

Cowen Institute Poll Brief:

New Orleans Families' Response to COVID-19 in K-12 Education

November 2021

Cowen Institute
TULANE UNIVERSITY

Introduction

Since 2007, the Cowen Institute has conducted annual polls on perceptions of public education in New Orleans. These polls have served to provide insight on how parents, guardians, and the general public feel about the most relevant issues related to New Orleans' highly decentralized K-12 public education system. In previous editions of the poll, we have presented findings for a given year in a single comprehensive report. However, this year, we will stagger the release of a series of topical briefs to prioritize the most timely findings.

The first brief in the series examines perceptions of how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted New Orleans students, families, schools, and educators – a topic that was also a major focus of our 2020 poll. To capture a range of experiences and attitudes, we polled **1,000 public and private school parents and guardians in Orleans Parish**, as well as those who homeschool their children. A total of 86% of those respondents had at least one child enrolled in a public school in Orleans Parish. ***A full demographic and descriptive breakdown of this sample is included on the final page of this report.***

This brief provides insights into how those respondents feel about a range of topics related to COVID-19 and education, including vaccine and mask mandates, how schools have responded to the pandemic, as well as the impact of the pandemic on the lives of their children. Upcoming briefs will address respondents' attitudes towards other aspects of New Orleans public education system.

Methodology

This is the 12th opinion poll on public education in New Orleans published by the Cowen Institute and ***was conducted between October 4-15th, 2021.*** The survey items were developed by the Cowen Institute in consultation with LJR Custom Strategies, a strategic research and consulting firm led by Principal Jennifer Johnson. The poll surveyed 1,000 adults who reside in Orleans Parish and are the parent/guardian/responsible party for one or more children who currently reside in their household and attend a K through 12 school. Of those adults surveyed, 85% were reached by cell phone and 15% were reached by landline. The sample was representative of the location of residence of the population of New Orleans. Findings from the full sample are subject to a sampling error of plus or minus 3.1%. Subgroup analyses are subject to error of up to plus or minus 10%.

In this report, we present the total number of respondents who gave a valid response to a given question (this is presented as an N on the graph title), as well as a percentage. A full overview of question format and item-level descriptives are included on our website cowendata.org.

Key Findings

The Response to COVID-19

- Overall, a majority of respondents were satisfied with the way both NOLA-PS and their individual schools responded to the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Satisfaction with NOLA-PS's response to COVID-19 and NOLA-PS overall were significantly correlated.
- Respondents had more favorable attitudes towards their individual schools' response to the pandemic than the district.
- Attitudes were comparable across subgroups.

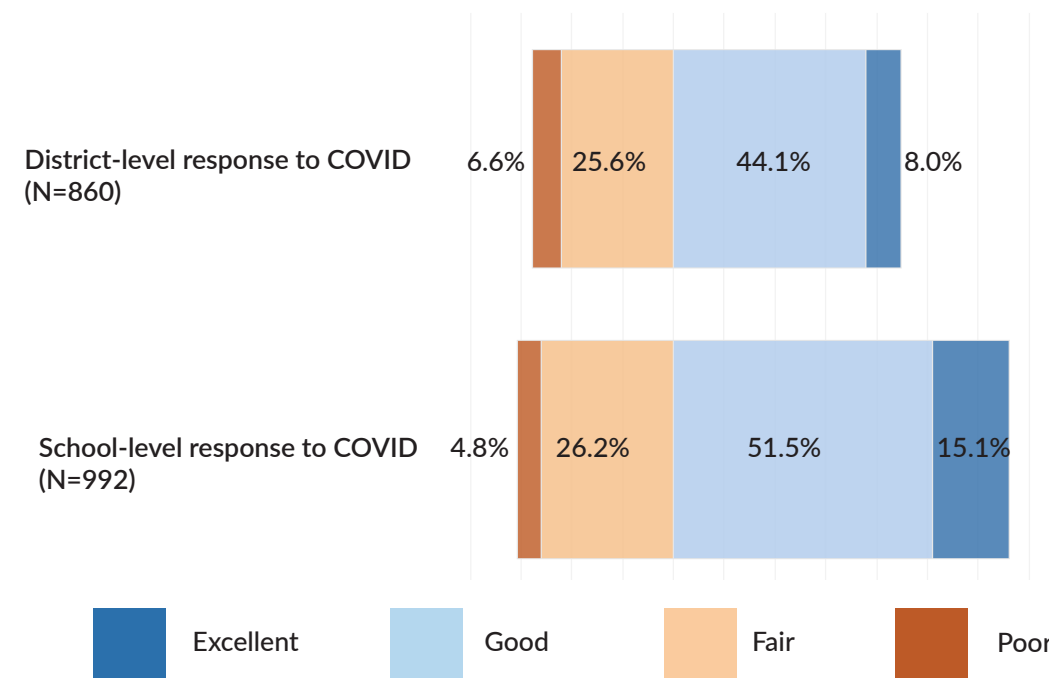
Parents Want Their Children in School

- Parents and guardians want their children in school.
 - Support for virtual schooling at this time was minimal, with 74% preferring in-person schooling. This support was consistent regardless of whether the respondent had a child who had been forced to quarantine.
- Respondents are concerned about lost learning time.
 - 80% agreed or strongly agreed that they are worried about how much school time their kids missed due to Covid and hurricanes.

