

Cowen Institute Poll Brief: New Orleans Parents' Opinions on Public K-12 Education

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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 all of the findings for a given year in a single comprehensive report. This year, to expedite the release of the most timely findings, we are releasing a series of briefs covering different topic areas.

This is the second brief in that series and examines parents' and guardians' overall feelings about the quality and features of K-12 public education in New Orleans. To capture the experiences and attitudes of a wide range of parents, as we did in 2020, 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 parents and guardians feel about a range of topics related to New Orleans' K-12 public education, including overall perceptions of New Orleans Public Schools (NOLA-PS, the local school board and authorizer for most charter schools in the city) and the performance of the city's charter schools.

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-12 school or are homeschooled. 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%.

A full overview of question format and item-level descriptives are included on our website cowendata.org.

Key Findings

Education as a Key Issue in New Orleans

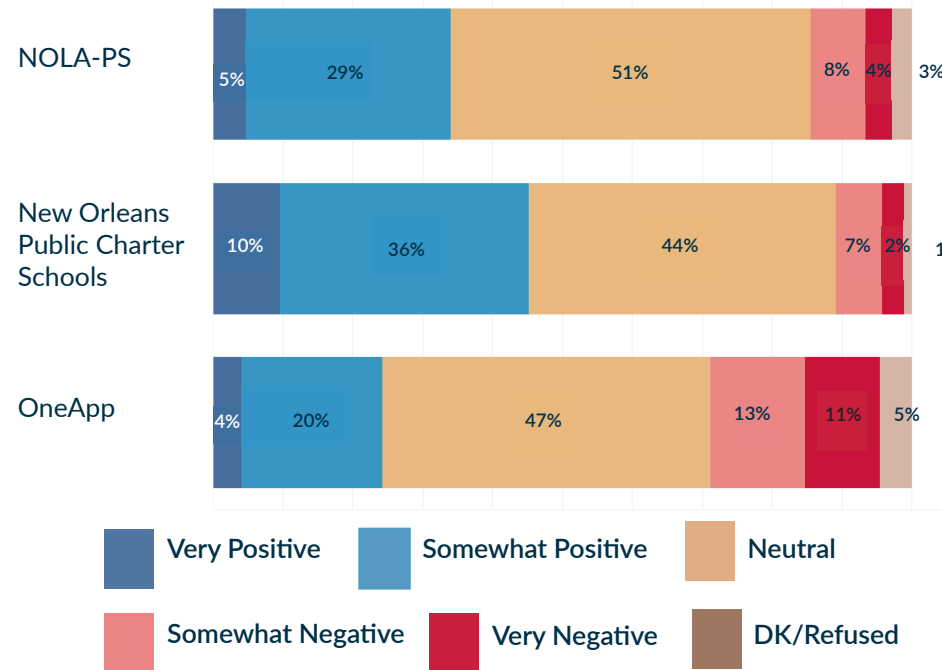
- Over the last few years, respondents are less likely to name education as a top concern when considering the issues facing New Orleans.
 - Prior to the pandemic, the Cowen Institute frequently found education to be the top concern respondents had when asked to rank the problems facing New Orleans. However, in each of the past two years, aside from COVID-19, crime, and the economy and jobs, have been the primary concerns for parents. Education ranked third this year.¹ Unsurprisingly, the economy was a particular concern for parents from lower-income households.
 - Women, and White women in particular are more likely than men to rank education as a concern.
 - Those citing infrastructure as their top concern doubled in the past year, from 5% then to 10% now.

Opinions on Education Overall

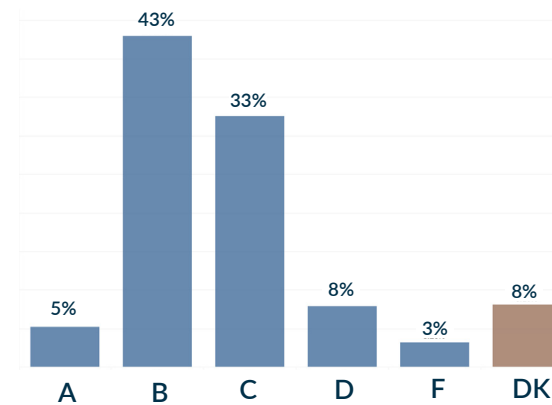
- The grade parents give all New Orleans public schools has improved.
 - 48% of all respondents gave the city's schools an A or a B grade, up 10% from 38% last year. The percentage giving schools a D or F grade fell from 16% to 11% from last year to this year as well.
 - A majority of parents with some college or less in terms of education, and those from lower-income backgrounds, gave schools an A or B grade, while a majority of parents with a college degree and from higher economic standing gave schools a C. Black respondents were also slightly more likely to give schools an A or B grade than White respondents.
 - A majority of parents with children in NOLA-PS schools gave schools an A or B grade.
- Feelings toward public charter schools and NOLA-PS remain positive to neutral overall, though less positive than last year.
 - 46% of respondents said that they had positive or very positive feelings about charter schools, while 44% said their feelings were neutral. This was a shift from last year, when 54% said they had somewhat positive or very positive feelings, and 29% said their feelings were neutral.
 - 52% of respondents also stated they were neutral about NOLA-PS, compared to 30% in 2020. 34% said they were somewhat positive or very positive, compared to 44% last year.
 - Parents without a student in an NOLA-PS school were more negative than parents with a NOLA-PS student.

