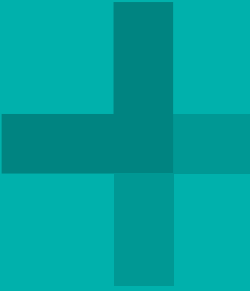




**Emerge smarter.**



# STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

SEPTEMBER 5<sup>TH</sup>, 2025

**C+R**  
RESEARCH



**ParentsTogether**

# Objectives + Methodology

## BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

### BACKGROUND

RALLY, in conjunction with Comms Hub, seeks research to understand how changes in education laws and policies are impacting students from students' own perspectives.

The research will provide headline-worthy findings to be presented at a National Press Club event in September. The goal is to develop news hooks that will capture reporters' interest. Specifically, RALLY aims to emphasize the gap in understanding student perspectives on public education in the U.S.

Secondarily, the research will be used for informing future campaign development.

### OBJECTIVES

The study will evaluate awareness, attitudes, and behaviors among U.S. students in grades 6–12 regarding important education topics such as mental health, bullying, religious curriculum, public versus private education, transgender students, DEI, and social-emotional learning.

## METHODOLOGY

**Methodology:** 15-minute online survey

**Field Dates:** August 11<sup>th</sup> – September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025  
(Core completed August 22<sup>nd</sup>, boosts completed September 1<sup>st</sup>)

**Sample:** n=1,000 Total Core Students

- n=427 Middle School
- n=573 High School
- Boosts:
  - n=211 Black Students
  - n=200 Asian/Multiracial Students
  - n=226 Students in the Northeast Region

### Respondent Specs:

- Students entering grades 6 through 12 (ages 11-18)
- Must be in or entering one of the following school types: public, private (secular or religious), charter, magnet, or Montessori.
- No education industry affiliation
- Click balancing to census on gender, age, income, race & ethnicity

### Notes:

- *Significance testing was done at a 90% confidence level and is indicated by letters (i.e., A, B)*
- *Indexing is used in this report, with **GREEN** indicating above average index at 120 or higher and **RED** indicating below average index at 80 or lower.*
- *Some charts and tables may not add to 100% or their sum due to rounding*
- *Attitudes charts show results by Middle School vs. High School*

# Key Findings: Student Perspectives

- ✓ **Most students are happy with their school** and believe it is the same or better than others.  
+ Students value their friendships, teachers, and sports. 1 in 3 say they love their school.
- ✓ Only second to cafeteria **better food options**, nearly half of students **want improvements in bullying** and social behavior.  
+ Most students know of anti-bullying policies in their school, but only half think their school does enough to prevent bullying.
- ✓ Most students are likely to speak out on issues they care about.  
+ About 2 in 5 students have reported or stood up to bullying in the past year.
- ✓ Students believe that **schools should offer mental health resources**, but don't feel their school has adequate resources.
- ✓ Students are **divided about religion** when it comes to whether different religions should be taught and how comfortable they feel learning about them.
- ✓ Many students feel that some **minority groups are not covered in their curriculum** at school and/or that **teachers avoid topics for fear of retaliation**.
- ✓ Half of students say they should be allowed self-expression, while others say it is context-specific or that schools should have rules.  
+ When asked to define what it means to "show up as themselves," most say it means authentic and true to oneself.
- ✓ Students are largely **aligned with their parents' beliefs**, and discuss a range of topics with them, like bullying and mental health.



## SO WHAT:

Students want schools to do more about bullying prevention and mental health so that all students can feel safe. Because religion and self-expression can be divisive, the media should handle these topics with care and sensitivity.

# Key Findings: By Topic



## School Ratings

- Many believe their school is the same or better than others.
- Most rate their school as good or excellent; very few (2%) rate it as poor or very poor.
- Friendships, teachers, and sports are valued aspects of school life.



## Key Issues

- Key topics regarding social and mental health are bullying/social behavior, exam stress/workload, flexible learning styles, and mental health support. Many would like better food options.
- The issues with high awareness are also personally relevant to students.



## Bullying

- Mixed on whether schools do enough to address bullying.
- 9 in 10 agree that speaking up against bullying is important.
- Only half think their school does enough to prevent bullying.



## Mental Health

- There is a high desire for mental health support. They believe schools should offer resources, like teaching them how to care for their mental health.
- Many feel their current school support in this area is inadequate.



## Religion

- A slim majority feel comfortable learning about different religions at school, and fewer than half believe religion should be a part of what they learn in school, indicating hesitance around the topic.
- Beliefs around this topic vary by school type.