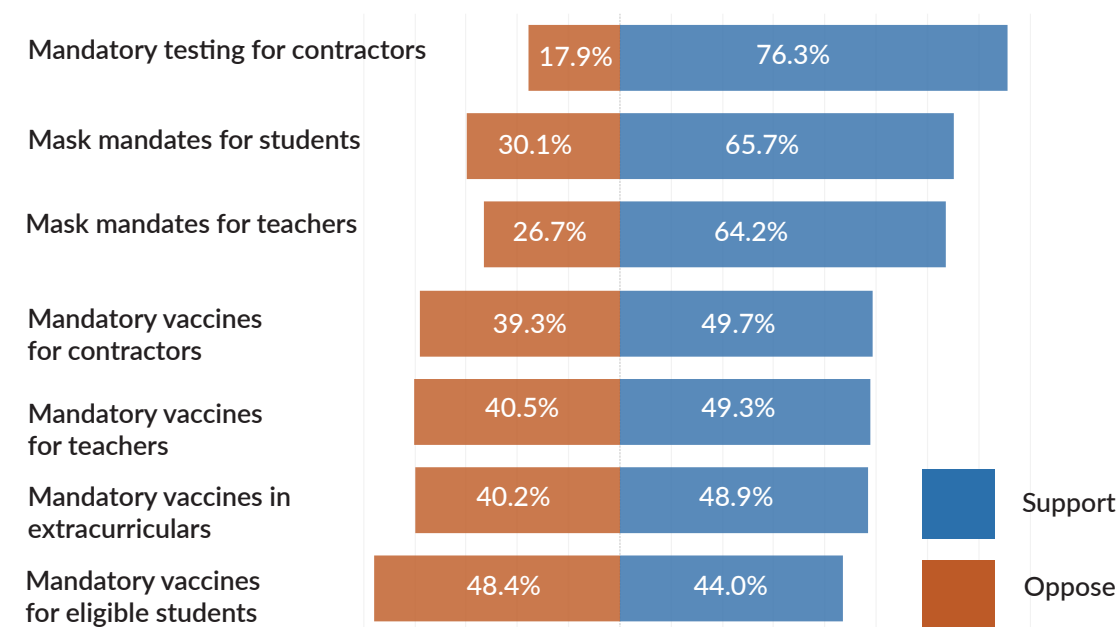
Vaccine and Mask Mandates

- Respondents were more supportive of testing and mask mandates than they were of vaccine mandates.
- A majority of respondents do not support mandatory vaccines for students or teachers, while a majority did support in-school mask mandates. Support for mandatory vaccines was higher among respondents from higher-income households and with a higher formal education level.
 - Around two-thirds of all respondents supported mask mandates for children in school, with support strongest amongst those with the highest levels of income and education.
 - Less than half of respondents supported mandatory vaccines for students and coaches in extracurricular activities, including sports. Support was again differentiated along socioeconomic and educational lines.

Attitudes Towards Response to COVID-19*



Overall Attitudes Towards Mandatory Testing and Vaccinations (N=992)*



- Nearly two-thirds of respondents supported mask mandates for all staff in schools, with support again differentiated along socioeconomic lines.
- A near majority of respondents supported vaccine mandates for outside contractors, such as bus drivers and custodians. Interestingly, this was the only vaccine mandate that was supported by a majority of respondents.
- More respondents opposed vaccine mandates for children than supported them. Responses were again stratified along socioeconomic and educational lines.
- 41% of respondents reported that their child had been sent home from school due to an in-school COVID-19 exposure.
 - There were also no major differences along demographic or socioeconomic lines.
- A majority of respondents (53%) did not know if their children's school had a vaccine mandate in place for teachers.
- A vast majority of respondents believed parents and families should be able to opt out of mandatory covid vaccines for students.
 - Once again, attitudes towards opting out of vaccine mandates differed along socioeconomic lines.

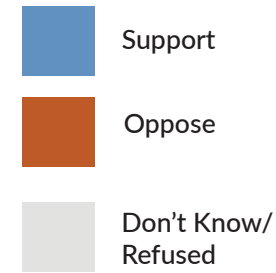
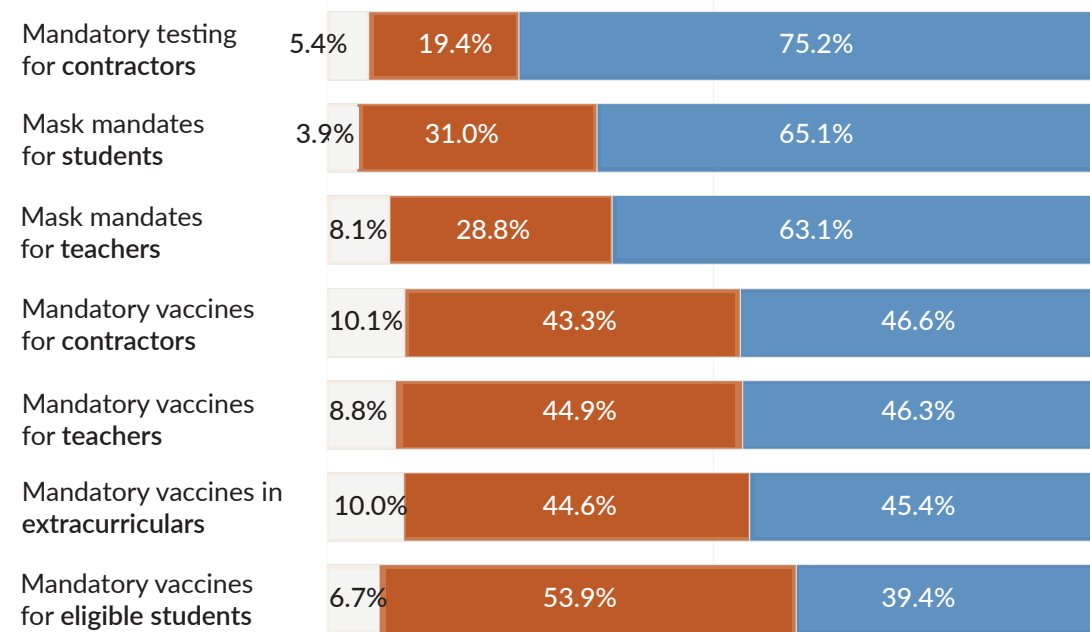
Testing

- More than three-fourths of respondents supported mandatory testing of outside contractors such as bus drivers and custodians.
- A slight majority of respondents believed that families should not be able to opt out of COVID-19 testing compared to 36% who agreed or strongly agreed families should be able to opt out. This was consistent across income and education levels.

