



The Educational Experiences of American Families During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Nationally Representative Panel Survey Evidence

Presented by: Anna Rosefsky Saavedra & Morgan Polikoff
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With: Marshall Garland, Shira Korn Haderlein, Amie Rapaport, and Daniel Silver

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The Understanding America Study



- Since 2014, longitudinal, national probability-based panel of approximately 8,500 US residents, collecting information at multiple time points each year on economic, labor, attitudinal, and health measures, etc.
- Tracking pandemic effects starting March 10, 2020
- Every day ~500 respondents answer UAS questions, 7000 over a two-week period



We Conduct Surveys Online, and Provide Internet-Connected Tablets...



...to people who didn't have Internet access before, permitting participation among older, lower income, lower education, rural, unemployed, and/or disabled participants, making the UAS truly representative of the US population



~1,450 UAS Households With Minimum One K-12 Child



UAS April 2020 (percent)

Current Population Survey (percent)

Race/ethnicity

White	61.4	55.6
Black	16.1	11.3
Other	4	10.4
Hispanic	18.5	22.7

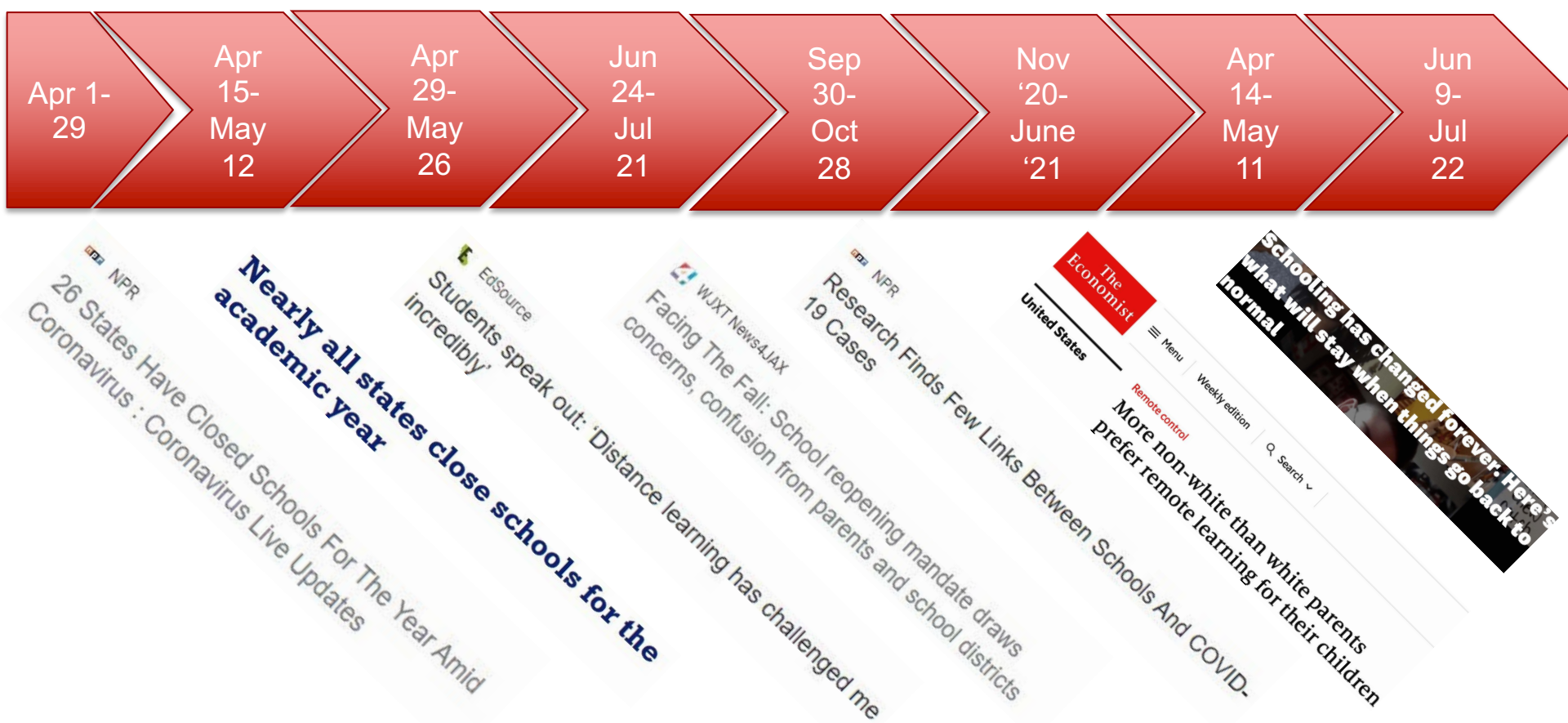
Education level

High school or less	35.8	36.4
Some college	29.0	27.2
Baccalaureate or higher	35.2	36.5

Age category

18-30	16.2	24.8
31-45	56.1	48.1
46-65	24.6	24.8
66+	3.1	2.3

Nearly 20 Waves of Parent Survey Administration Data (and Counting)



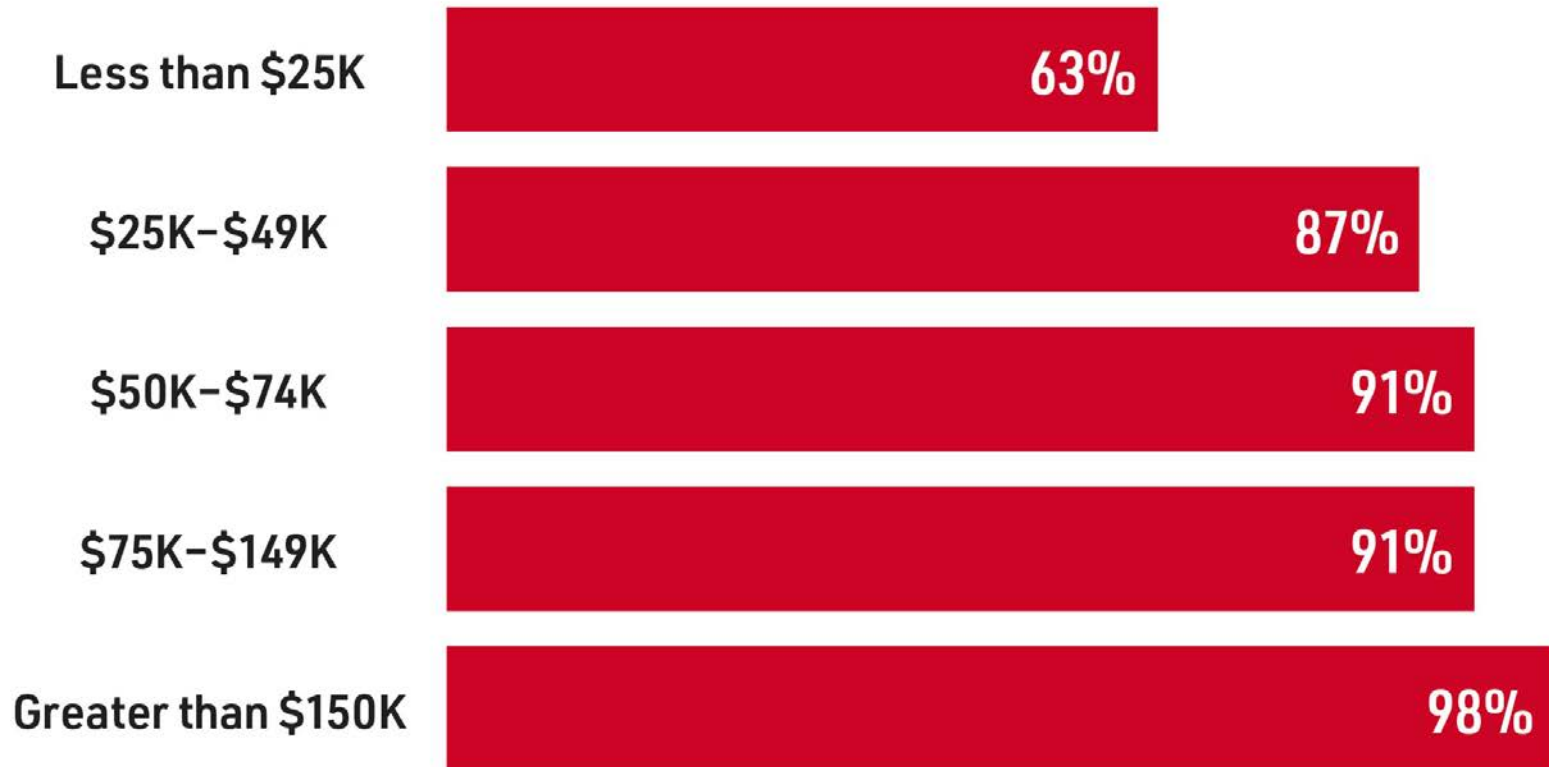


**At the beginning of the pandemic, we
found large disparities in educational
experiences**

In April 2020, More than One-Third of Low-Income Families Lacked Access to Computers and Internet