¹ Note: Prior to this year, when the Cowen Institute posed this question, respondents were asked to rank "Crime/Criminal Justice" as a single concern. This year, Crime and Criminal Justice were separated, and Crime was the top concern for 29% of respondents (which ranked it as the top issue) compared to Criminal Justice which was cited by 2% of respondents.

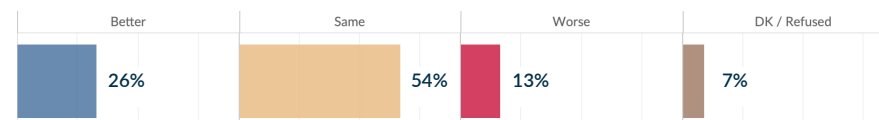
How do you feel about....



How would you rank New Orleans public schools?



Do you think New Orleans Public Schools are getting better, getting worse, or staying the same?



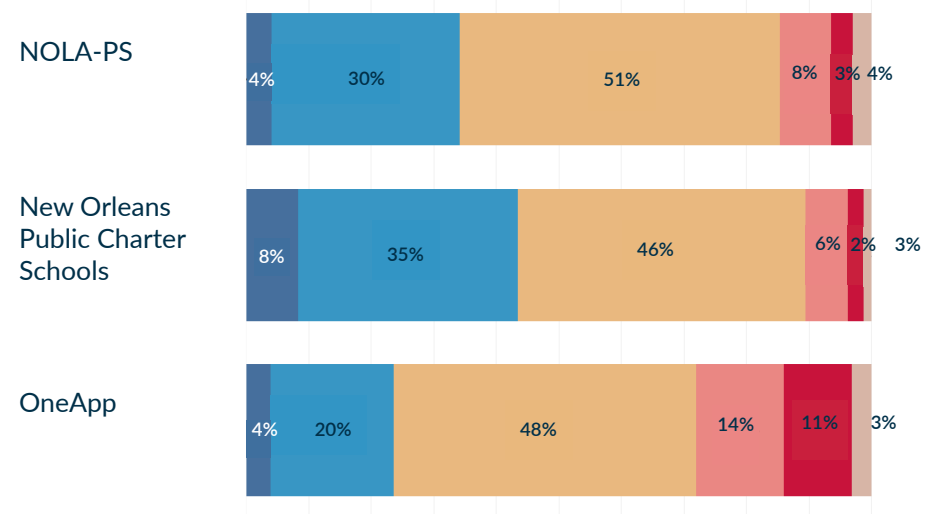
- Black men and other Men of Color were less positive toward public charter schools than White men and all women, regardless of race.
- The subgroup patterns for feelings about NOLA-PS and charter schools closely mirrored each other, with those who gave the schools a low letter grade and parents whose children do not attend NOLA-PS schools offering the lowest ratings.

Areas of Strength and What Needs Improvement

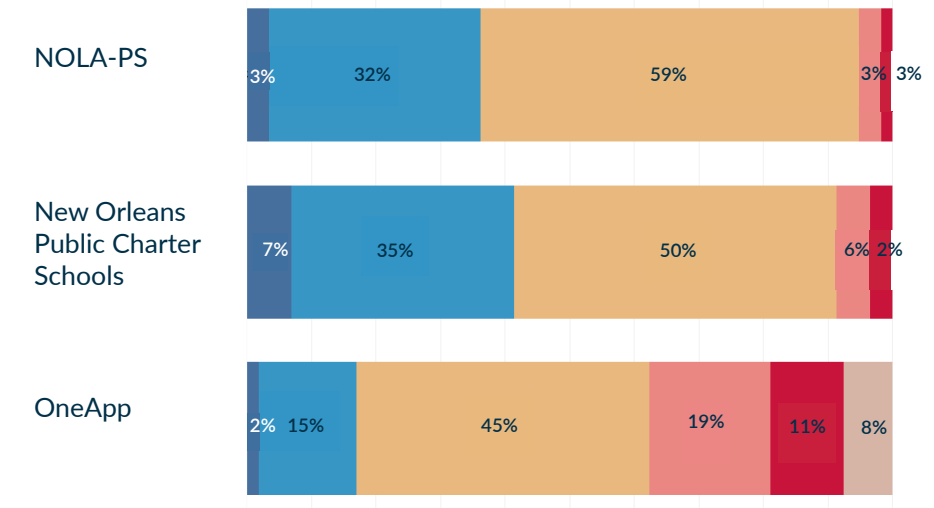
- When asked to rate the best things about New Orleans' public schools, the fact that schools are free and teachers were the two most common answers.
 - 13% of parents believed that there was nothing good about the public schools in New Orleans and 20% couldn't offer a comment.
- When asked to name the biggest concern they had about New Orleans' public schools, responses were scattered, with no topic being named by more than 8% of parents. Parents cited closing schools, low quality education, bus transportation, teachers, class size, and teacher shortages as their top issues.
 - 12% of respondents said they did not have a change to suggest and 19% didn't know or refused to answer.
- Compared to last year, however, parents were more likely to say that the public education in New Orleans was staying the same, rather than getting better: this year, 53% said schools were staying the same, compared to 39% in 2020.
 - A plurality of all subgroups said things were staying the same, rather than improving.
 - Younger respondents and White men were the most likely to say that schools were improving, while older respondents and households without NOLA-PS students were the most critical.
- Provided with a list of possible improvements for city schools, a plurality of parents (38%) believed hiring more qualified teachers would have the greatest impact on school quality.
- Consistent with last year's poll, there was not a majority of parents who expressed a willingness to pay a little more in taxes to help fund public education.
 - In 2020, 40% stated they were willing to do so, compared 36% who stated they were not, and 25% who were undecided. This year, 43% stated they would be willing to have higher taxes, 40% said they would not, and 17% were undecided.

