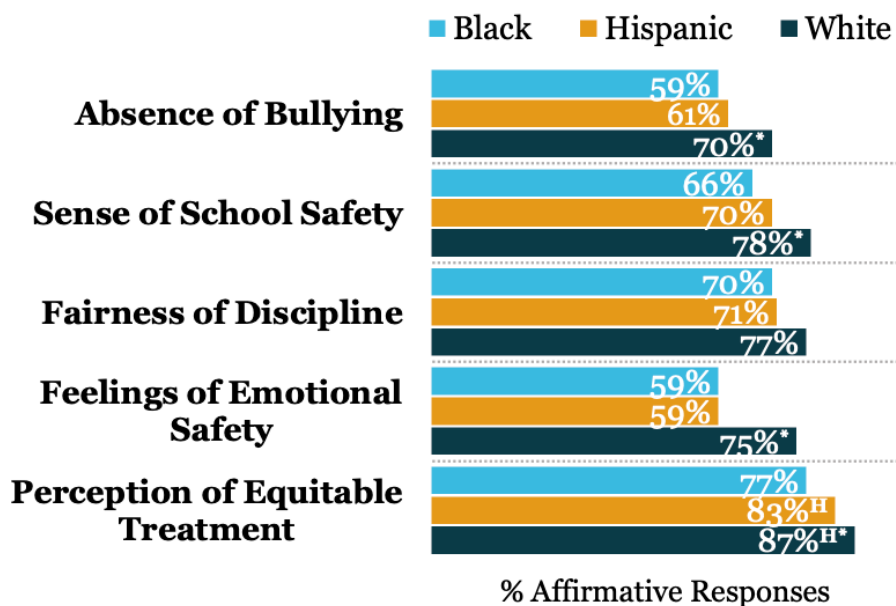




# HOW DO STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE VARY BY RACE?

Unlike the academic factors we examined above, we find racial/ethnic differences across all aspects of school climate. In all, white students report significantly better school climate than Black and Hispanic students (Figure 10). The largest differences are in feelings of emotional safety (16 percentage points higher for white students than Black and Hispanic students), sense of school safety (12 percentage points higher for white students than Black students), and absence of bullying (11 percentage points higher for white students than Black students).

Figure 10: Black and Hispanic students report worse school climate than white students

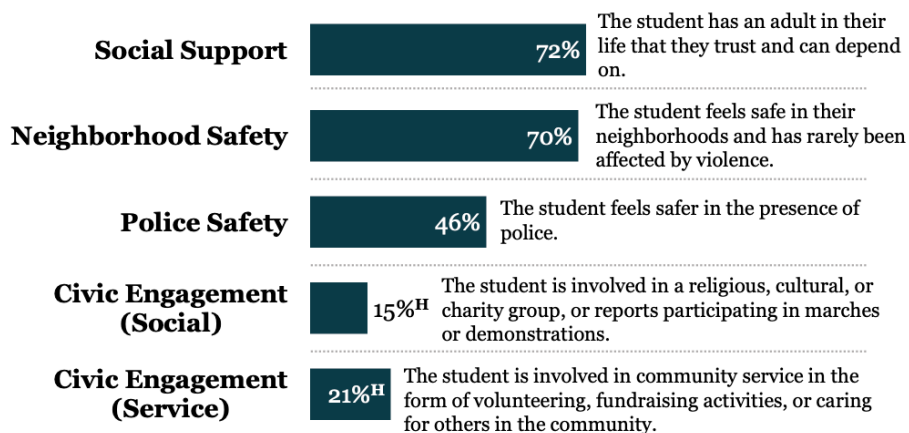


Note: \* indicates responses are significantly different from Black students' responses ( $p < .05$ ).  
H indicates the dimension was only asked to high school students.

# WHAT DO NEW ORLEANS YOUTH SAY ABOUT THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS?

The experiences students have outside of their schools can influence their learning and growth. These questions also speak to the well-being of New Orleans youth overall, not just factors connected to their education. For each dimension we display the percent of questions students answered affirmatively. New Orleans students frequently agree that they feel safe in their neighborhood (70%) and have people that care for and support them (72%). However, fewer than half of New Orleans students claim to feel safer in the presence of police. In addition, only about 1 in 5 students report consistently participating in a service or social activity within the past year (Figure 11).

**Figure 11: Most students report having social support & feeling safe in their neighborhood, but fewer than half feel safer in the presence of police and civic engagement is limited**



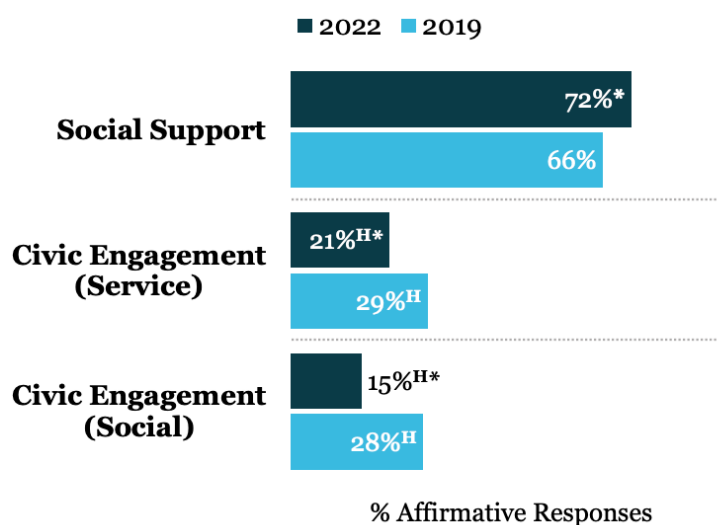
% Affirmative Responses

*Note: H indicates the dimension was only asked to high school students.*



New Orleans students report more social support in 2022 than in 2019, but fewer students report consistent civic engagement in both social and service activities (Figure 12). This may be due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited in-person social activities. Students' perceptions of their neighborhood and police safety did not change between 2019 and 2022.