Household income



Children have access to internet and laptop/desktop for learning

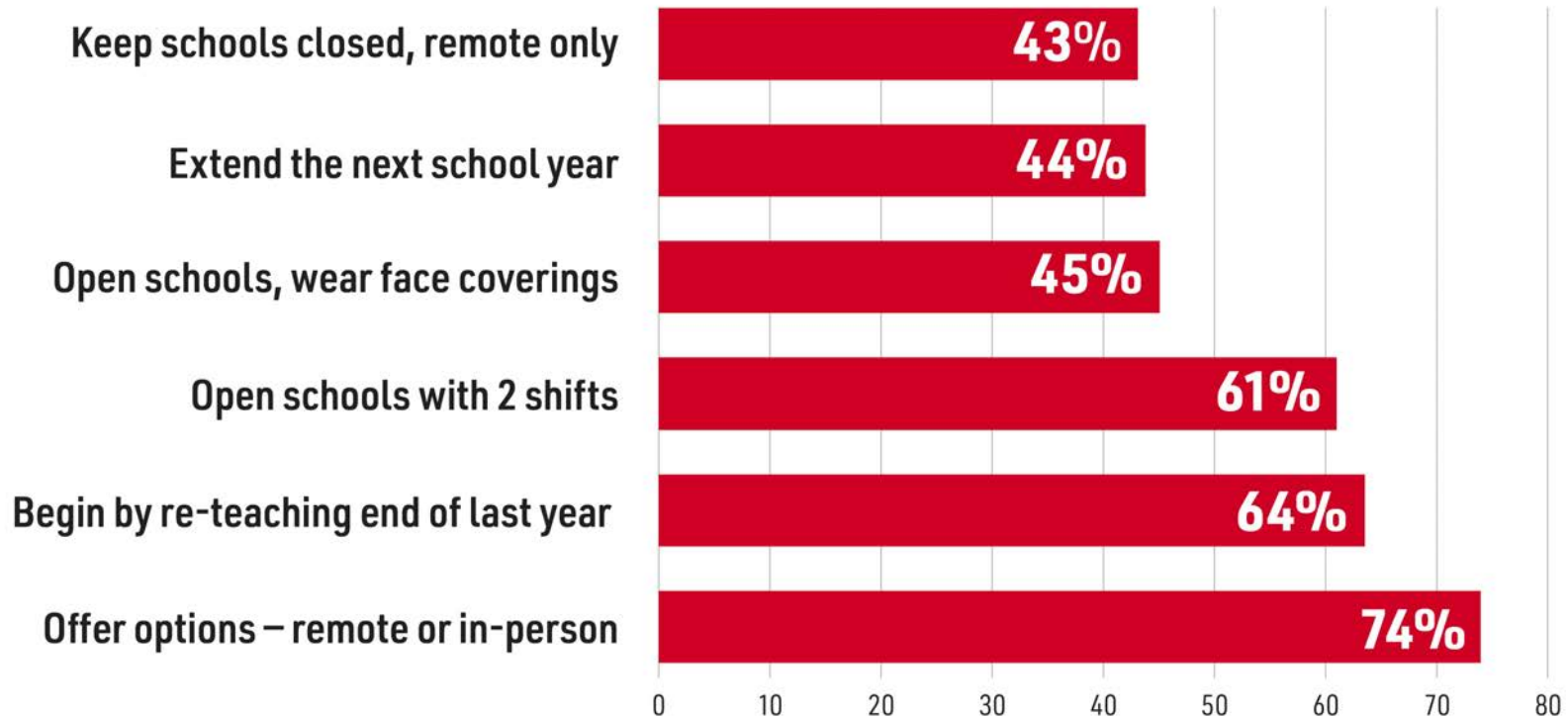


**In the summer of 2020, parents
shared their preferences for the fall**

Remote-only Learning Had Parents' Least *Overall* Support

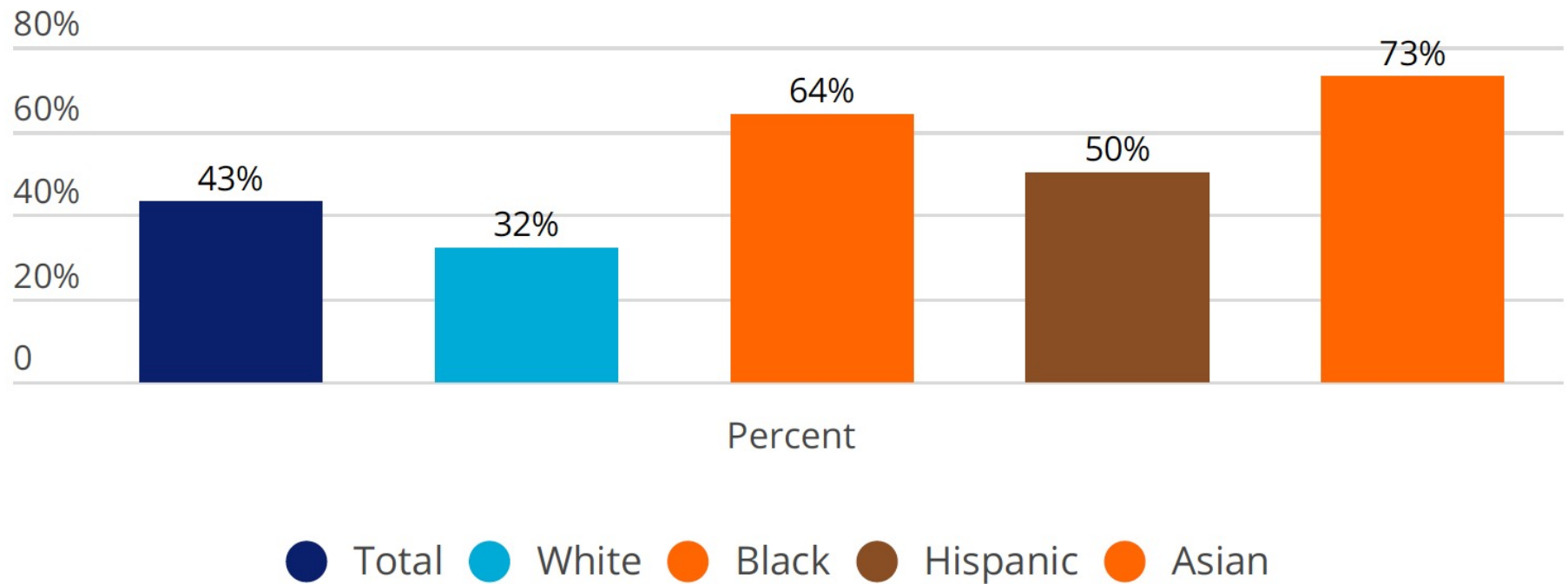


Percent who "support" or "strongly support"



Q: Schools are considering several policies in the wake of recent school closures.
Do you oppose or support each of the following policies?

But More Parents of Color Wanted Remote Learning



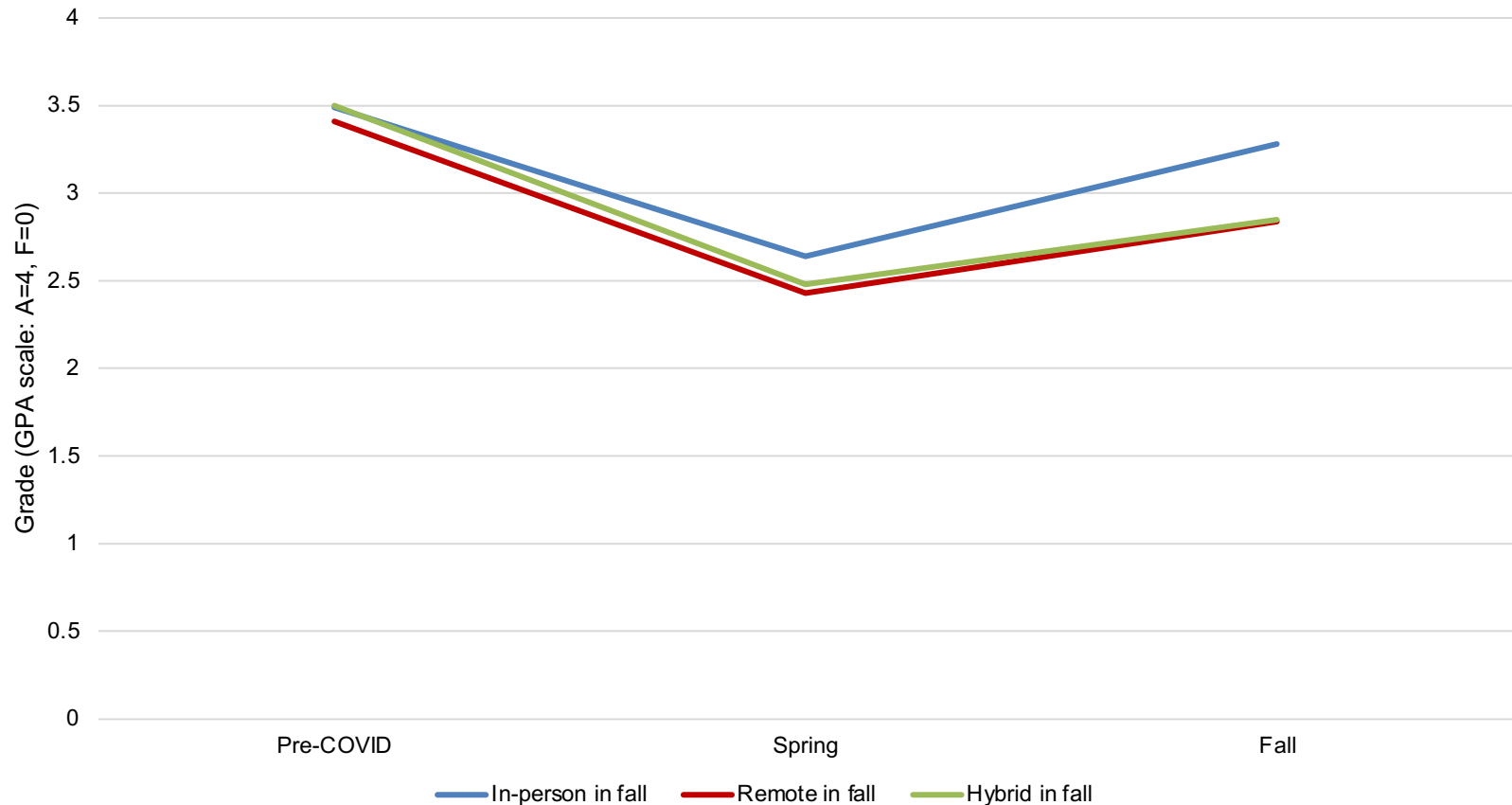


**By October 2020, some parents
reported improvements over the spring,
though with a long way to go**

Overall Parents' Grades for School Quality Improved, But Not So Much Among Remote