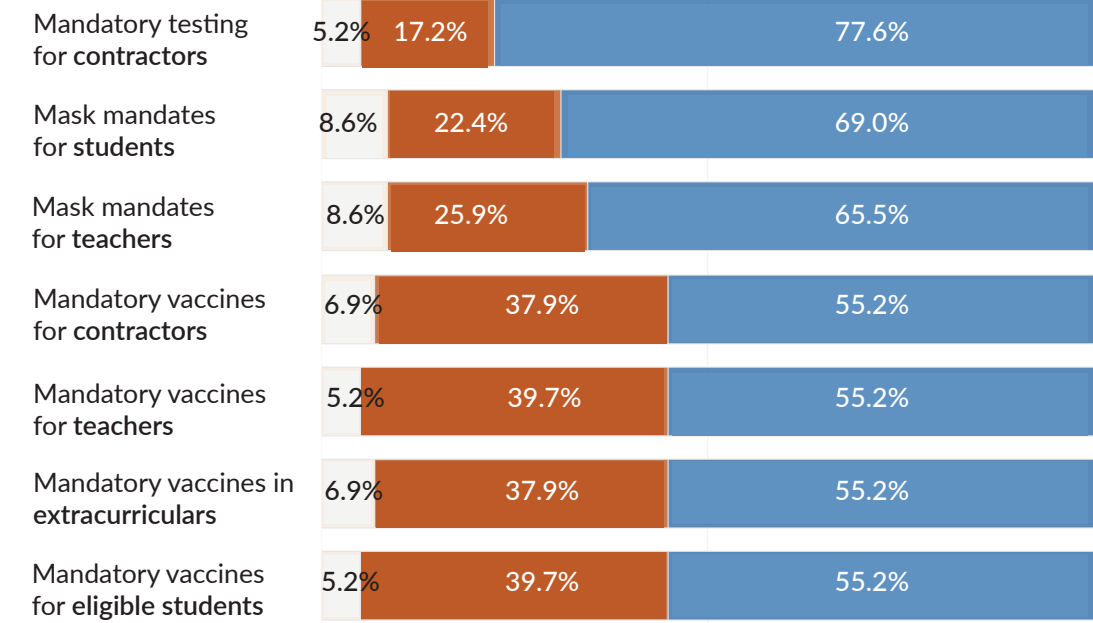
*Percentages may not add up to 100%, reflecting the portion of respondents who answered Don't Know or Refused

Responses By Race

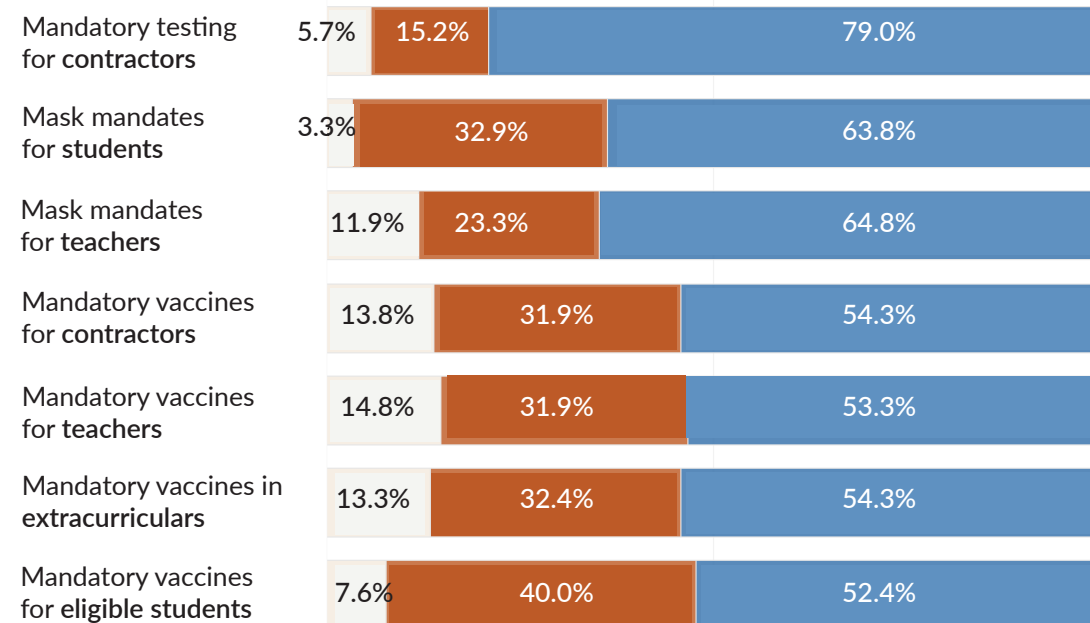
Black Respondents (N=676)