**Figure 12: Students report more social support & less civic engagement in 2022**



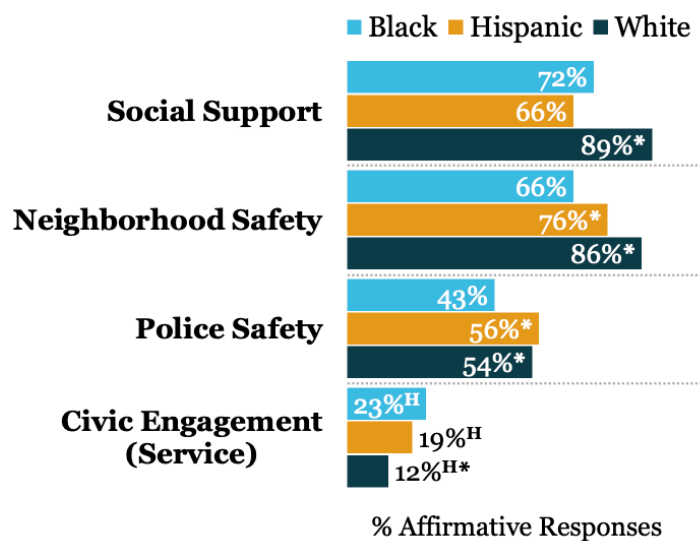
*Note: \* indicates the difference between responses in 2019 and 2022 is significant ( $p < .05$ ).  
H indicates the dimension was only asked to high school students.*



# HOW DO NEIGHBORHOOD EXPERIENCES DIFFER BY RACE/ETHNICITY?

Black students in New Orleans report engaging in service activities twice as often as white students. Among Black students in New Orleans, 23% report participating consistently in service activities, which include helping other families or their classmates when they are in need. Only 19% of Hispanic students and 12% of white students similarly report participating in service activities (Figure 13). However, white students agree that their neighborhood is safe, that they feel safer in the presence of police, and that they have social support more frequently than Black students. For neighborhood safety, Black students agree they feel safe in their neighborhoods about 66% of the time, compared with 76% for Hispanic students and 86% for white students.

**Figure 13: White students report better neighborhood & police safety and social support than Black students**



*Note: \* indicates the difference between responses in 2019 and 2022 is significant ( $p < .05$ ).  
H indicates the dimension was only asked to high school students.*

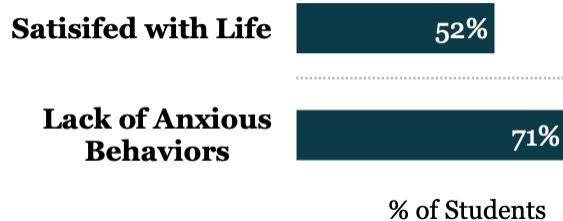


# WHAT DO STUDENTS REPORT ABOUT THEIR OVERALL WELL-BEING?

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, schools and communities have become more attuned to youth mental health. The 2019 survey reported on students' anxious behaviors, but the committee decided to add questions on students' life satisfaction and mental health resources to help gauge the needs of New Orleans youth.

Overall, 71% of New Orleans students report not experiencing anxious behaviors, but only about half report being satisfied with their lives (Figure 14). Interestingly, the percentage of New Orleans students reporting anxious behaviors did not change between the 2019 and 2022 surveys. We did not measure life satisfaction in 2019, but it is possible that the pandemic contributed to the low life satisfaction among New Orleans students.

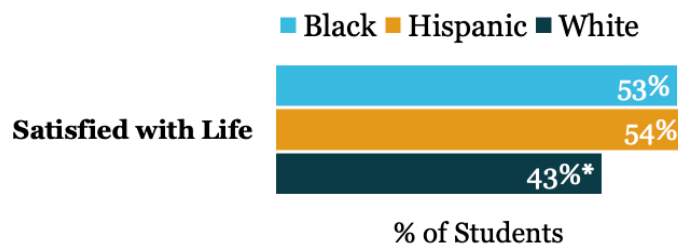
**Figure 14: About half of New Orleans students report being satisfied with their lives and almost three-quarters report not experiencing anxious behaviors**



# HOW DOES WELL-BEING DIFFER BY RACE/ETHNICITY?

Black, Hispanic, and white students in New Orleans report similar levels of anxious behaviors, but we do find differences in their life satisfaction (Figure 15). Black and Hispanic students overall report being more satisfied with their lives (53% and 54%, respectively) than white students (43%).