## Curriculum

- Half feel some minority groups are not covered at school and/or that teachers avoid topics for fear of retaliation.
- Some say political discussions distract from their ability to learn or their teachers talk about controversial topics too much.
- 1 in 3 experience removal of books with LGBTQ+, race, or gender themes.



## Self Expression

- There is a range of opinions on self-expression in schools.
- Racial and ethnic diversity within friend groups is moderately prevalent.
- Most consider "showing up as themselves" to mean being authentic and true to oneself.



## DEI / Diversity

- Racial and ethnic diversity within friend groups is moderately prevalent.
- Most have racial diversity in their friend groups and opportunities to be around other cultures.
- About half have DEI programs in their school.



## Gender / Diversity

- Most treat peers who have differing gender expressions with acceptance.
- Broad consensus exists that all students should feel safe and included at school, regardless of gender identity.
- Some express confusion or discomfort. ~1 in 3 agree that transgender students should use their preferred restroom.



## Parental Beliefs

- Discussions around bullying and mental health are common with parents. Fewer have spoken with their parents about religion in school or transgender students.
- Almost all indicate that they are aligned with their parents' beliefs; only 1 in 10 are different, and fewer don't know if they are different from their parents.

# Key Findings: Potential Headlines



## Bullying and Social Behavior

- Half of Students Call for Improved Bullying Prevention Efforts in Schools
- High Agreement Among Students on the Importance of Addressing Bullying
- Half of Students Feel Schools Are Ineffective in Preventing Bullying
- Students Highlight Need for Improvement in Bullying Solutions



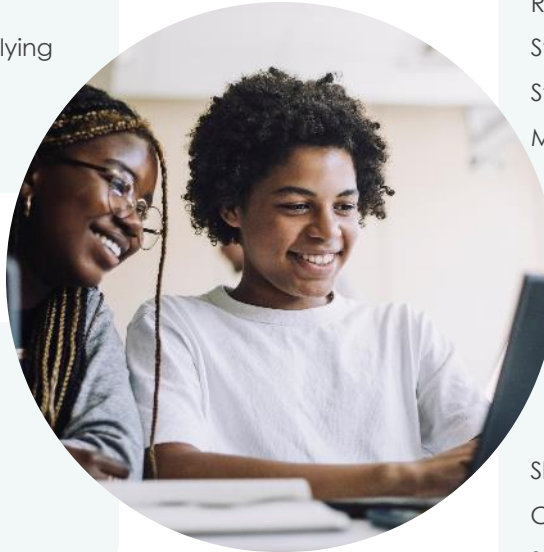
## School Environment & Culture

- One in Three Students "Love" Their School Experience
- Friendships, Teachers, and Sports Valued by the Majority of Students
- Students Prioritize Better Cafeteria Food and Bullying Solutions for School Improvements



## Mental Health & Resources

- Widespread Call for Enhanced Mental Health Resources in Schools
- Persistent Student Call for Better Mental Health Support Within Schools
- Students Voice Need for Improved Mental Health Support Systems



## Diversity & Inclusion

- Racial Diversity in Friendship Circles Expressed by Student Populations
- Student Reports Indicate Racial Diversity in Friend Groups
- Students Demand Representation of Minority Groups in School Curriculums
- Many Students Perceive Gaps in Minority Representation in School Education



## Religion & Curriculum

- Student Opinions Divided on the Role of Religion in School Curriculums
- Slim Majority of Students Comfortable with Learning About Different Religions
- Concerns Over Political and Controversial Topic Avoidance in Schools
- Students Note Avoidance of Controversial Topics by Teachers



## Self-Expression & Parental Influence

- Half of Students Advocate for Increased Freedom of Self-Expression
- Student Views Differ on Self-Expression and Authenticity in Schools
- Majority of Students Align Their Beliefs with Their Parents' Views

# Key Findings: Demographic Differences (1/2)

## Middle School

More often express uncertainty or context-dependence regarding school rules and policies.

Less likely to express how peers respond to students who have non-traditional sexual/gender expression.

vs

## High School

More strongly formed opinions.

More knowledgeable about anti-bullying, mental health, and DEI.

More likely to spend time with different races and ethnicities.

More involved in diverse cultural experiences.

## Public School

More likely to have concerns about bullying as a pressing issue, and more likely to say their school could improve bullying prevention and social behavior.

Less likely to rate their school better than others.

vs

## Private School

Rate their school more highly but also believe other schools seem to offer more/better things.