Responses by Race

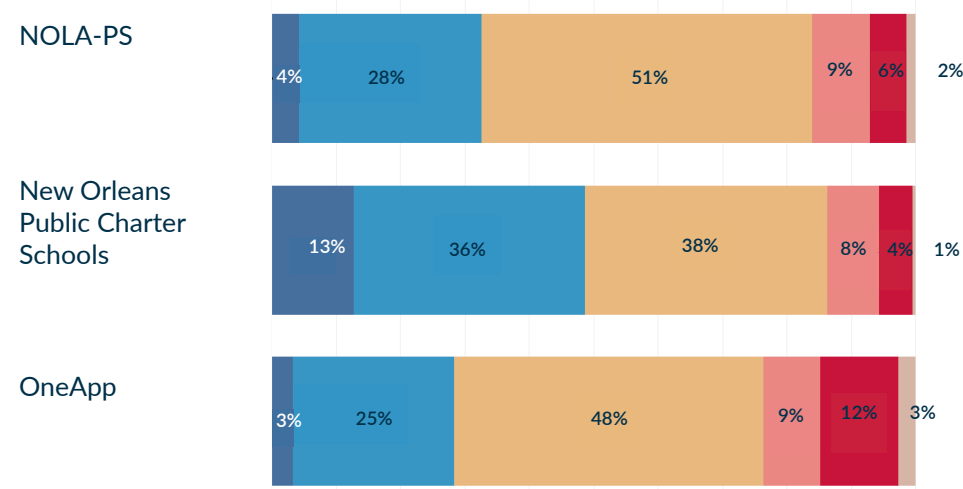
Black Respondents (N=676)



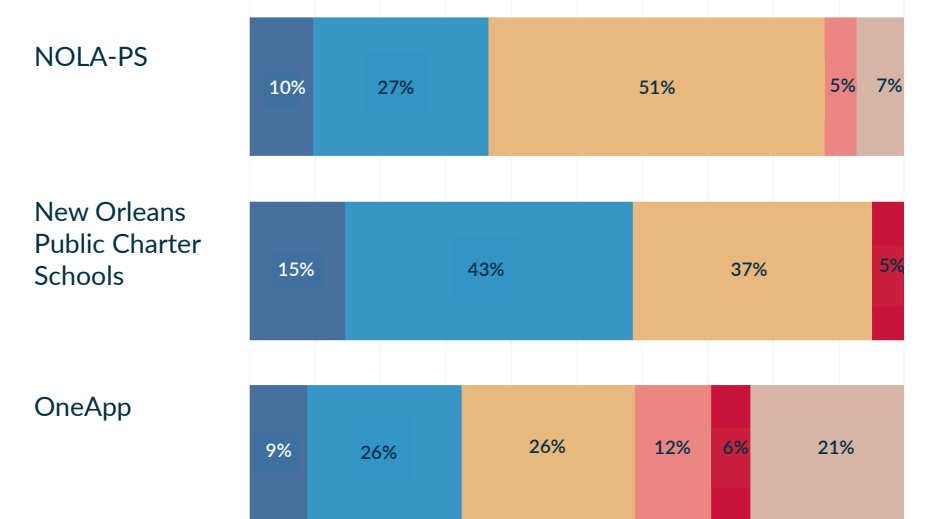
Hispanic/Latinx Respondents (N=58)



White Respondents (N=212)