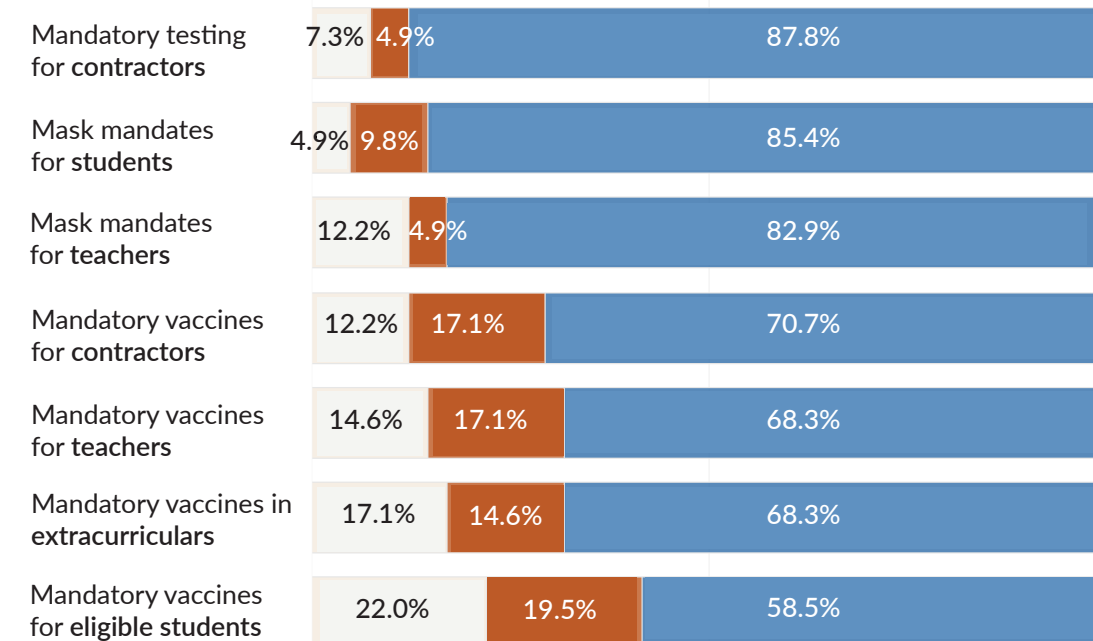
Hispanic/Latinx Respondents (N=58)



White Respondents (N=212)

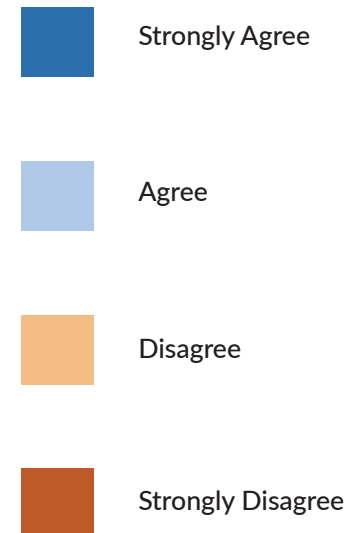
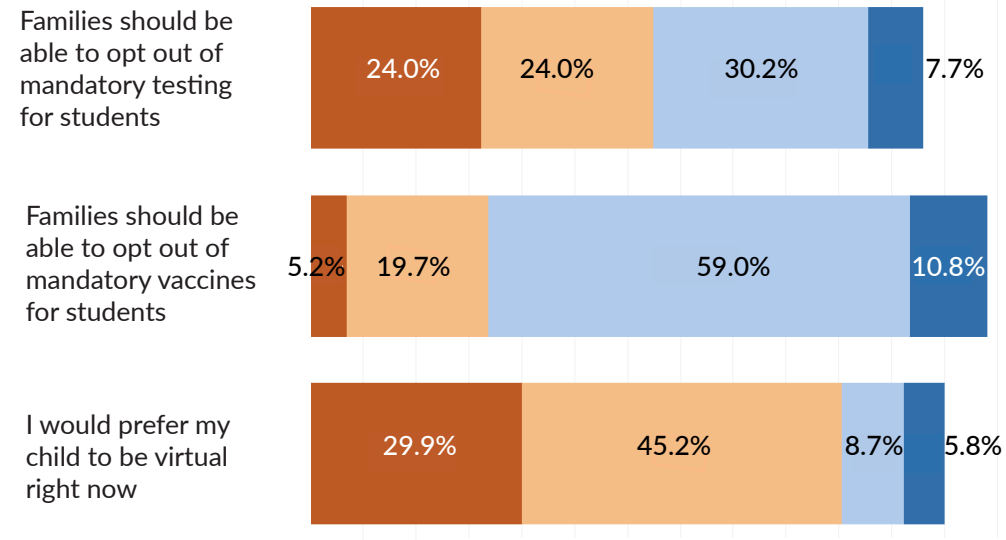


Other Race Respondents (N=41)