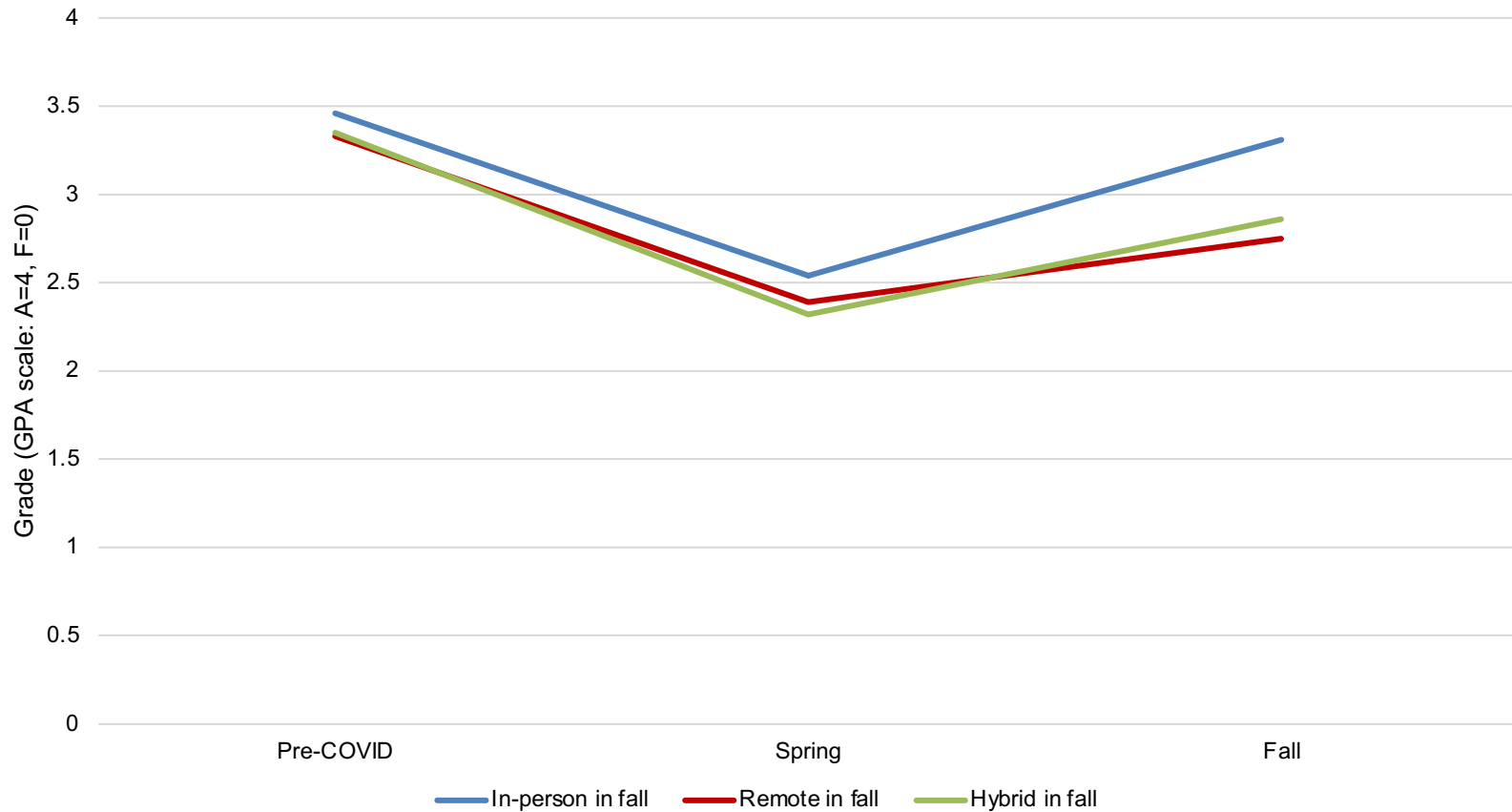
Parents' Grades for School's Overall Quality of Education



Same Pattern for Science Instruction Quality Grades



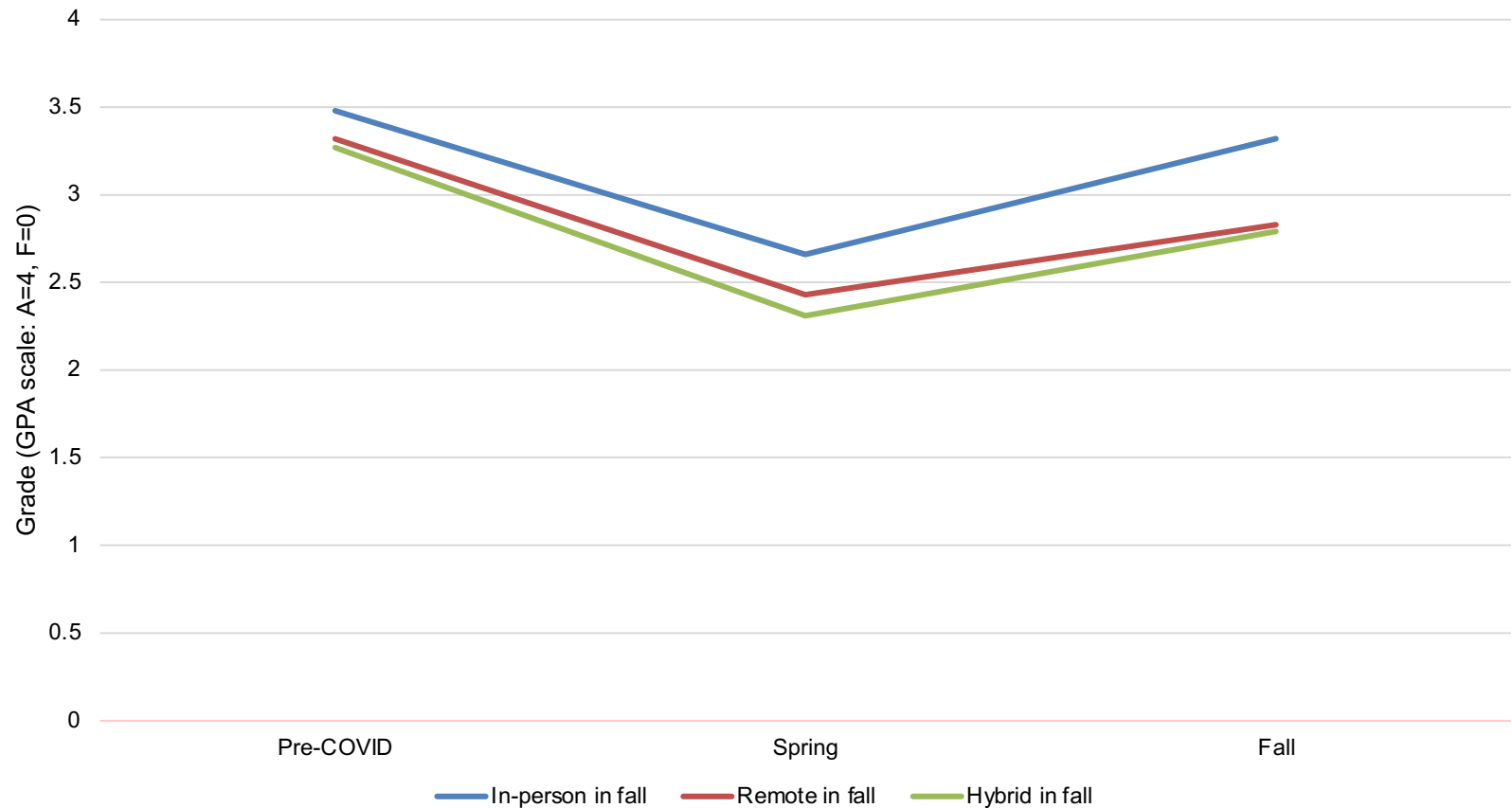
Parents' Grades for School's Science Instruction Quality