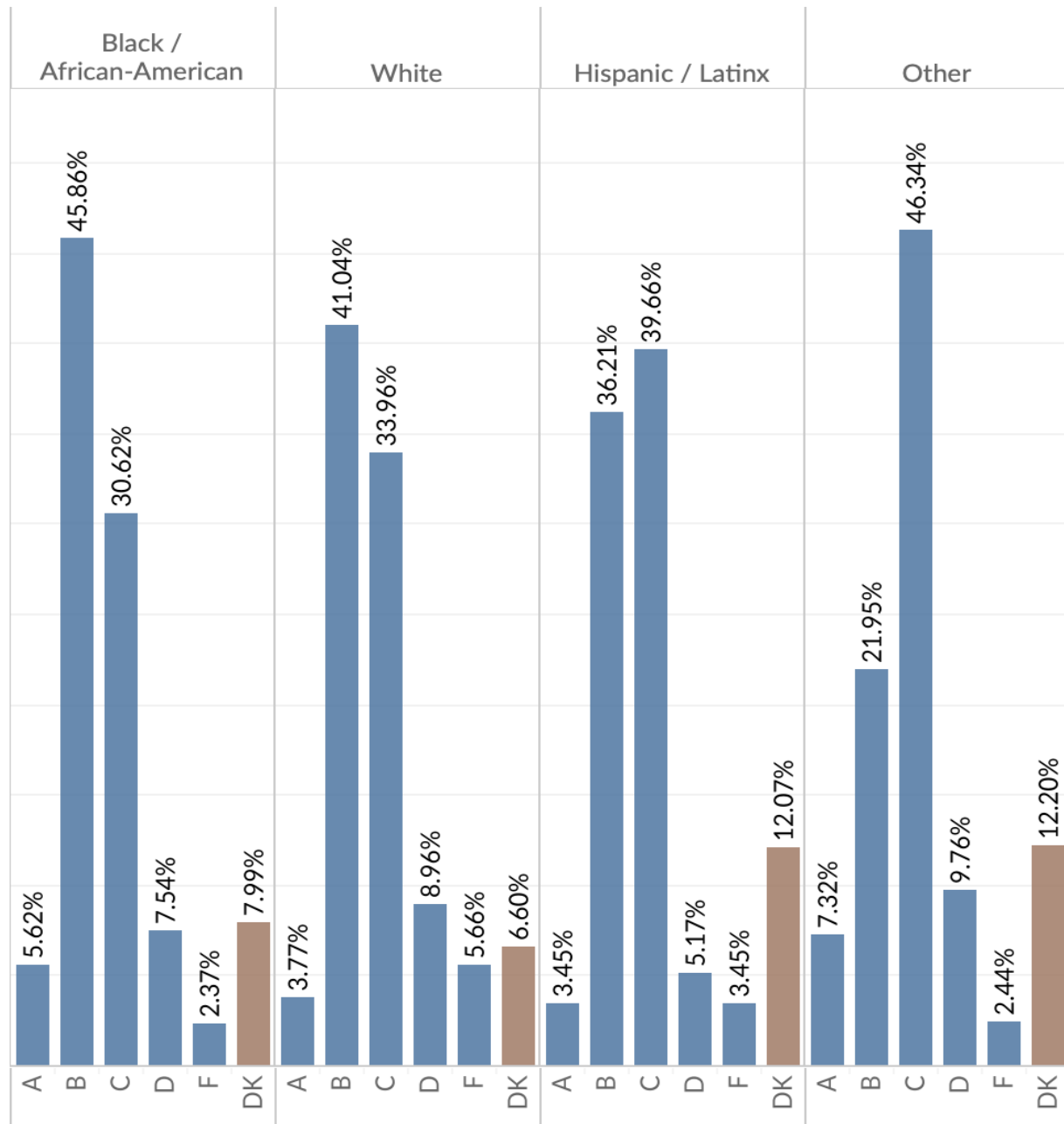


Other Race Respondents (N=41)