**Figure 15: Black & Hispanic students report being satisfied with their lives more than white students**



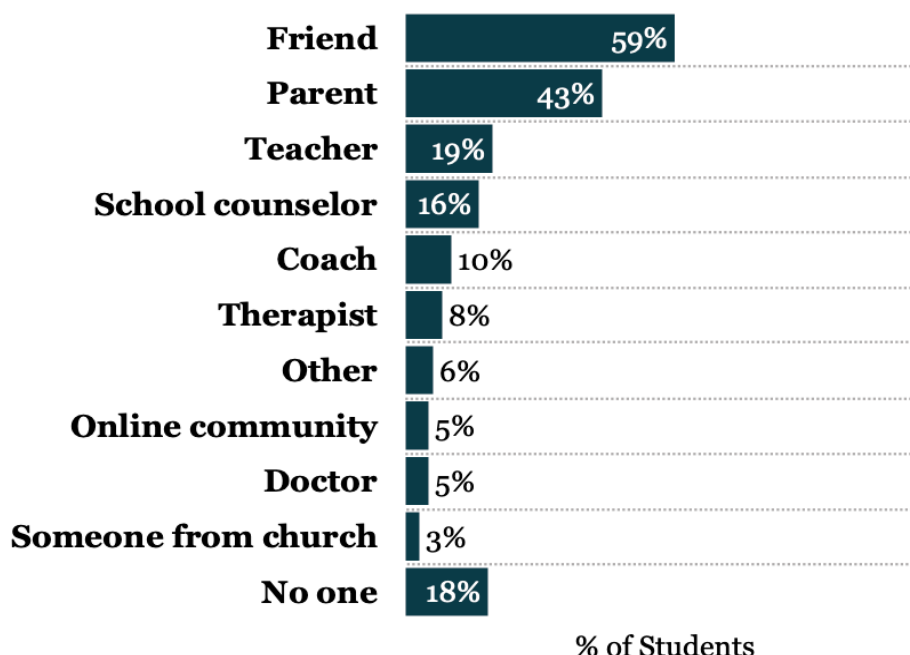
*Note: \* indicates responses are significantly different from Black students' responses ( $p < .05$ ).*



# WHAT MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS DO NEW ORLEANS STUDENTS HAVE?

When young people have an adult to speak with in the face of stress, trauma, or being overwhelmed, they are more likely to receive the support they need to overcome difficult situations. However, as shown in Figure 16, most New Orleans students say they would speak with a friend (59%), and 18% say they would speak with no one if they were struggling with mental health. While this group is a small percentage of the total, this degree of isolation for any students is a cause for concern.

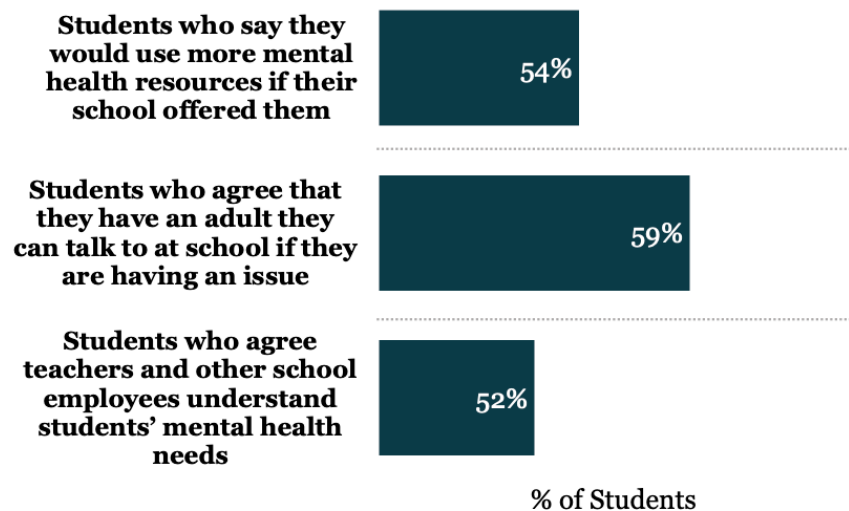
**Figure 16: If overwhelmed or depressed, most students would speak with a friend & 18% wouldn't speak with anyone**



*Note: This question allowed students to select all that apply. The “No one” category excludes students that selected any other option.*

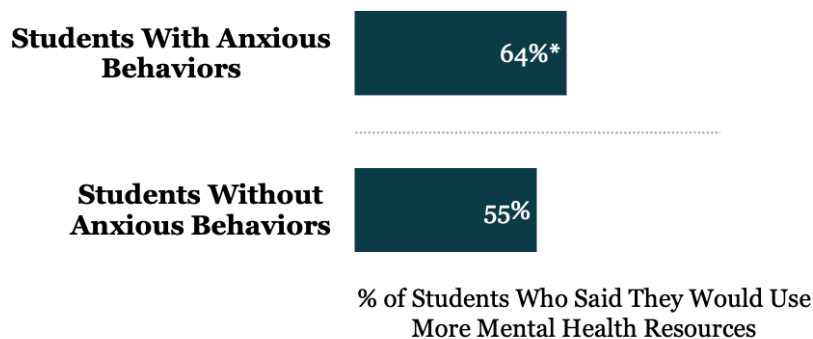
Figure 17 displays New Orleans students' perceptions of mental health resources within schools. Fifty-nine percent of New Orleans students say they have an adult in school they can talk to when facing an issue, but only 52% agree that adults in their schools understand students' mental health needs and over half (54%) of students say they would use more mental health resources within their schools if they were offered.

**Figure 17: More than half of New Orleans students report having mental health support in their schools**



When we look more closely at students who report having anxious behaviors, 64% of these students claim they would use more mental health services in their schools if provided, compared to only 55% of students who report not experiencing anxious behaviors (Figure 18). These results suggest that schools can do more to make students feel they have the support they need when they are experiencing anxious behaviors.