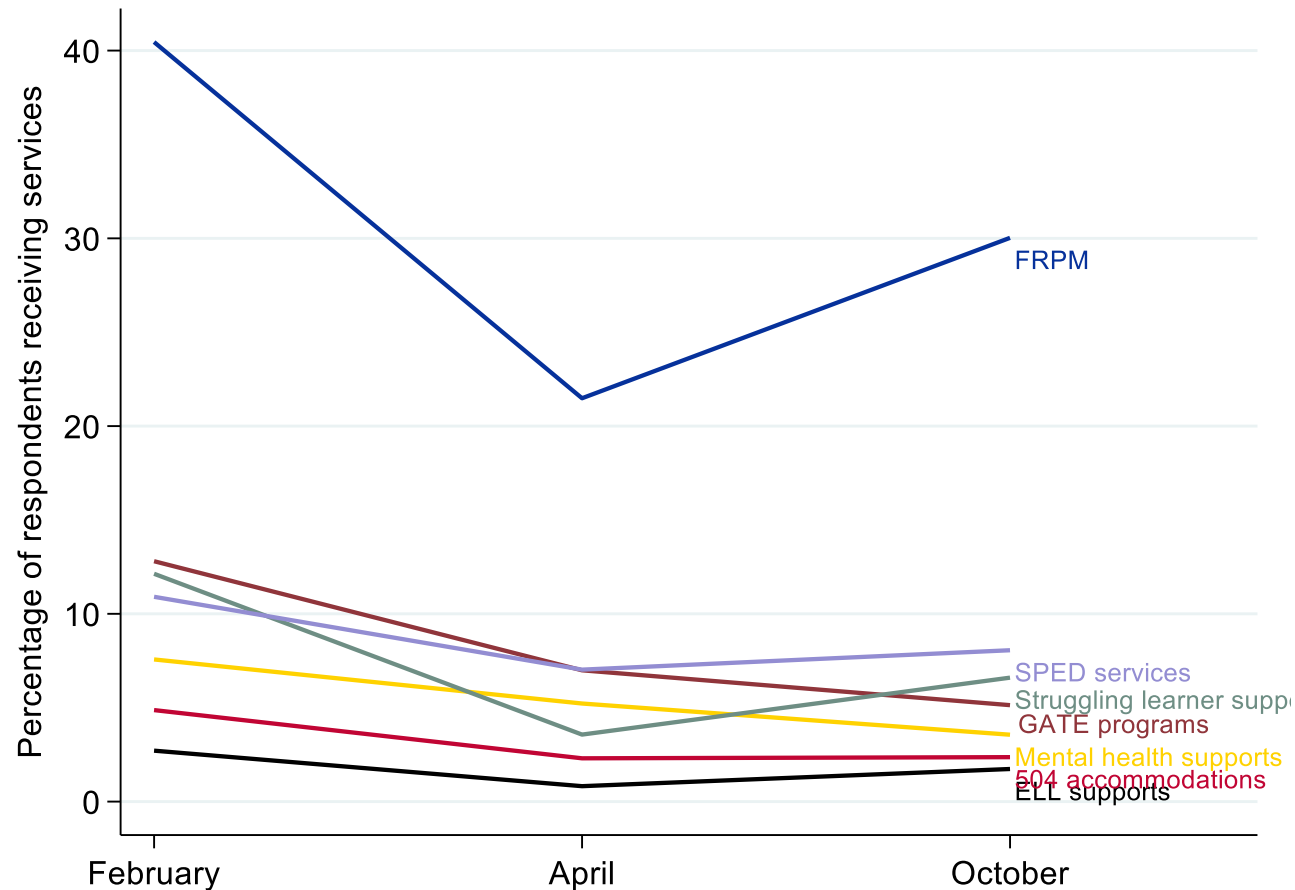
...And for Math



Parents' Grades for School's Math Instruction Quality



Schools Were Delivering More Services in October Than in April, But Not at Pre-COVID-19 Levels

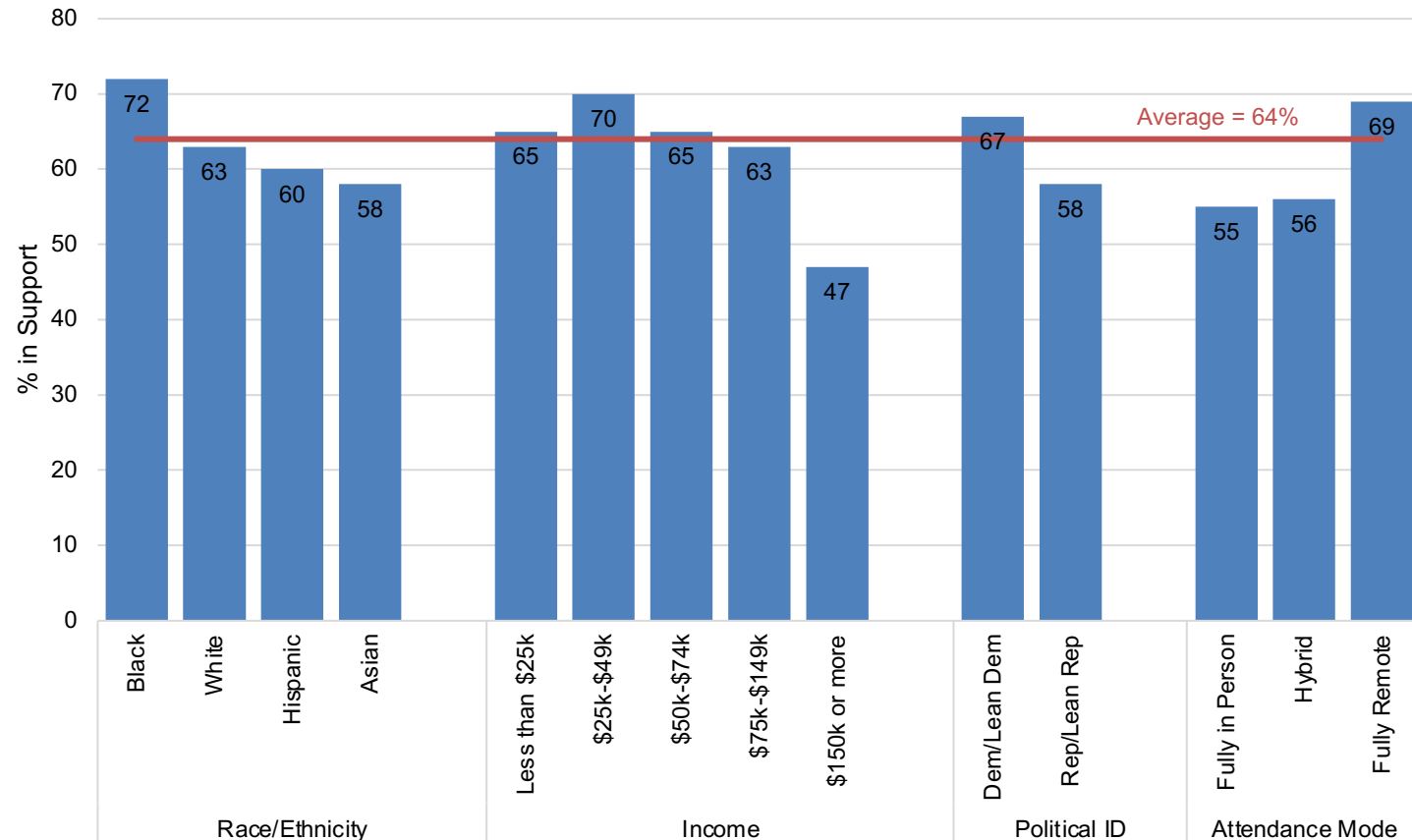


Parents Support Cancelling Spring 2021 Standardized Tests



US Parents Show Relatively High, Uniform Support for Cancelling Standardized Tests in Spring 2021

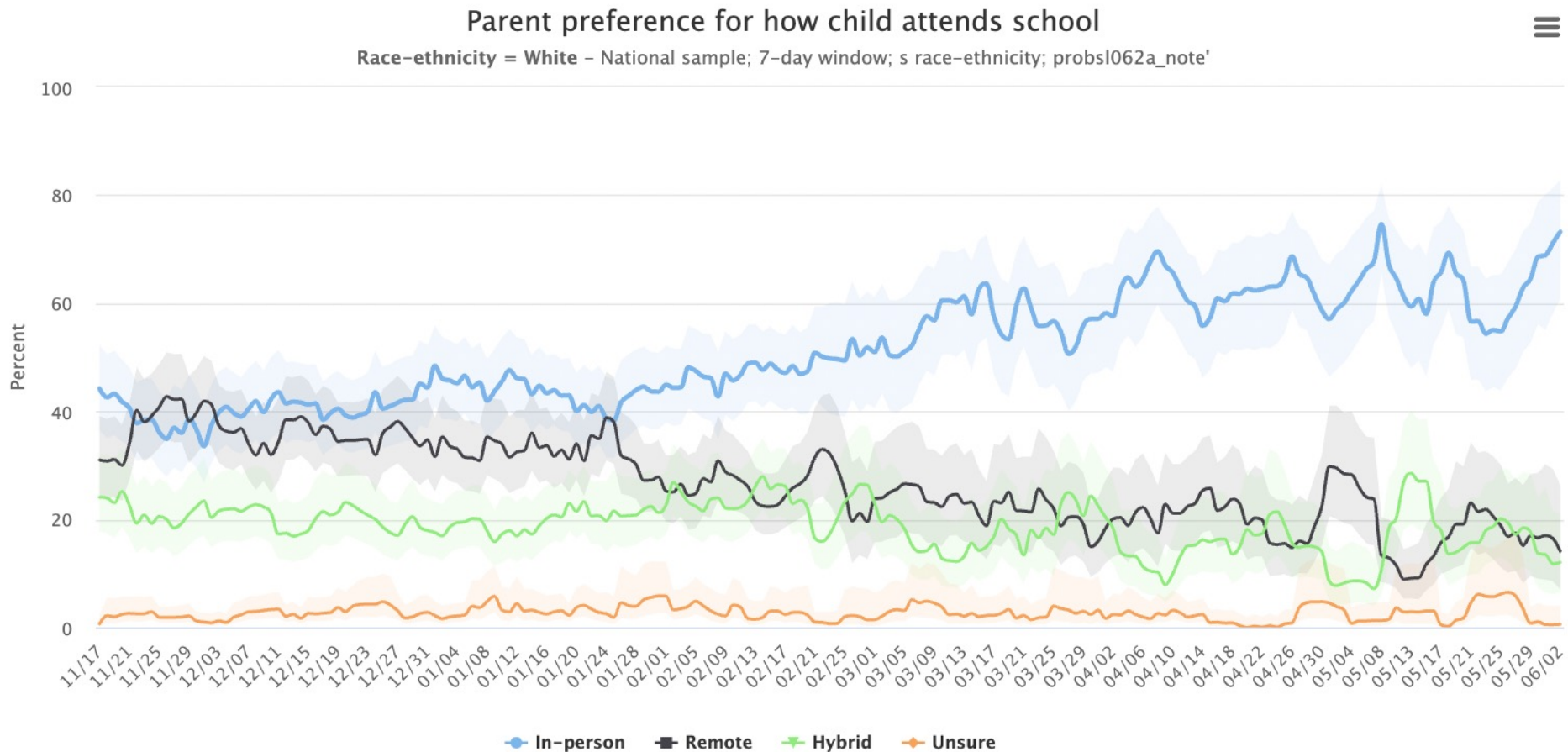
Data from October 2020 administration of the UAS