Feel more comfortable reporting bullying and perceive greater safety and prevention measures.

Report that political discussions or conflicts distract from their ability to learn and report book bans.

## Northeast

Positive about SEL activities improving relationships and believe their schools are inclusive of gender identity.

Discuss curriculum restrictions, religion in school, and DEI and SEL programs with their parents.

Less belief in restricting self-expression.

vs

## Midwest

Less likely to spend time with students of a different race or ethnicity.

More likely to say their schools could be better at bullying prevention and social behavior.

vs

## West

Less likely to think schools should offer mental health resources.

More likely to think that political discussions or conflicts distract from their ability to learn.

vs

## South

More likely to have heard about teaching religion in public schools. Think religion should be part of curriculum and discuss with parents.

Believe it is important to stick up to bullying and think news topics make bullying worse.

More mention books removed.

More racial diversity.

## Urban

More aware of and impacted by mental health services and DEI programs.

Frequently engage with different cultures and ethnicities.

More likely to speak out on issues.



# Key Findings: Demographic Differences (2/2)

## White

Value friendships. Are concerned about issues like exam stress and homework.

Less likely to feel that their school cares about their mental health.

Less exposure to DEI and SEL. Strong agreement in standing up to bullying and report that they have done so.

Fewer support transgender students using preferred bathroom or their aligned sports team.

Tend to align with parents' beliefs.

Associate with similar people.

VS

## Black

Value field trips, teachers, and lessons, and think schools could improve bullying prevention. More than other groups, they note bullying as an issue.

Are engaged with DEI and aware of educational differences and curriculum inclusivity. Discuss mental health and support inclusion of religion.

Believe in role of diversity to enhance learning and are vocal in activism; more likely to talk to parents about school issues and to speak out on topics they care about.

VS

## Hispanic

Value inclusive/respectful culture and mental health. Aware of and impacted by a variety of topics, like DEI, SEL, and religion.

Say topics they see discussed in the news make bullying worse.

Report more experience with removal of books and are more likely to agree that topics get skipped.

Advocate for self-expression and transgender rights and are more likely to have supported a transgender peer.

Associate with diverse groups.

VS

## Asian/Multi

Less likely to mention bullying and less concerned with inclusive culture and mental health.

Less exposed to DEI, mental health services, and curriculum restrictions, but consider curriculum issues most important, and are less impacted by most school programs.

Generally, less likely to engage with these topics, and less likely to talk with their parents about anti-bullying policies.

More LGBTQIA+ identification and interaction with racially diverse groups.

White = White Non-Hispanic, Black = Black Non-Hispanic, Hispanic = Hispanic, Asian/Multi = Asian or any other non-White, Black, or Hispanic

## Male

More likely to express that the curriculum could be more engaging and relevant and could have student leadership/input.

More likely to want improved lunches.

More likely to agree that politics are discussed and that teachers have asked parental permission before accessing materials.

VS

## Female

Place higher value on social and academic aspects of school, and more frequently talk to friends about mental health.

When peers differ from them, they are more likely to have a view of acceptance and respect.

Lower agreement with transgender students playing on teams and using bathrooms that align with gender identity.

## LGBTQIA+

More impacted by anti-bullying policies and mental health services.

Spend time with peers of different races or ethnicities and discuss mental health with friends.

Speak out about issues and have positive reactions to students with non-traditional sexuality or gender.

Some have more different beliefs from their parents, but most still have similar beliefs to them.



# EMERGE SMARTER.

## DETAILED FINDINGS





Students generally believe that their school is “good” – the same or better than other schools. 1 in 3 love their school.