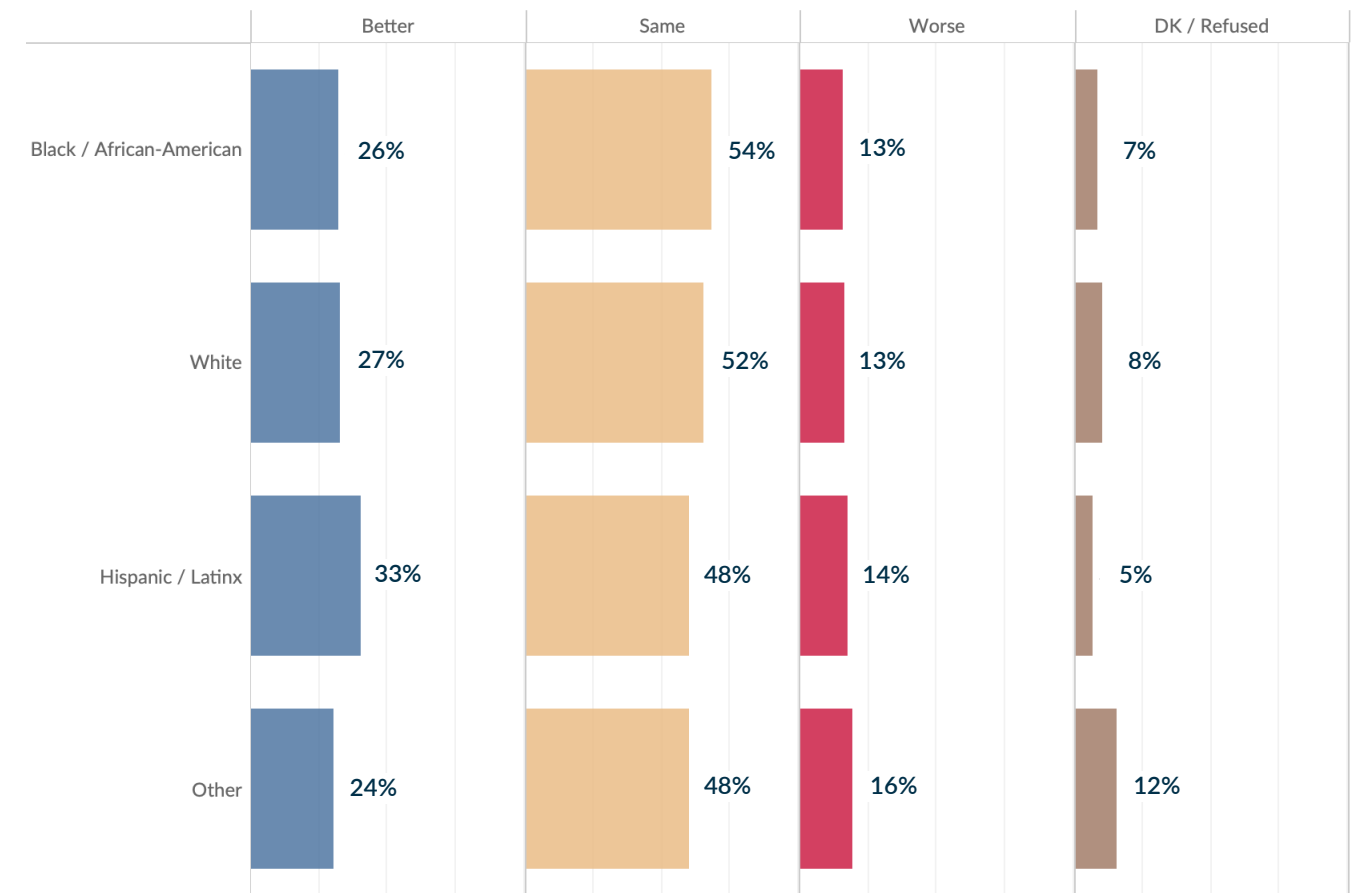


Responses by Race

How would you rank New Orleans public schools?

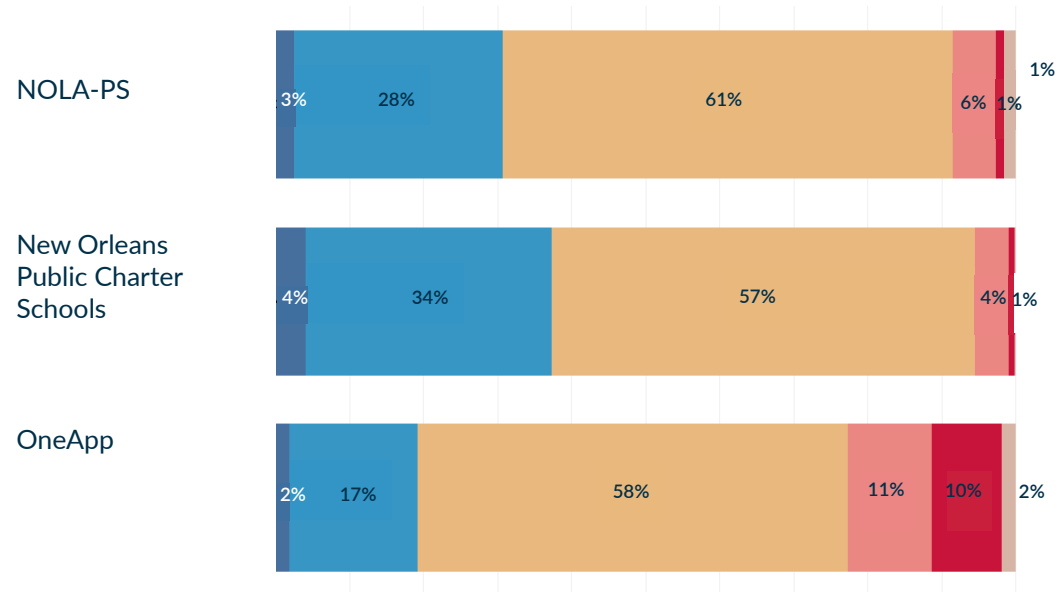


Do you think New Orleans Public Schools are getting better, getting worse, or staying the same?