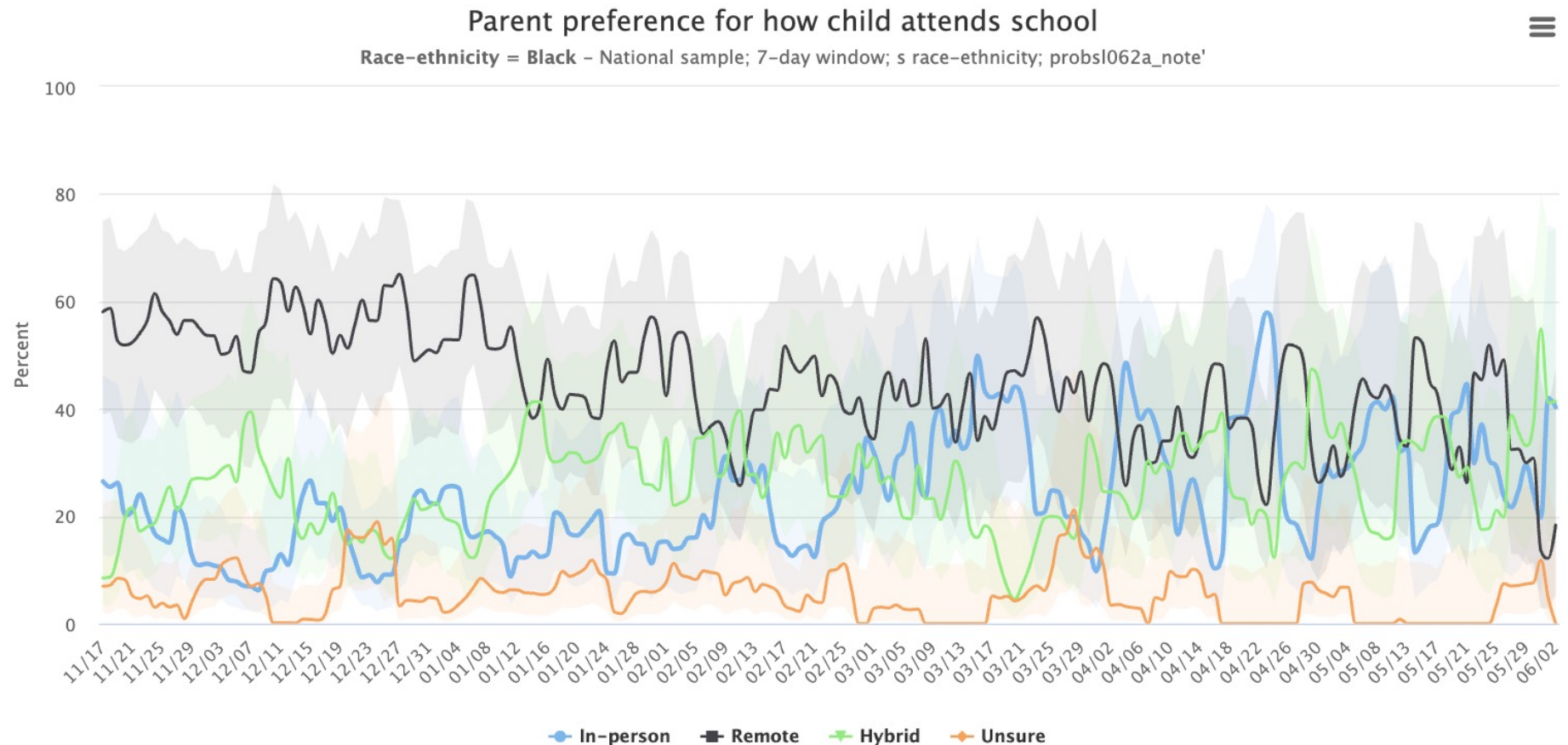


**November 2020 through June 2021 we
have been collecting data on child
attendance mode, parent preferences,
school mitigation strategies**

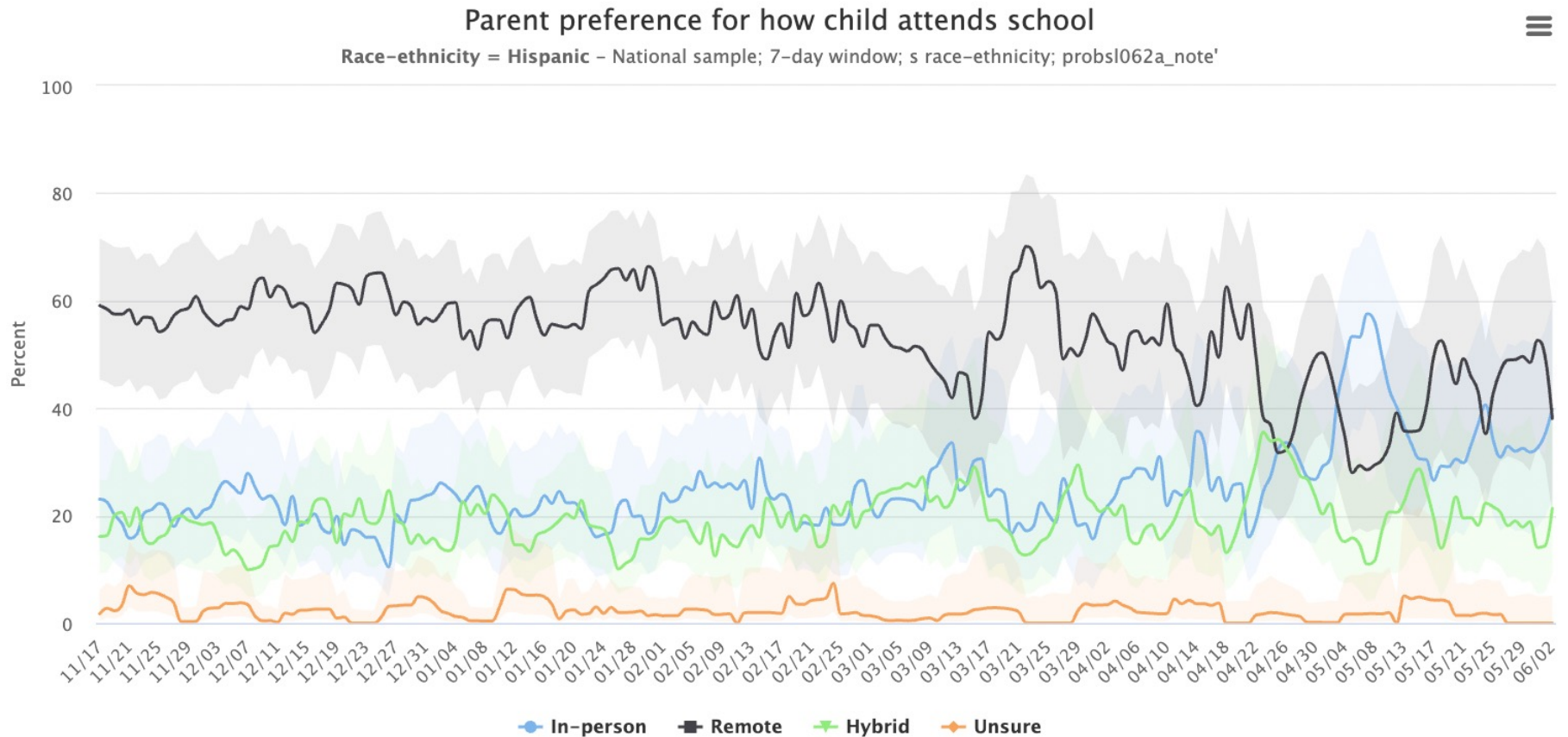
White Parents Increasingly Preferred In-Person Learning