**Figure 18: Students with anxious behaviors report they would use mental health resources if made available in school**



*Note: \* indicates there is a significant difference in responses between students with and without anxious behaviors.*

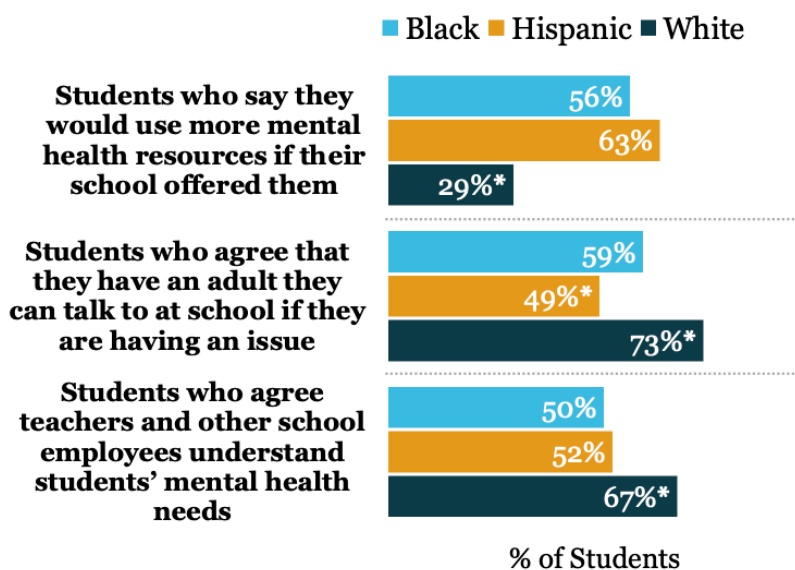


# HOW DOES MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT IN SCHOOLS DIFFER BY RACE/ETHNICITY?

As with school climate, white students report better mental health supports in schools than Black and Hispanic students (Figure 19). Almost three-quarters of white students claim to have an adult they can speak with in school compared to only 59% of Black students and 49% of Hispanic students. While 67% of white students agree that teachers and other school employees understand their mental health needs, only about half of Black and Hispanic students feel the same way.

Importantly, Black and Hispanic students are almost twice as likely as white students to report that they would use more mental health resources in schools if provided to them.

**Figure 19: Black & Hispanic students report less mental health support in their schools than white students**



Note: \* indicates responses are significantly different from Black students' responses ( $p < .05$ ).

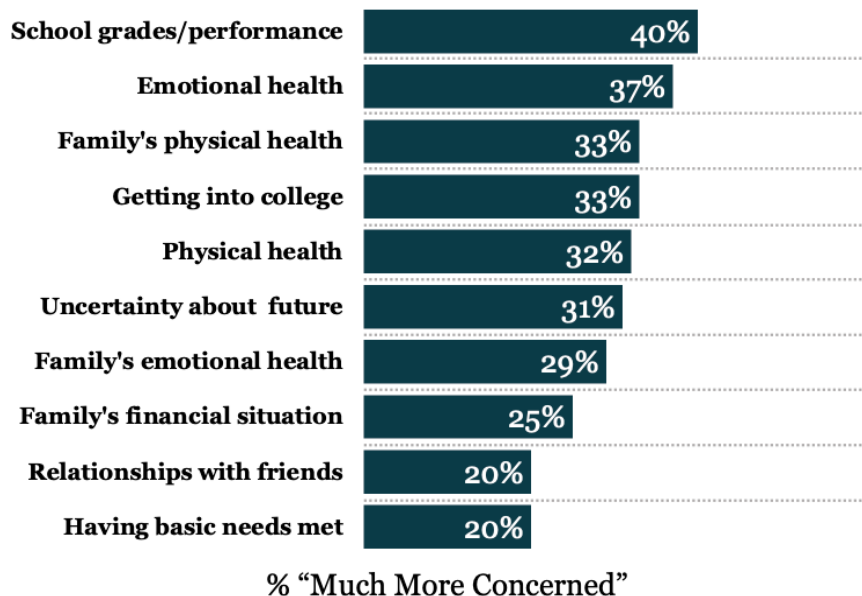
# HOW HAVE NEW ORLEANS STUDENTS' LIVES CHANGED SINCE THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

Undoubtedly, all of students' experiences inside and outside of school over the past three years have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the health, economic, and safety precautions taken to slow the spread of the virus. We asked students to report on aspects of their lives that became more challenging as a result of the pandemic and how their learning and learning environment was affected.

## EXPERIENCES WITH COVID-19

On average, students report being more concerned about three areas of their lives. The most frequent increased concerns were in their school grades and performance (40%) and their emotional health (37%). The two least frequent concerns were in their relationships with friends (20%) and having their basic needs met (20%), as shown in Figure 20.