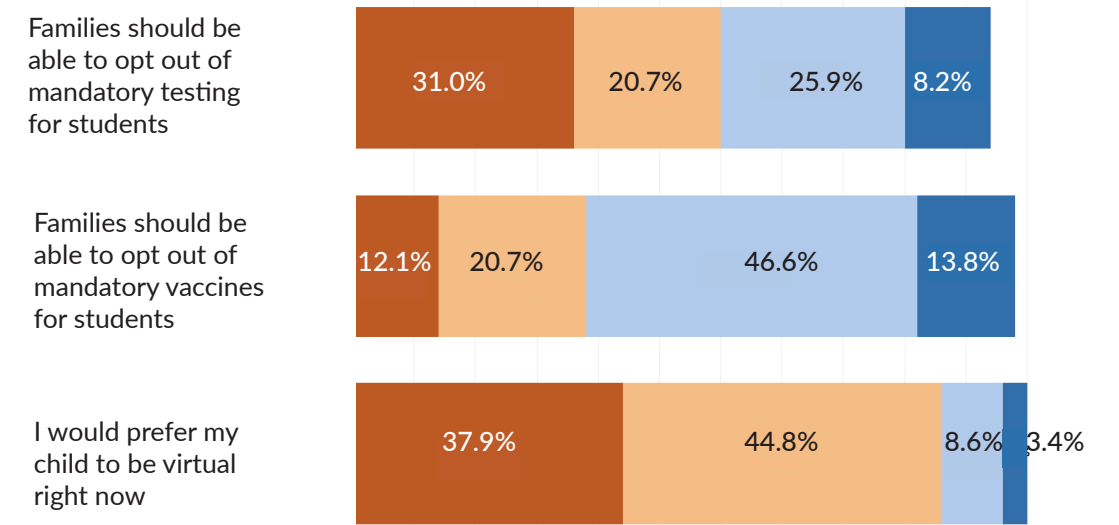


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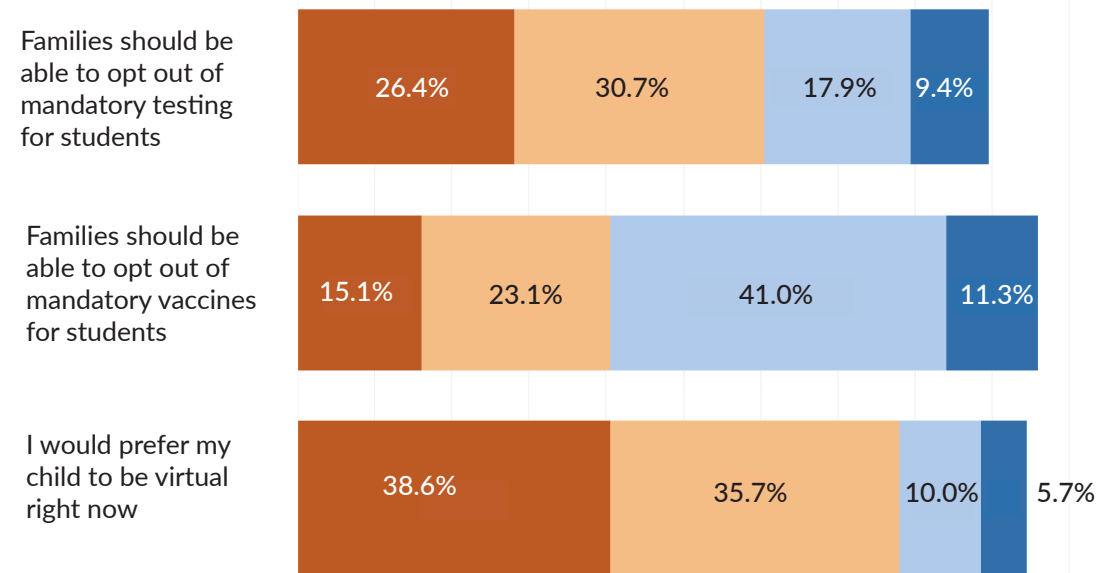
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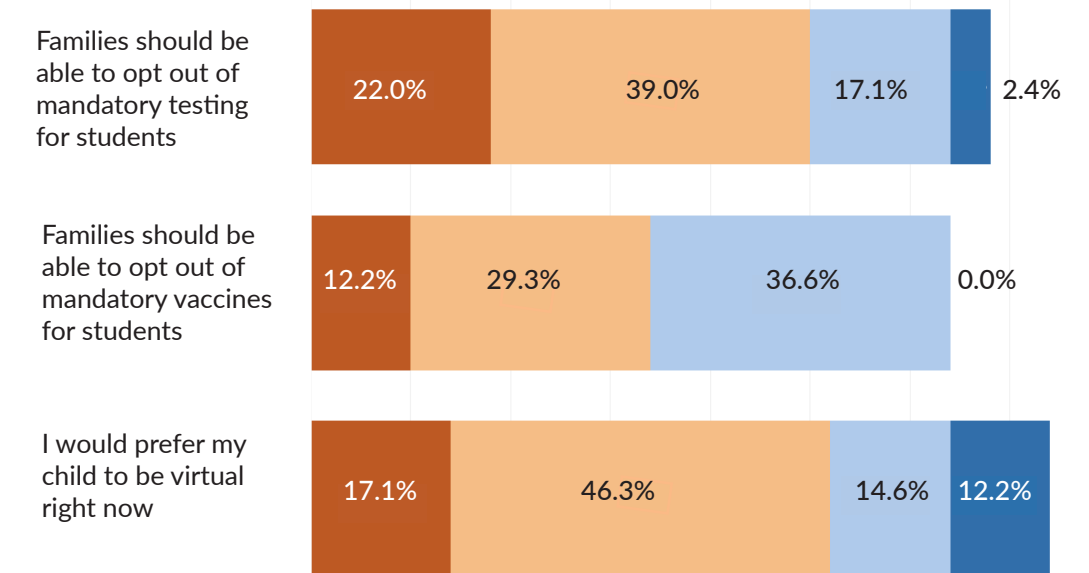
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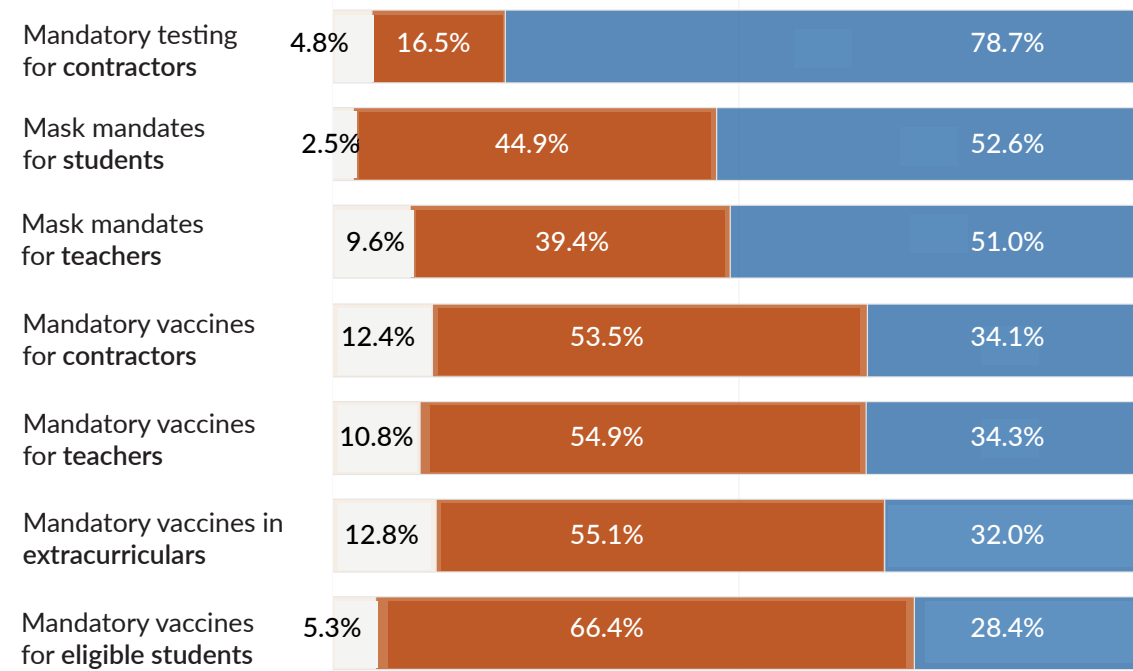
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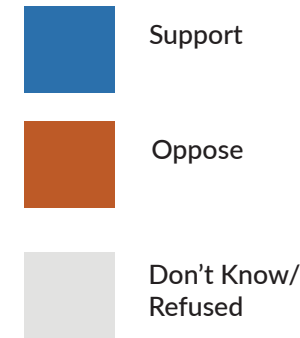
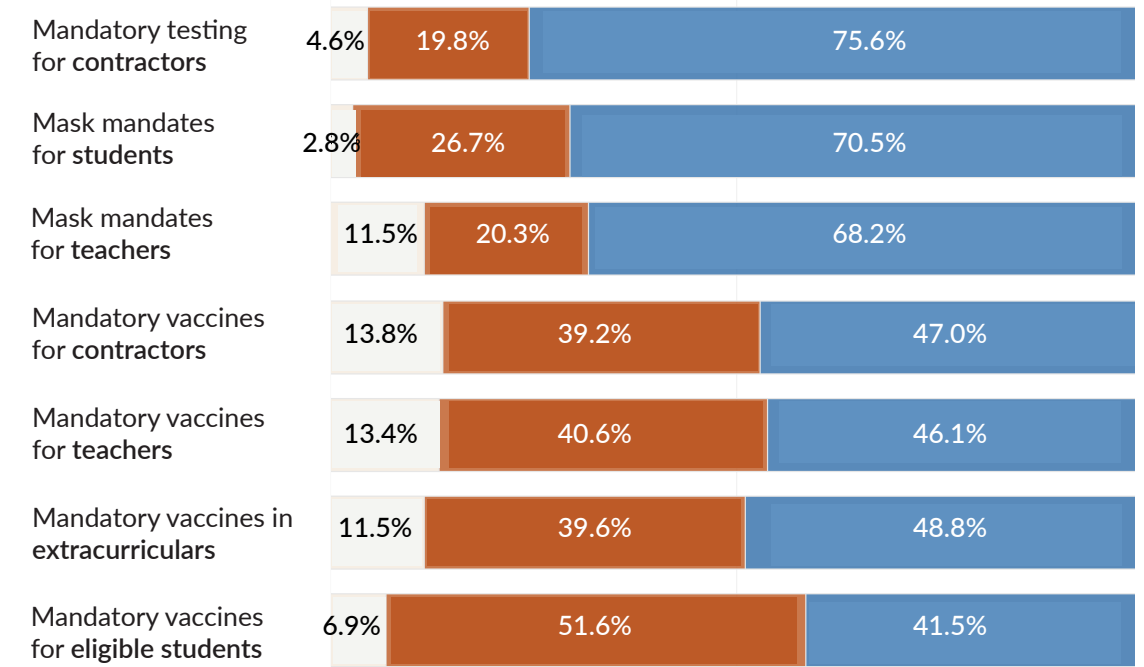
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Responses By Household Income