## School Rating

**78% Excellent/Good**



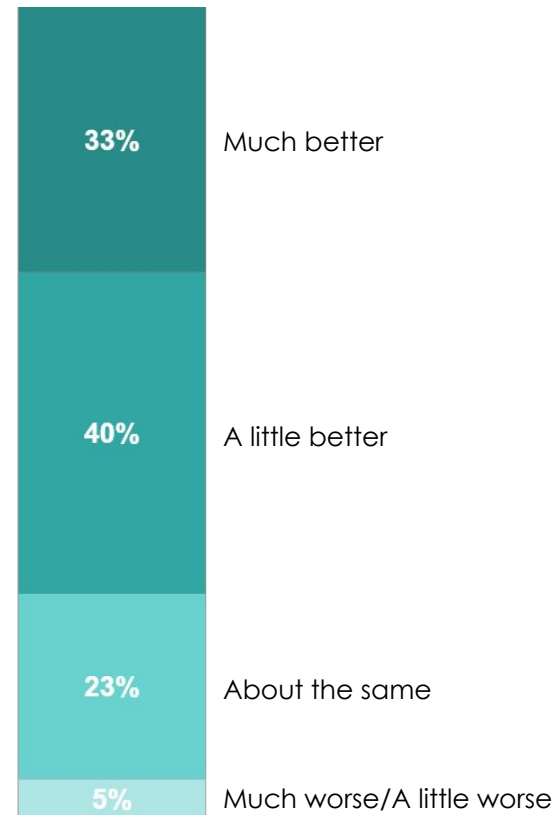
**2% Poor/Very Poor**



Private school students rate their school better than public school students, but they also perceive relative lack; they believe other schools offer more or do certain things better.

## School vs Others

**73%** Much better / A little better



## Describing the School

My school is okay – some things work well, but there's room for improvement **36%**

I love my school **36%**

My school has better teachers, better programs, and better support than other schools I know **34%**

My school gives me everything I need to succeed **33%**

My school is average – nothing special or worse than other schools **23%**

Other schools I know seem to offer more or do certain things better than my school **11%**

My school is far behind others in terms of quality and opportunities **7%**

Students highly value their friendships, teachers, and sports. Bullying is a top area for improvement, after food options.

## Like About School

## School Could Improve On



Male students mention they like sports and lunch; female students note social support and academics.

**Social and Emotional Support (net)** 88%

Friendship(s) 83%

Its welcoming environment

The support I receive 23%

**Academic Experience (net)** 67%

My teacher(s) 52%

Classes they offer 33%

The lessons taught 24%

**School Culture (net)** 65%

Field trips 39%

Cafeteria/lunch 36%

School traditions 34%

**Extracurriculars (net)** 58%

Sport(s) 48%

Club(s) 24%

**Personal Growth and Leadership (net)** 29%

Making a difference 20%

Leadership opportunities 18%



Private school students note the welcoming environment, sports, making a difference and leadership opportunities as things they like, but they also note that their school has room for improvement.

Cafeteria food options 49%

Bullying and social behavior

Exam stress and homework load 43%

Flexible learning styles 31%

Mental health support 30%

Engaging and relevant curriculum 24%

Communication from teachers and staff 23%

School facilities 20%

Inclusive and respectful culture 20%

Student leadership and input 15%

Don't think anything needs to be improved 7%



Male students say their school could be better at engaging, relevant curriculum and student leadership/input.



Students in the Midwest say their school could be better at bullying prevention and social behavior.



Public school students say their school could be better at bullying prevention and social behavior.

Common issues in schools are anti-bullying policies, mental health support, and DEI; most topics are more well-known among high schoolers.