**Figure 20: Percent of students reporting to be “much more concerned than usual” since the start of COVID-19 about...**



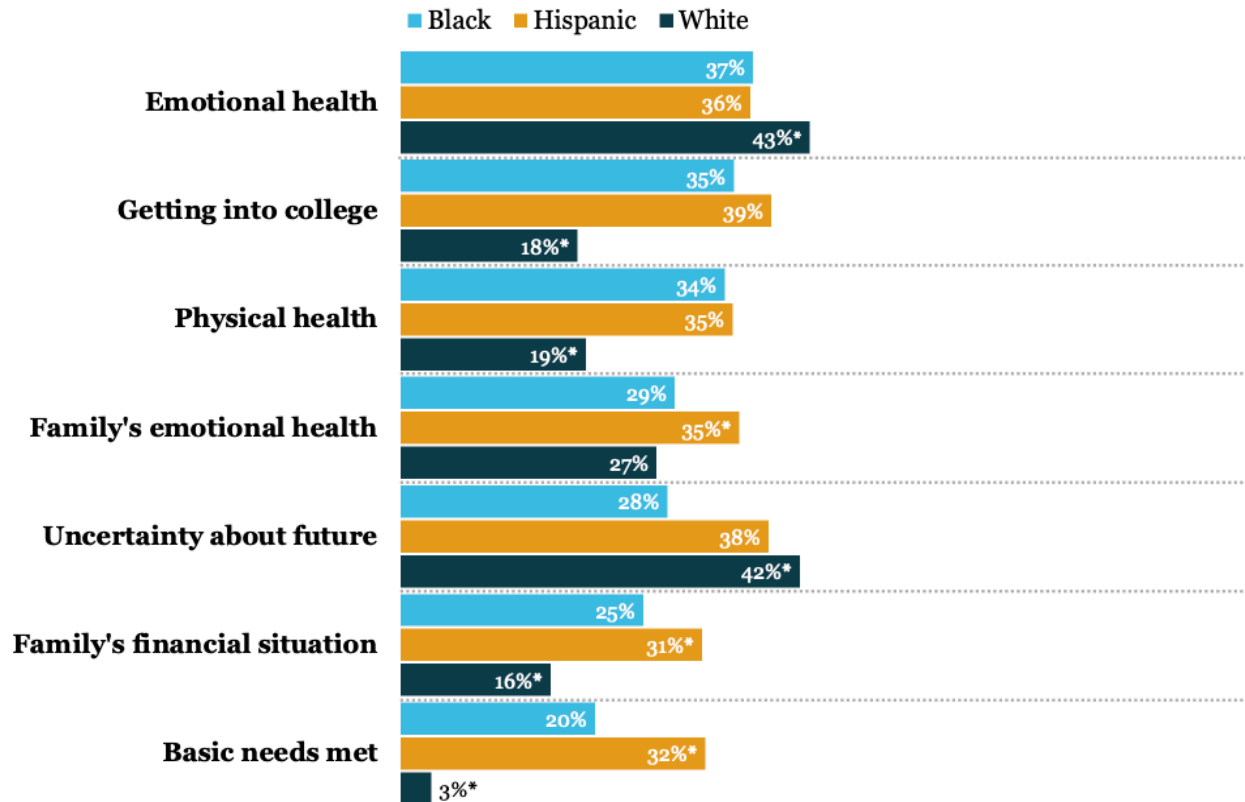
Interestingly, New Orleans students on average report fewer increased concerns related to COVID-19 than students nationally. [While students nationally had similar increases in concerns about their school grades/performance and emotional health](#) as New Orleans students, a higher percentage of students nationally reported being more concerned since the start of COVID-19 about the uncertainty of the future (20 percentage point gap), their family's financial situation (15 percentage point gap), and their family's physical health (15 percentage point gap). It is possible that the measures the New Orleans schools and community took to stop the spread of the disease helped assuage students' concerns. It is also possible that New Orleans students were more concerned on average across these measures before the COVID-19 pandemic than students nationally, thus their concerns did not increase as much.

## HOW DID COVID-19 AFFECT STUDENTS' LIVES BY RACE/ETHNICITY?

We find racial/ethnic differences in both the total number of and kinds of issues that students report being more concerned about since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. On average, Hispanic students report more increases in concerns about the greatest number of items (3.4), followed by Black (3.0) and then white (2.6) students. As shown in Figure 21, Hispanic students report being more concerned about their family's emotional health, their family's financial situation, and having their basic needs met than Black and white students. While white students had increased concerns about their emotional health and the future than Black students, Black and Hispanic students had increased concerns about getting into college and their physical health. We do not find racial/ethnic differences in students' concerns about their family's physical health, their relationships with friends, and their academic performance.