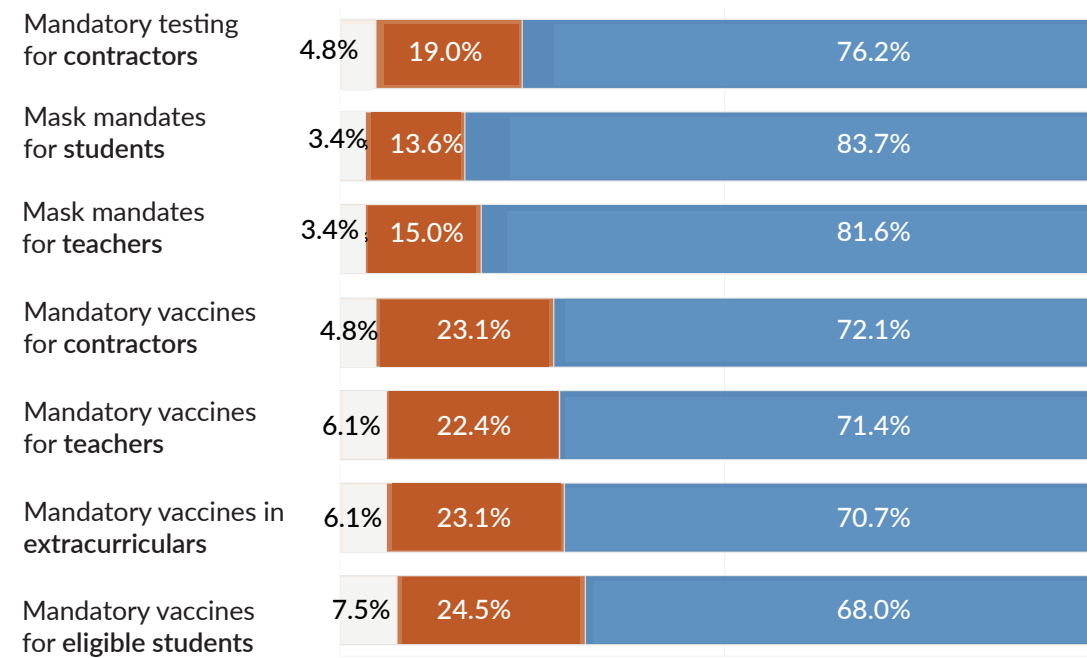
Household Income Less Than \$40,000 (N=437)