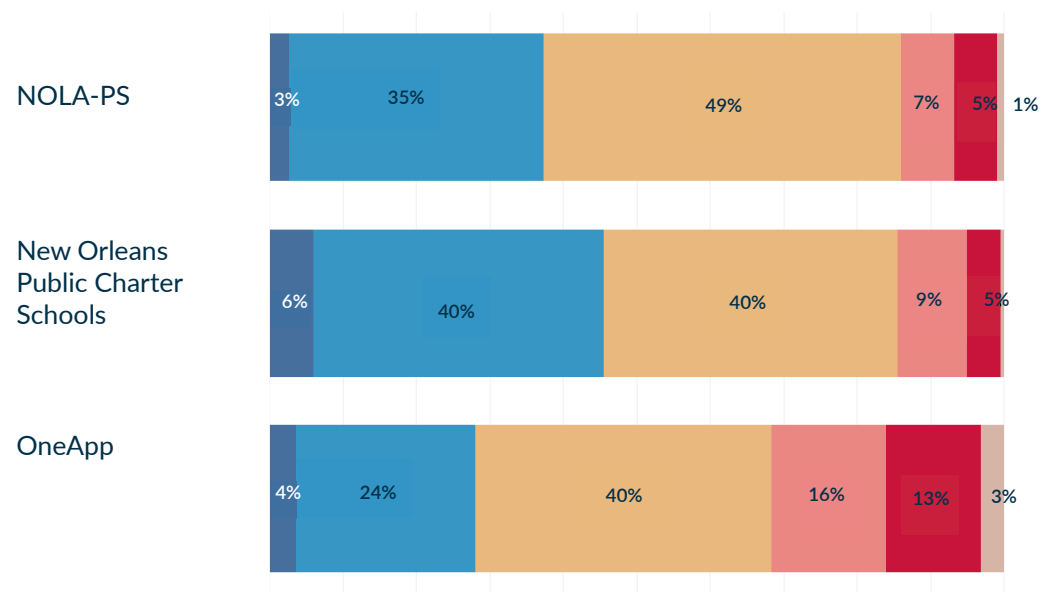


Responses by Income

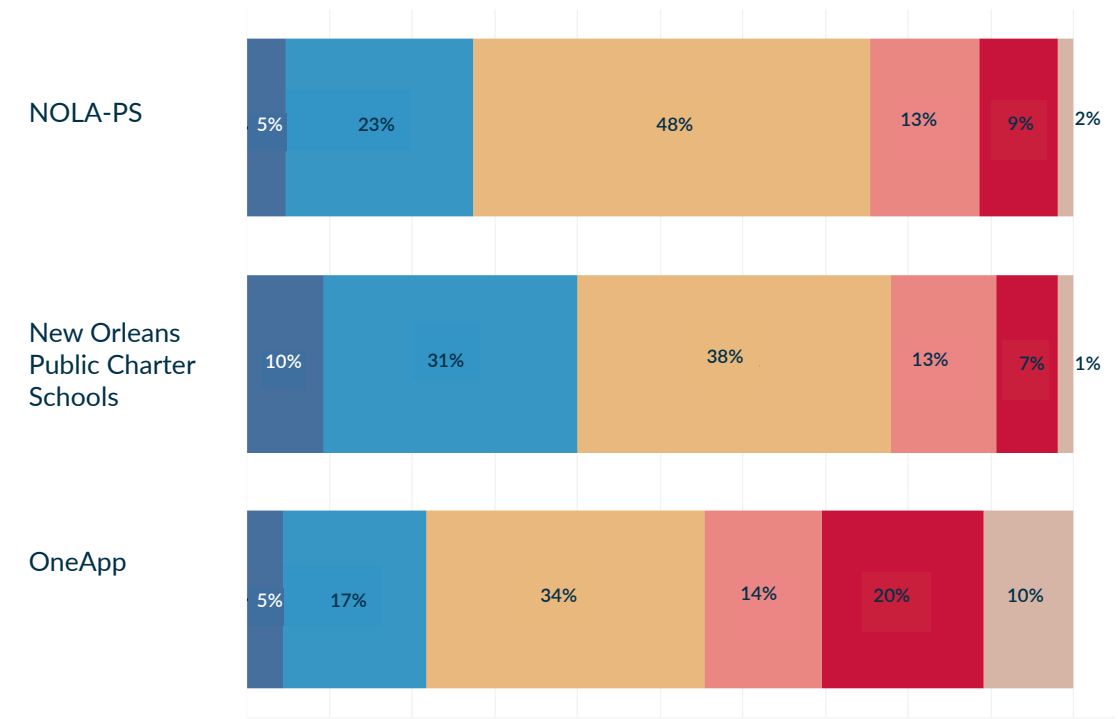
Household Income Below \$40,000 (N=437)