Black Parents Were Much More Ambivalent About In-Person



Hispanic Parents Have Been Less Enthusiastic About In-Person



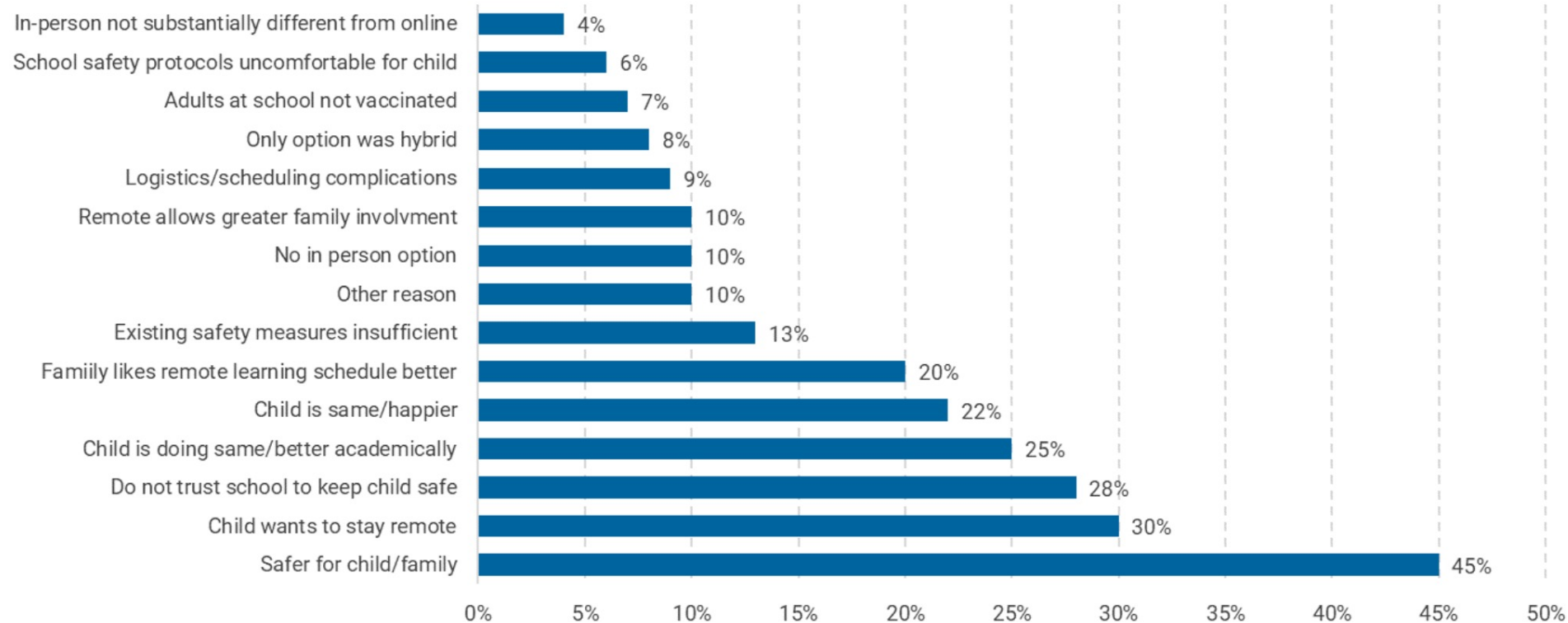


**April-May 2021 we collected data about
“school hesitancy,” and parents’
perspectives on policy interventions**

Parents Have Multiple Reasons for Not Sending Their Children Back In-Person—But Mostly Safety and “Child Fit”



K-12 parents' reasons for not sending their child to in-person schooling in April-May of 2021



Source: USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research's Understanding America Survey.

Note: Data collected between April 14, 2021 - May 25, 2021 from a nationally representative sample of U.S. adults.

16% of Families are Hesitant to Send Their Children to School In-Person Next Year, 31% Black

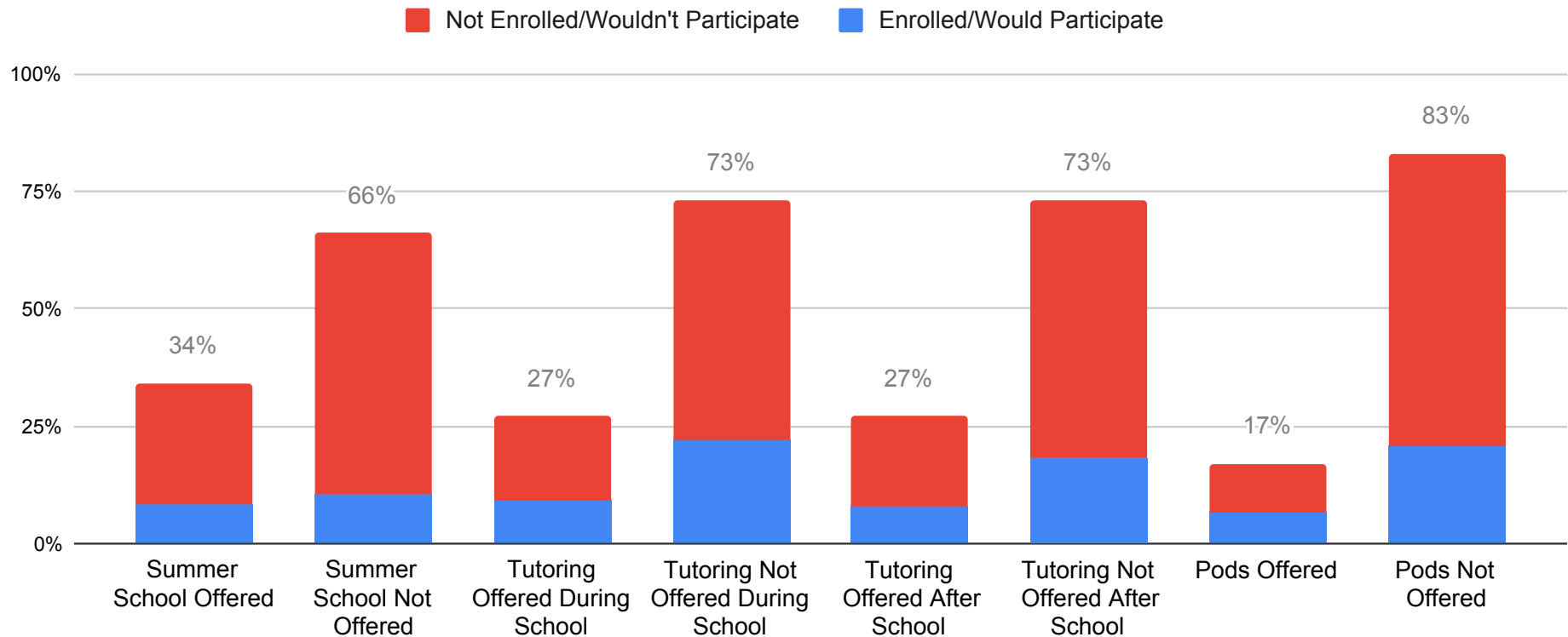


Percentages of K-12 parents planning for their child to learn remotely at the beginning of the 2021-22 school year

	Remote (%)	Unsure (%)	Remote plus unsure (%)
Asian	7.1	5.5	12.6
White	5.9	5.2	11.1
Hispanic	7.6	10.1	17.1
Black	15.2	15.6	30.8
Overall	7.9	7.8	15.7

UAS data collected 5/12/2021-6/08/2021, ~90% sample (administration ends 6/22/2021)

Limited Parent Interest in “Popular” In-person Interventions



Press and Publications April 2020-June 2021



- **Analysis: Tutoring, Summer School, Pods — Survey Finds Parents Aren't So Thrilled About Most K-12 COVID Recovery Solutions on the Table** (April 2021-May 2021 data)
- **Why some parents are sticking with remote learning - even as schools reopen** (April 2021-May 2021 data)
- **American Enterprise Institute Report on what's behind racial differences in attitudes toward school reopening (and what to do about them)** (May 2020-March 2021 data)
- **Brookings Brown Center Chalkboard article on how almost everyone is concerned about K-12 students' academic progress** (December 2020-February 2021 data)
- **Economist article on how more non-white than white parents prefer remote learning for their children** (January-February 2021 data)
- **Los Angeles Times article on how parents struggle with a new dilemma: Is it safe to send kids back to school?** (January-February 2021 data)
- **Los Angeles Times article on how a high school reopened two months ago, with no COVID-19 outbreaks?** (January-February 2021 data)
- **EDsource article on how California parents continue to disagree on return to school as Covid-19 cases decline** (January-February 2021 data)
- **Economist article on why reopening schools in minority neighbourhoods is hard** (January-February 2021 data)
- **Chalkbeat article on whether parents are getting the type of instruction they want for their kids** (January-February 2021 data)
- **New Yorker article on what's at stake in the fight over reopening schools** (January-February 2021 data)
- **New York Times article on how Rhode Island kept its schools open** (January-February 2021 data)
- **Los Angeles Times article on how schools in more affluent areas move faster to reopen than those in low-income communities** (January-February 2021 data)
- **Education Next blog on mask-wearing in schools** (November 2020 data)
- **Evidence Base article on evidence of COVID-19's impact on K-12 education and critical areas of intervention** (April-October 2020 data)
- **Brookings piece on fall 2020 differences between in-person and remote learning experiences** (September 30-October 28 2020 data)
- **Evidence Project piece on needed supports for remote learners** (September 30-October 28 2020 data)
- **74Million piece on decrease in parent support for standardized testing in spring 2021** (September 30-October 28 2020 data)
- **Hechinger Op-Ed with recommendations for policy makers about school re-openings** (September 30-October 28 2020 data)
- **USC blog on parents' concerns and perspectives on school reopening** (June 22-July 24 2020 data)
- **EdWeek (exclusive) article on K12 parents' concerns and preferences** (June 22-July 24 2020 data)
- **FutureEd blog on parents' conversations about race with their children** (June 22-July 24 2020 data)

Ongoing Work



- Continuing to track children's attendance mode, options their schools are offering, and school in-person safety precautions
- New surveys in June, October 2021
- Linking education data to the full UAS dataset and COVID case, hospitalization, death, vaccine rates
- Continuing to publish results in education and mainstream press, prepare papers for peer-reviewed publication
- Stay tuned!