Household Income \$40,000 - \$74,999 (N=220)

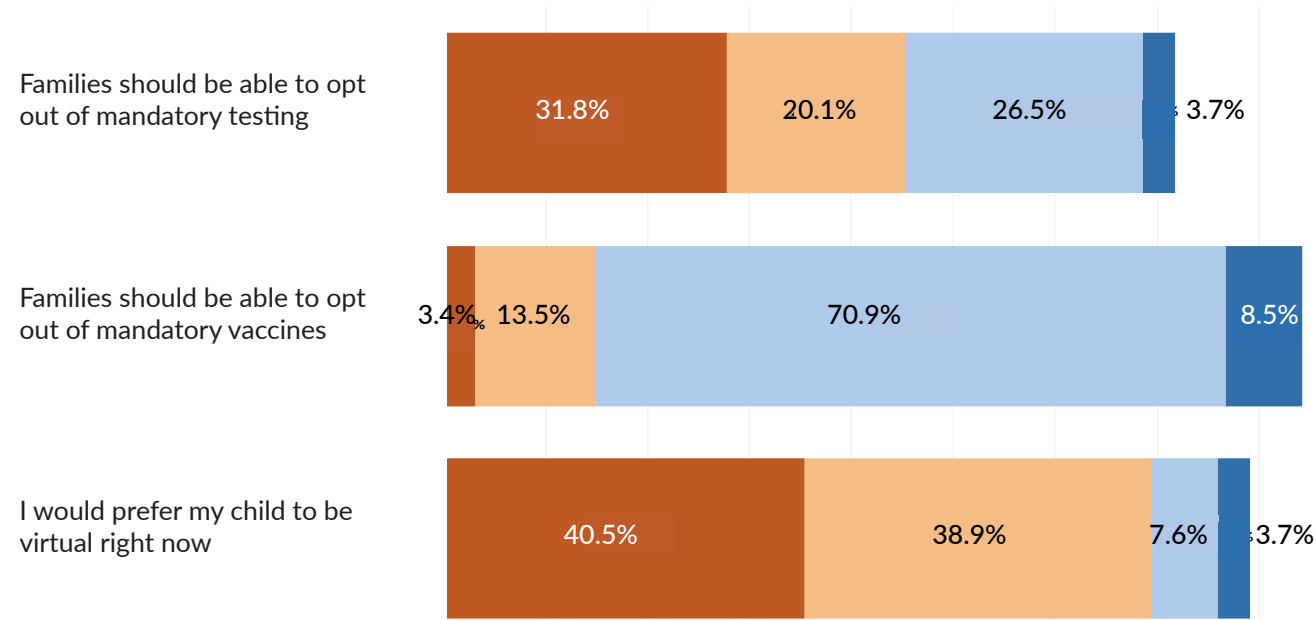


Household Income Above \$75,000 (N=150)