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

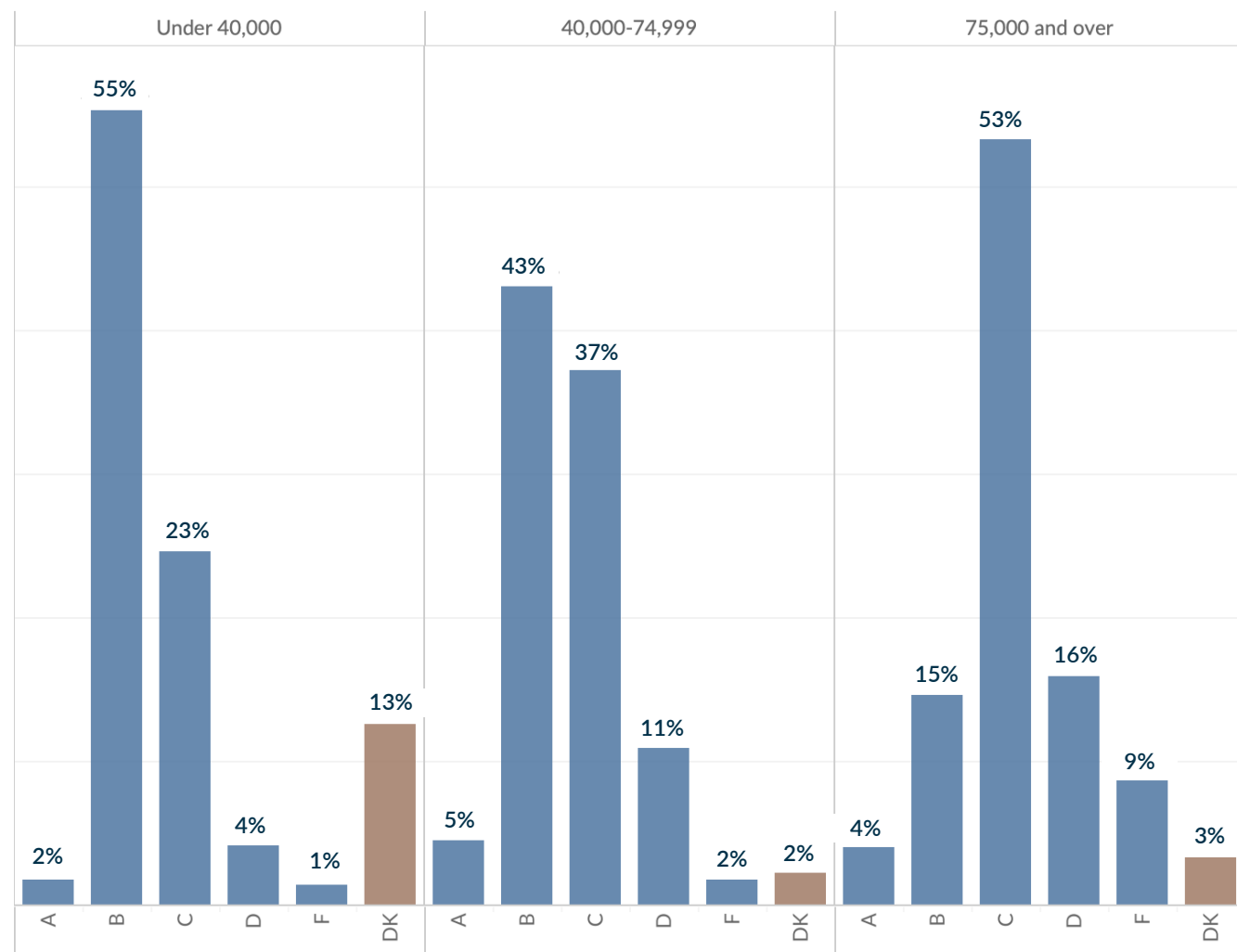


Household Income Over \$75,000 (N=150)