UAS Data Available for Free Download: uasdata.usc.edu/education



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Thank you!

Anna Rosefsky Saavedra
asaavedr@usc.edu

Morgan Polikoff
polikoff@usc.edu

In collaboration with: Marshall Garland, Shira Korn Haderlein, Amie Rapaport, and Daniel Silver



Extra slides

Summary of Results

uasdata.usc.edu/education

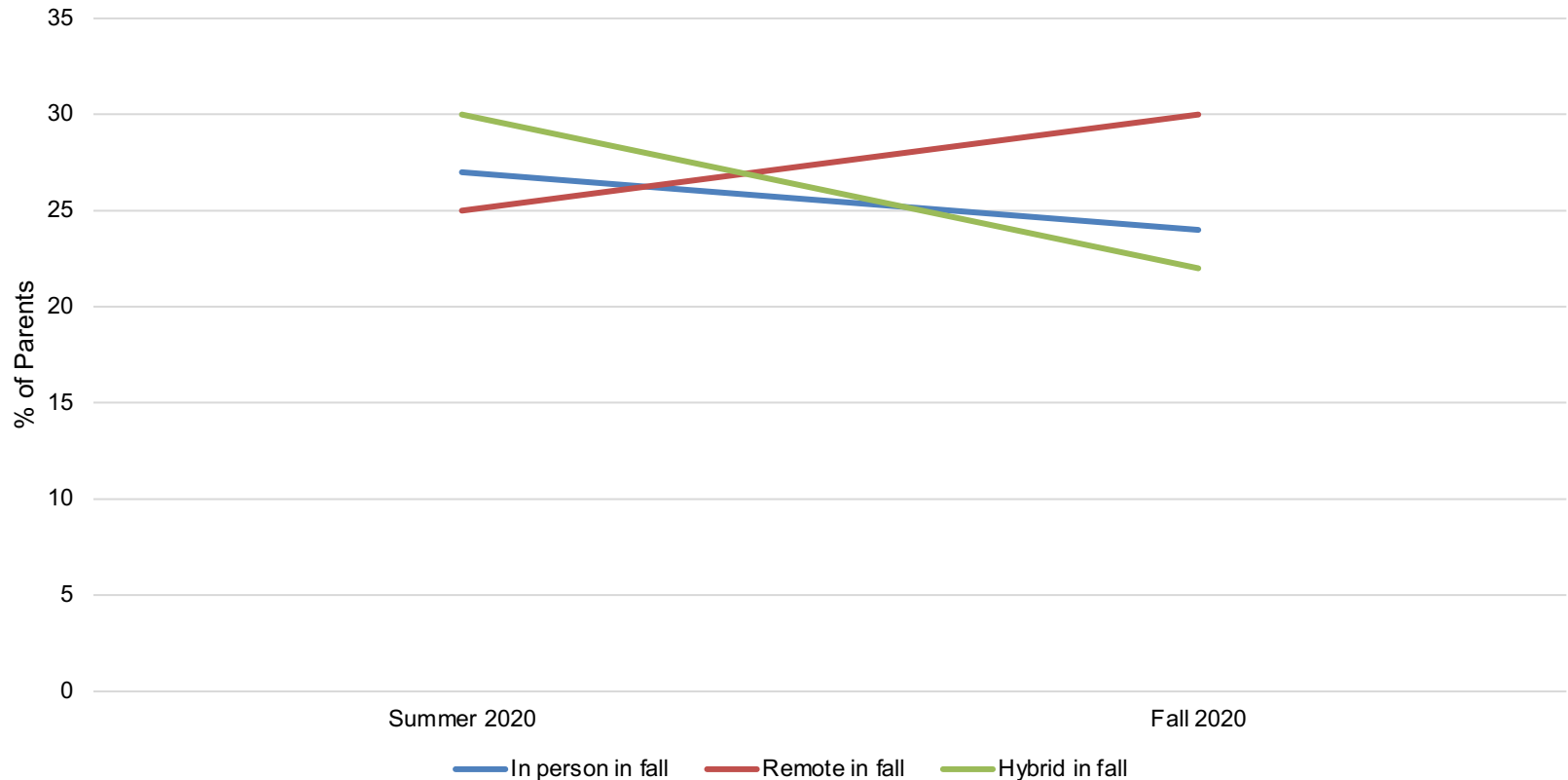


- Remote learner needs have included one computer per child, acceptable internet service, meals and mental health support--as well as tutoring, parent homework support, child care
- Remote learning attendance varied considerably nationwide through the year, as did parent views on education quality
- Wide variation by race and household income in parents' attendance mode preferences for their children—concerns of ongoing “school hesitancy”
- Parents have multiple reasons for keeping their children out of in-person school, but most come down to “safety” and “fit” reasons.
- Parent interest in many “popular” policies is limited
- Bipartisan support for civic education topics

Greater Proportions of Remote Parents Report Their Child is Unprepared in Science



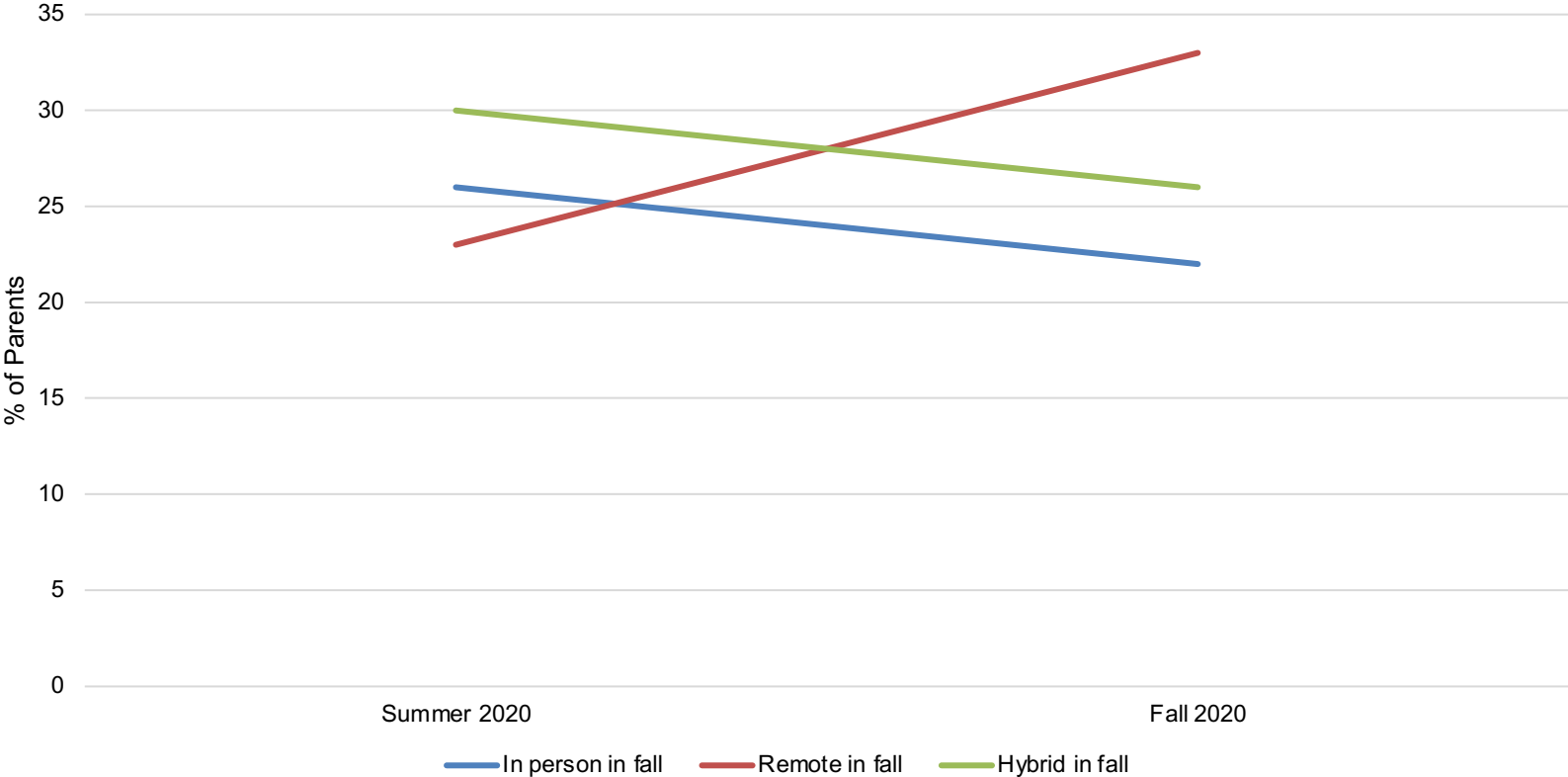
Parents Reporting their Child is Academically Unprepared in Science,
by Fall Attendance Mode