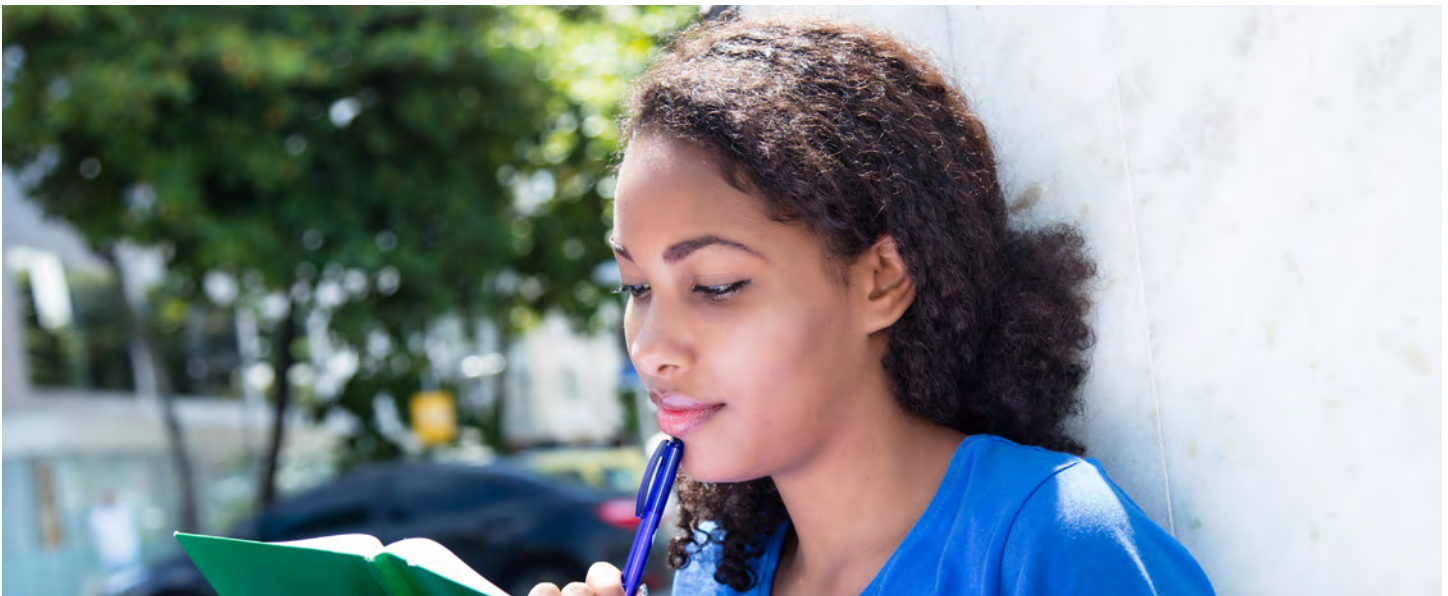


**Figure 21: Black & Hispanic students report a greater increase in concerns during COVID-19 about most topics compared to white students**



**% “Much More Concerned”**

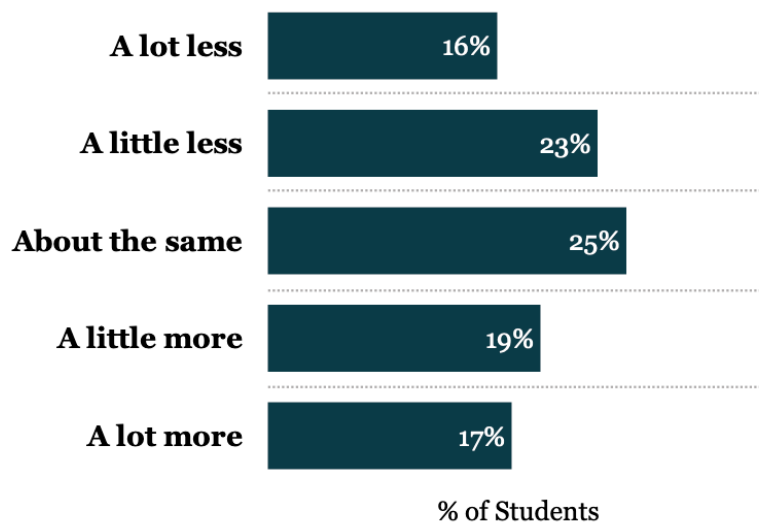
*Note: \* indicates responses are significantly different from Black students’ responses ( $p < .05$ ).*



# WHAT DO NEW ORLEANS STUDENTS SAY ABOUT THEIR LEARNING EXPERIENCES DURING COVID-19?

New Orleans students are almost evenly split in whether they feel they learned more or less during the 2020-2021 school year compared to before COVID-19 began (Figure 22). A quarter of students report learning about the same amount, while 39% report learning less and 36% report learning more. [These student perceptions of learning contrast with LEAP test scores in the city, which decreased between 2019 and 2021.](#)

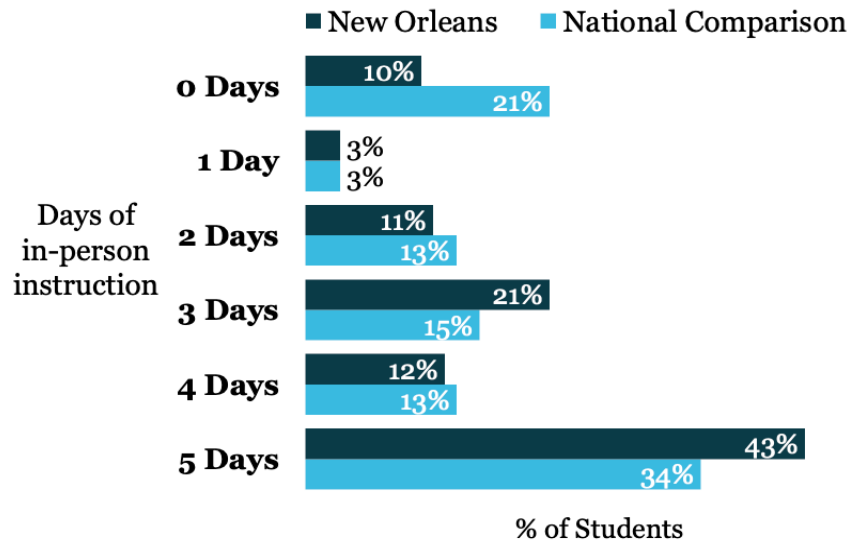
**Figure 22: Students were split on whether they learned more or less in 2020-2021 compared to before COVID-19**



When asked about their preference for learning once the COVID-19 pandemic is over (Figure 23), 43% of students report wanting to return to all in-person instruction and only 10% report wanting all virtual instruction, with 47% reporting a preference for some hybrid instruction (between 1 and 4 days a week virtual). [Compared with students nationally](#), New Orleans students prefer all in-person instruction more (9 percentage point gap) and prefer all virtual instruction less (11 percentage point gap).