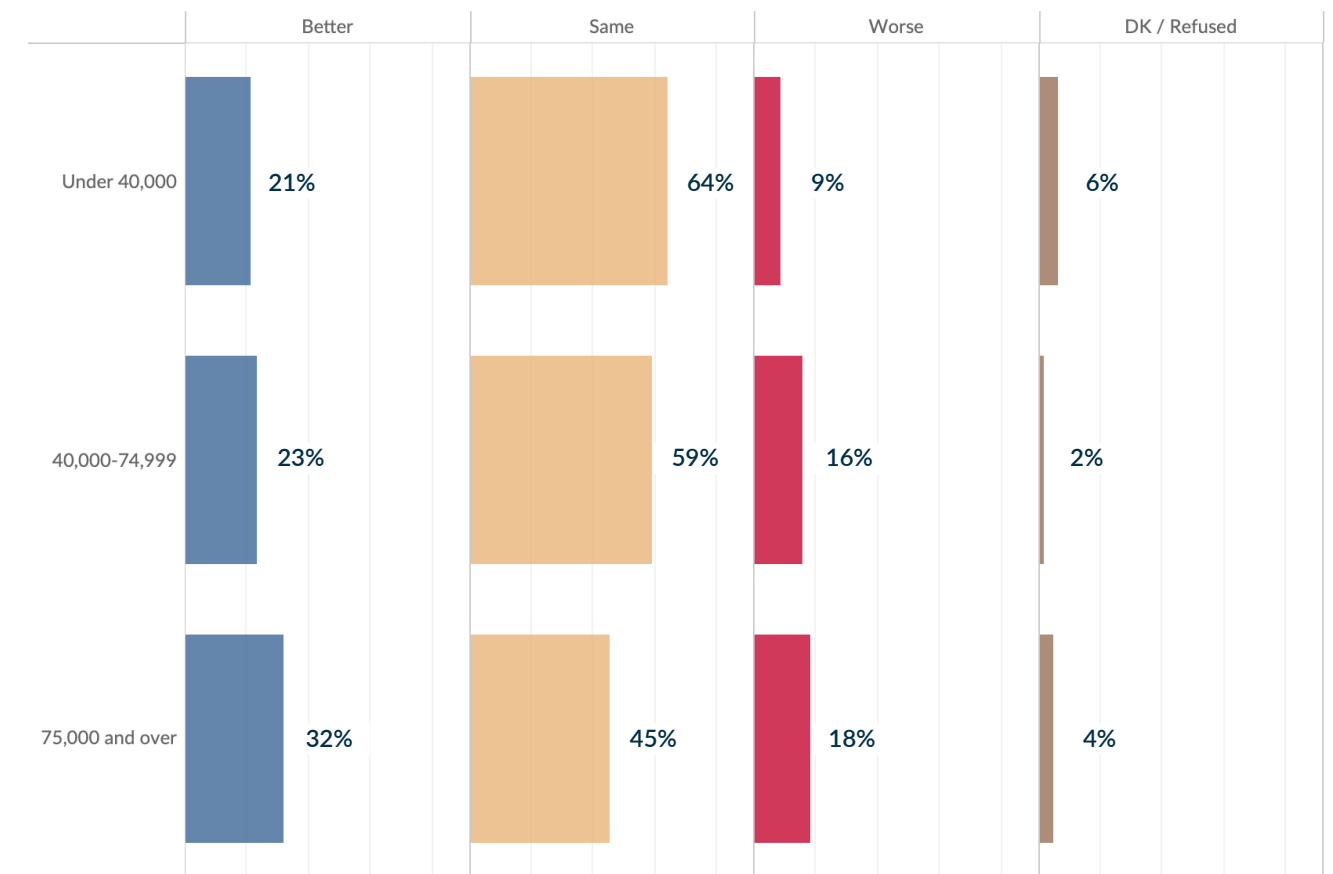


Responses by Income

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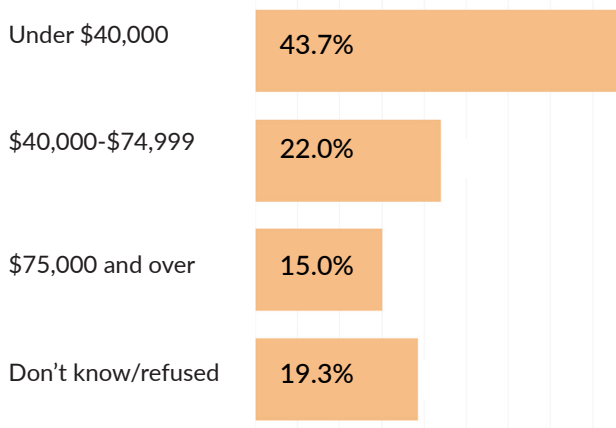


Do you think New Orleans Public Schools are getting better, getting worse, or staying the same?

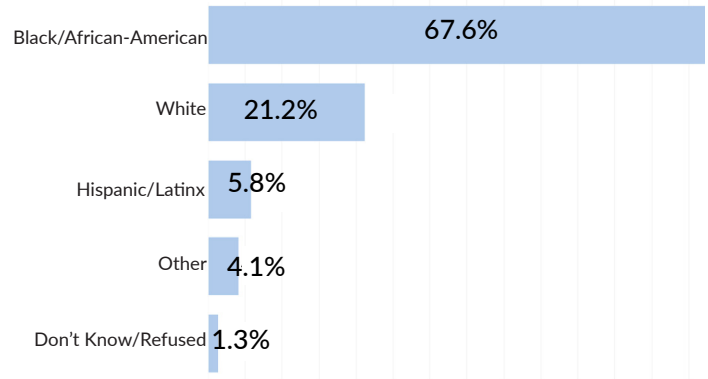


Sample Demographics (1,000 Total Respondents)

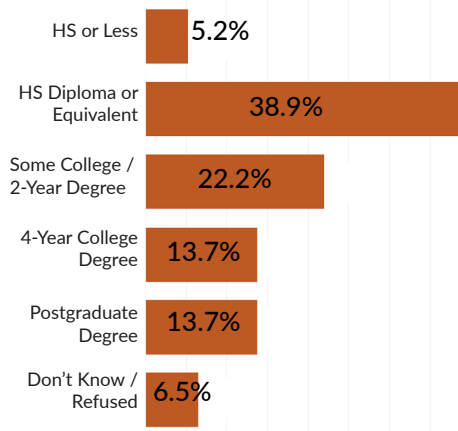
Household Income



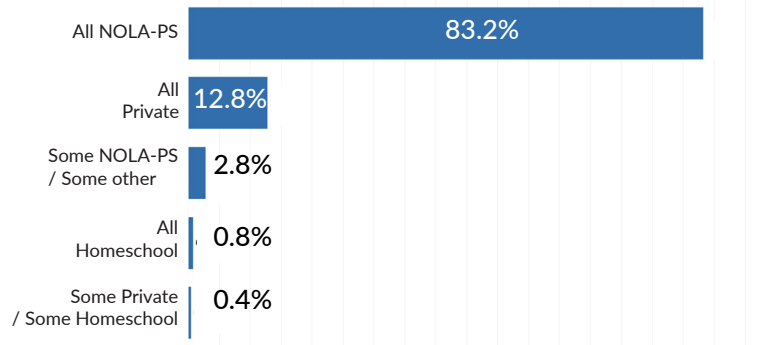
Race



Education Level



Type of School Child is Enrolled In



Gender