Greater Proportions of Remote Parents Report Their Child is Unprepared in Math



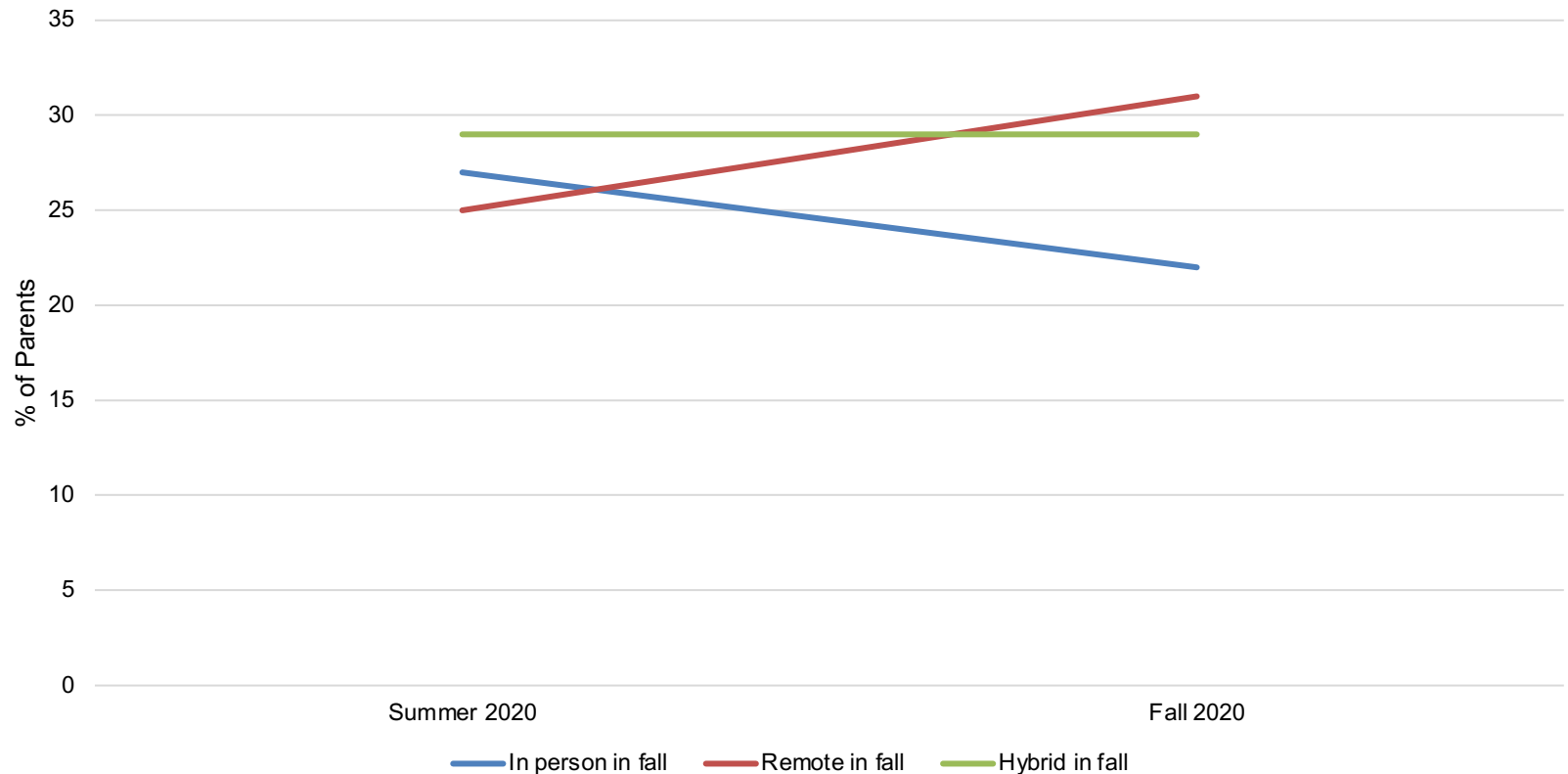
Parents Reporting their Child is Academically Unprepared in Math, by Fall Attendance Mode



Greater Proportions of Remote Parents Report Their Child is Unprepared in ELA as well



Parents Reporting their Child is Academically Unprepared in ELA, by Fall Attendance Mode



Remote Learners Need Tutoring, More Supports for Parents, More Computers, Better Internet

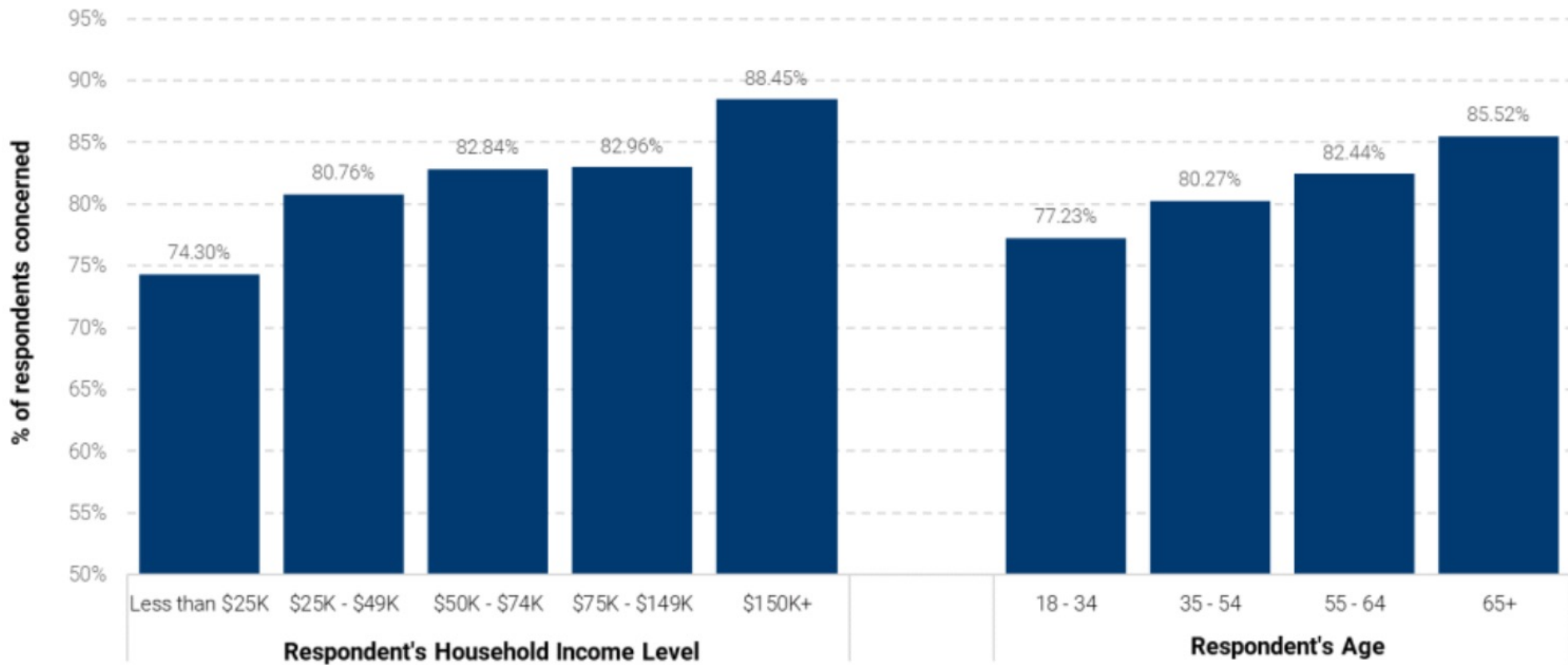


- Nearly 40 percent of parents reporting their children need tutoring say their schools did not provide it
- Roughly half of parents with a high school degree (or less) feel equipped to help their own children with homework, math 51%, science 58%
- While computer/device provision has improved, 3.5% of remote learners do not have a device for learning—nearly one in ten share
- While just over one percent of families do not have internet access, 22% report continuous internet interruptions, 40% for lowest income (<\$25K)
- More than one in ten families with remote learners have formed “pods” where students learn together in-person with the help of a tutor or teacher, 15% among families with household income less than \$50K

Almost Everyone is Concerned about K-12 Students' Academic Progress



Public concern about academic progress of low-income K-12 children



Source: USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research's Understanding America Survey.
Note: Data collected between Dec. 16-Feb. 7 from a nationally representative sample of U.S. adults.

Results and Policy Implications



- Remote learning attendance differs nationwide
 - Remote learning is inferior so we know which groups of students are most in need
- Remote learner needs include tutoring, parent homework support, one computer per child, acceptable internet service, child care
 - We know some areas to bolster supports
- Special service provision is not back to pre-COVID levels including for meals and mental health support
 - We know some more areas to bolster supports
- Parents' support for mask-wearing in schools increased since summer
 - Physically opening schools is complicated but increased parent support for mask-wearing is promising
- Parents' support for cancelling standardized tests increased since spring
 - Standardized testing will need to be targeted, with attention paid to messaging for parents
- In spring 2021, white and higher-income parents want to send children back to school in person, while families of color and lower-income families have been more cautious
 - Sharing these trends is critical to informing national reopening dialogues