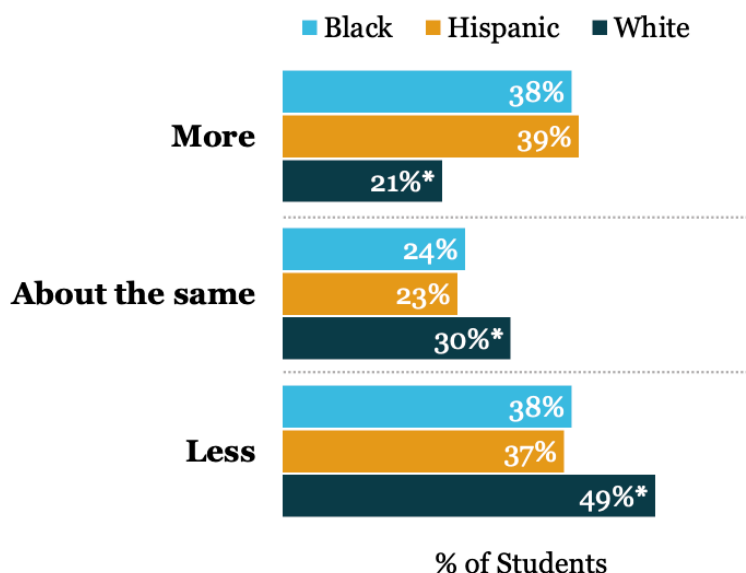
**Figure 23: New Orleans students prefer in-person instruction more than students nationally (days per week)**



# HOW DID NEW ORLEANS STUDENTS' LEARNING EXPERIENCES DURING COVID-19 VARY BY RACE/ETHNICITY?

On average, white students say they learned less during the initial stages of COVID-19 (2020-2021 school year). Black and Hispanic students' responses are split between learning more and less. As shown in Figure 24, almost half of white students report learning less during the 2020-2021 school year compared with 38% of Black students and 37% of Hispanic students. However, equal percentages of Black students report learning more and learning less during the 2020-2021 school year. The pattern is similar for Hispanic students.

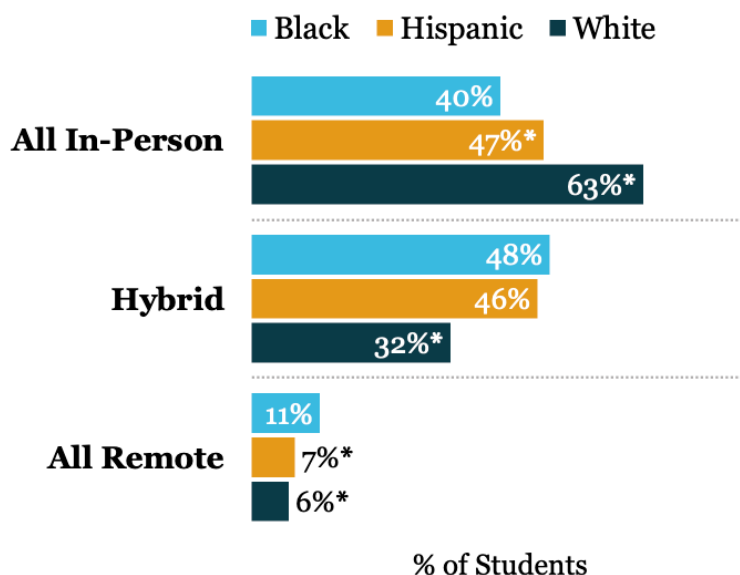
**Figure 24: Compared to Black & Hispanic students, white students reported learning less during COVID-19 (2020-2021)**



*Note: indicates responses are significantly different from Black students' responses ( $p < .05$ ).*

Potentially due to these differences in perceptions of learning during COVID-19, Black students prefer hybrid instruction over all in-person instruction and all-remote instruction (Figure 25). Only 40% of Black students report wanting to return to all in-person instruction once the COVID-19 pandemic is over, compared with 47% of Hispanic students and 63% of white students.

**Figure 25: Black & Hispanic students prefer remote instruction more than white students**



*Note: \* indicates responses are significantly different from Black students' responses ( $p < .05$ ).*



# SUMMARY

The purpose of our second citywide youth survey is to provide a detailed portrait of New Orleans students' experiences both inside and outside of their schools and how that has changed over the years. Despite the challenges facing our community over the past few years, many New Orleans students still report positive experiences with their teachers, schools, and communities. Students' ratings of their teachers increased overall and we found few differences by race/ethnicity in these ratings.

However, students' academic and emotional well-being inside and outside of schools is a cause for concern. Only half of students report feeling cared for by their teachers, engaging in behaviors to support learning, feeling safer in the presence of police, being satisfied with life, and having mental health support from adults in their schools.

The unequal experiences reported by race/ethnicity reflect the structural racism deeply embedded within our community and society. Despite reporting higher life satisfaction and engagement in their communities than white students, Black students report worse experiences inside and outside of school. Black students are less likely than white students to feel comfortable talking to adults in their schools when they have an issue and report worse school climate overall. These results could explain why many Black students report learning more during COVID-19 and not wanting to return to in-person instruction full time once the pandemic is over. Although perceptions of equitable treatment increased for high school students between 2019 and 2022, Black and Hispanic students report equitable treatment less often than white students.