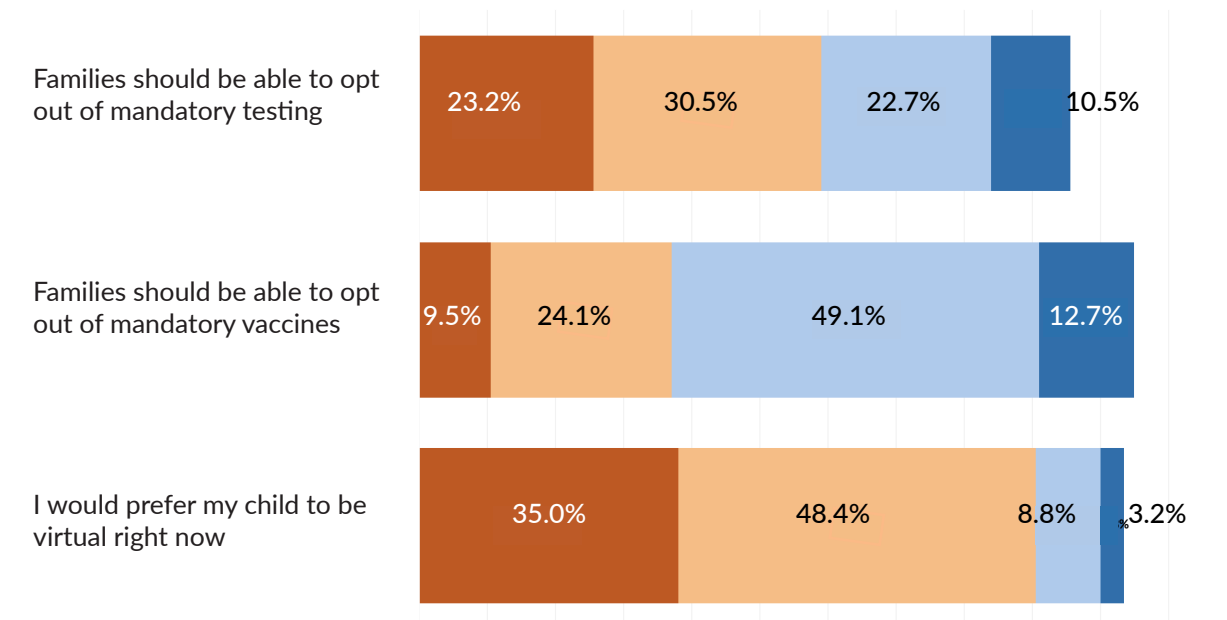


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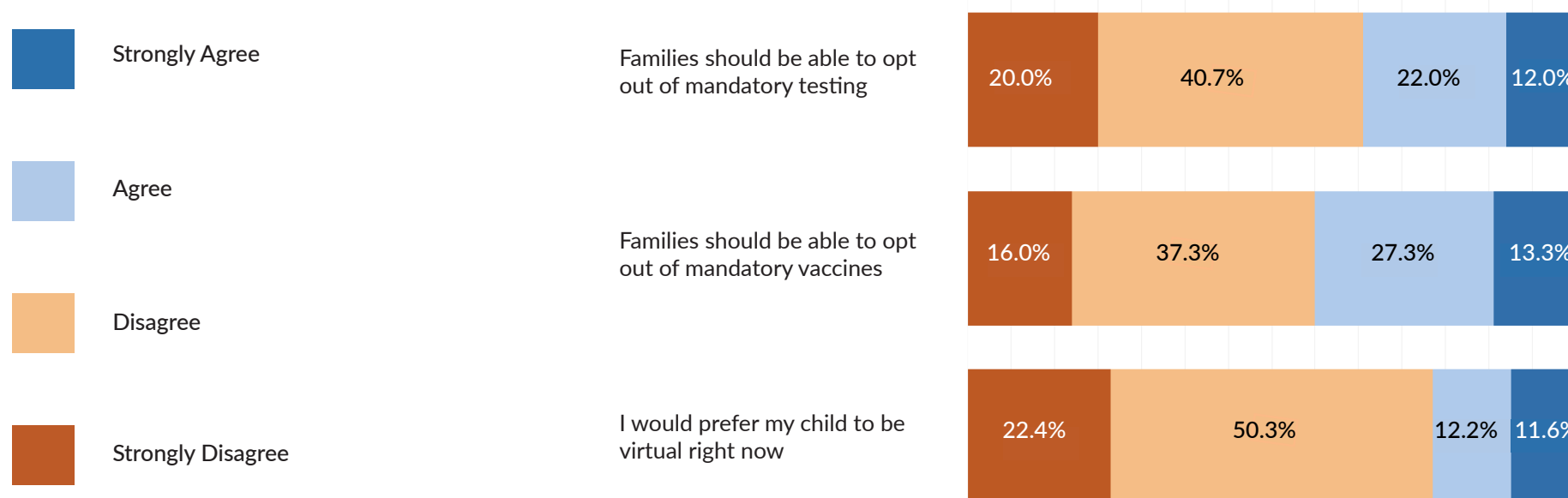
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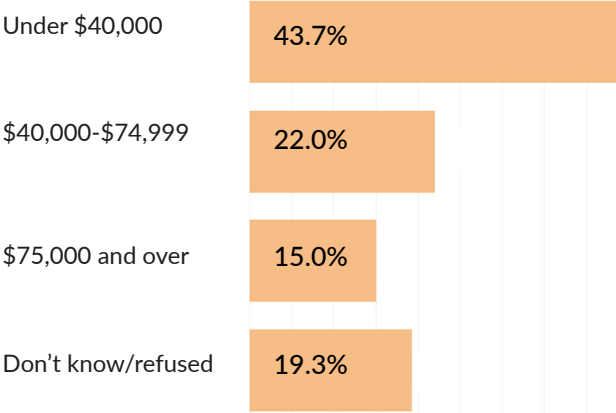
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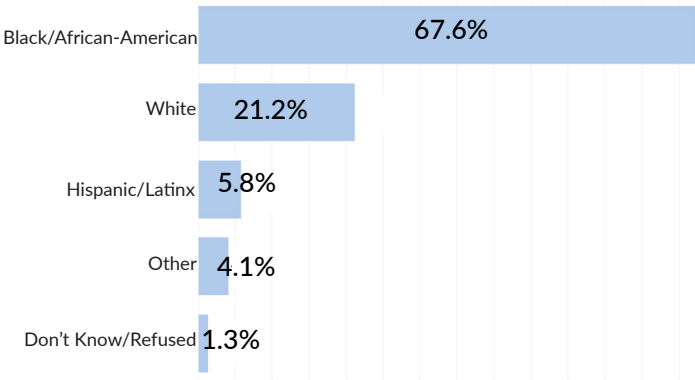
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Sample Demographics (N=1,000)

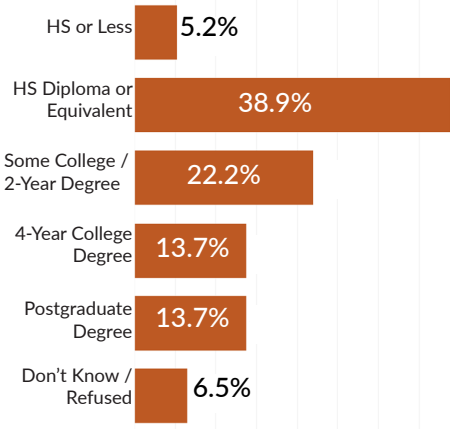
Household Income



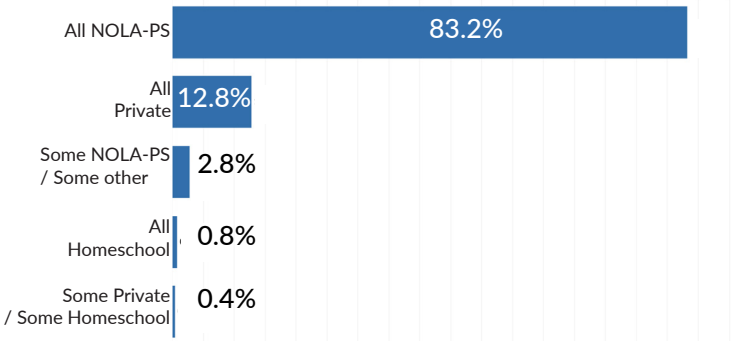
Race



Education Level



Type of School Child is Enrolled In



Gender