Our ongoing series, Voices of New Orleans Youth, is a call to action for schools and organizations in the city. While we do see some evidence of improvements, there is still much we can learn from New Orleans students themselves about what they need to thrive inside and outside of school. It is our hope that New Orleans' leaders of education, government, and non-profits will listen and respond to what the city's youth are telling us.

# HOW DID WE CARRY OUT THE ANALYSIS?

We invited all publicly funded New Orleans schools that served students in any of the surveyed grades (6th – 11th) to participate in the survey. We focused on these grades for several reasons: (1) almost every publicly funded school offers one of these grades; (2) students below grade 6 might not be well positioned to answer some of the questions we asked; (3) some high school students drop out of school, and this affects who would take the survey in 12th grade; and (4) limiting the sample to selected grades reduced the burden on schools.

The schools administered the web-based survey during school hours. Students were informed that their responses would remain anonymous and were asked to be as honest as possible. We received survey responses from 3,110 students in 28 of the 76 eligible schools (13 of these schools participated in the 2019 youth survey). The survey was available in English and Spanish. We compared the survey results to administrative data from the Louisiana Department of Education and NOLA-PS to determine whether our sample of schools and students is representative of 6th – 11th grade students in publicly funded schools across the city of New Orleans. Overall, the distribution of students by race/ethnicity, gender, and disadvantaged economic status are similar across the schools that participated in the survey and New Orleans schools overall according to administrative records. Our sample also includes schools across every NOLA-PS geographic zone and state-assigned letter-grade. To account for the small differences in the characteristics of survey respondents and students across the city, we use survey weights in all of our analyses, though results without the weights are very similar to those presented here.

An important feature of the New Orleans citywide youth surveys is the ability to compare responses across years to understand whether and how the youth are changing and responding to new city and school initiatives. But any trends in the results could be due to multiple factors. It could be that schools and communities made changes in their programs and practices since the last survey, but we cannot clearly distinguish these effects from at least three other factors. First, while our sample appears representative of the population in each year, the population itself has shifted somewhat. Second, even if it does not seem that the population changed very much in ways we can easily observe, it could be that the change in the sample of schools in the survey means there are some less obvious differences in the survey sample. Third, the context significantly shifted, as in the nation as a whole, with COVID-19 and, locally, with Hurricane Ida.

We took steps to address each of these factors. We calculated the changes in student population demographics and found some small differences; the percent of Black students decreased by 4 percentage points, the percent of Hispanic students increased by 4 percentage points, and the percent of disadvantaged students increased by 3 percentage points. We also recalculated all the trends in results just for the sample of schools that was identical between the two years. Finally, we asked students questions about their experiences during COVID-19 and Hurricane Ida to contextualize the trends.



We are also cautious about saying that the 2022 results clearly differ from 2019. We only highlight significant changes in student responses if they meet all of the following criteria:

- The difference between the weighted percentage of affirmative responses in 2019 and 2022 is at least three percentage points.
- There is a statistically significant difference between the 2019 and 2022 responses when weighting, controlling on grade-level, and using standard errors clustered at the school level.
- The 2022 responses overall for the item are similar to the 2022 responses among students in the schools that participated in both the 2019 and 2022 surveys.
- The differences between the 2019 and 2022 survey responses are similar when we only look at students in schools that participated in the 2019 and 2022 surveys.

While we are cautious about saying the results changed, it is still important to emphasize that such changes could have multiple underlying causes. We are only able to describe what is happening, not establish cause and effect.

We also examined whether there were significant differences between responses across different racial/ethnic subgroups. The main racial/ethnic groups reported in this brief include students who identify as Black only, white only, and Hispanic. We report results for students who identify as Asian and other racial/ethnic subgroups (American Indian, multiracial) in the technical appendix.

The technical appendix to this report provides much more detail about the survey. For example, we show the differences between our sample and the population and present both weighted and unweighted results. We also present the complete results of the surveys, including some that we do not report here.

While we wish to thank the many organizations involved, we also want to emphasize that the analysis and interpretations are our own and should not be attributed to the other organizations on the survey Steering Committee.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## Steering Committee for the Citywide Youth Survey:

- Cowen Institute
- Crescent City Schools
- The Data Center
- Education Research Alliance for New Orleans
- Louisiana Association of Educators
- Mayor's Office of Youth and Families
- New Orleans Youth Alliance

## Citywide Youth Survey Report Design:

- Grace Browse, Graduate Graphic Design Associate
- Jamerlyn Brown, Communications Manager
- Sara Slaughter, Associate Director of Comms. and Operations

## ERA'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- 1. Improving students' experiences in school and beyond requires consideration of all the ways that schools affect students' lives.*
- 2. Issues that affect education are complex and require analysis to better understand the implementation and effects.*
- 3. Our work is most useful when we collaborate with partners and foster conversations that allow us to deepen our work and its impact through dialogue.*
- 4. Racism, sexism, other forms of discrimination against marginalized groups, and systemic inequities affect schools in many ways that we can address through our research.*
- 5. Values are informed by experiences and vary from person to person. We aim to avoid centering a particular set of values or experiences in our work. In discussing the implications of our work, we articulate the values implicit in the programs/policies we are studying and the extent to which those and other values are captured in our analyses.*
- 6. We aim for rigor by starting our work with reviews of prior research by other scholars, examining data, putting our drafts through extensive peer review processes, and being explicit about the limits of our analyses.*
- 7. We aim for objectivity in our work by examining issues from multiple perspectives, summarizing the main contours of education debates and how our research informs those debates, and avoiding public advocacy for specific policies and programs.*