## Issue Awareness on Students

**32%** say

### Bullying

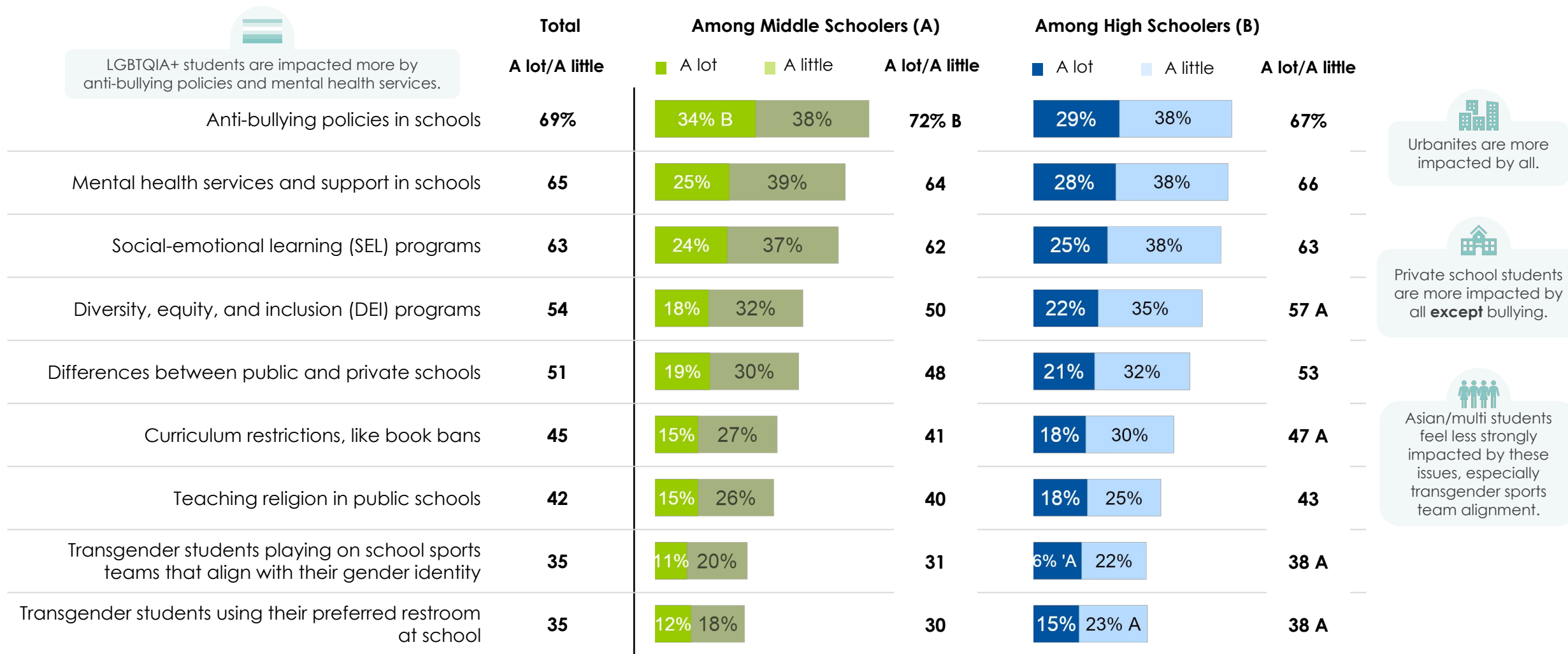
is the school issue that matters most to them. This is higher for Public Schools (33%) than Private (18%)

|   | Total          | Among Middle Schoolers (A)                     |                |  | Among High Schoolers (B) |  |  |
|---|----------------|--|----------------|--|--------------------------|--|--|
|   | A lot/A little | <div><div>A lot</div><div>A little</div></div> | A lot/A little | <div><div>A lot</div><div>A little</div></div> | A lot/A little           |  |  |
| Anti-bullying policies in schools   | 87%            | <div><div>47%</div><div>40%</div></div>        | 87%            | <div><div>45%</div><div>43%</div></div>        | 87%                      |  |  |
| Mental health services and support in schools                                     | 78             | <div><div>29%</div><div>45%</div></div>        | 74             | <div><div>32%</div><div>48%</div></div>        | 80 A                     |  |  |
| Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs                                   | 72             | <div><div>27%</div><div>40%</div></div>        | 67             | <div><div>34%<br/>A</div><div>42%</div></div>  | 76 A                     |  |  |
| Social-emotional learning (SEL) programs  | 70             | <div><div>25%</div><div>46%</div></div>        | 71             | <div><div>24%</div><div>45%</div></div>        | 69                       |  |  |
| Differences between public and private schools                                    | 70             | <div><div>28%</div><div>39%</div></div>        | 67             | <div><div>29%</div><div>43%</div></div>        | 71                       |  |  |
| Transgender students playing on school sports teams that align w/ gender identity | 63             | <div><div>19%</div><div>37%</div></div>        | 56             | <div><div>30%<br/>A</div><div>38%</div></div>  | 68 A                     |  |  |
| Transgender students using their preferred restroom at school                     | 60             | <div><div>20%</div><div>35%</div></div>        | 55             | <div><div>25%<br/>A</div><div>39%</div></div>  | 64 A                     |  |  |
| Curriculum restrictions, like book bans   | 59             | <div><div>16%</div><div>39%</div></div>        | 55             | <div><div>23%<br/>A</div><div>38%</div></div>  | 61 A                     |  |  |
| Teaching religion in public schools   | 54             | <div><div>19%</div><div>36%</div></div>        | 54             | <div><div>23%<br/>A</div><div>31%</div></div>  | 54                       |  |  |

Base: Total Students (n=1,000) / Q6. What school issues or topics matter most to you? / Note: Showing top code / Base: Total Students (n=1,000) / Total Middle Schoolers (n=427), High Schoolers (n=573) / Q7. How much have you heard or seen lately about these school topics – from your parents, teachers, social media, or the news? / Note: 4pt. scale, where 1=I don't know and 4=A lot  
Sig testing: A/B

The issues that are most commonly covered at school (anti-bullying, mental health, etc.) are also personally relevant to students.

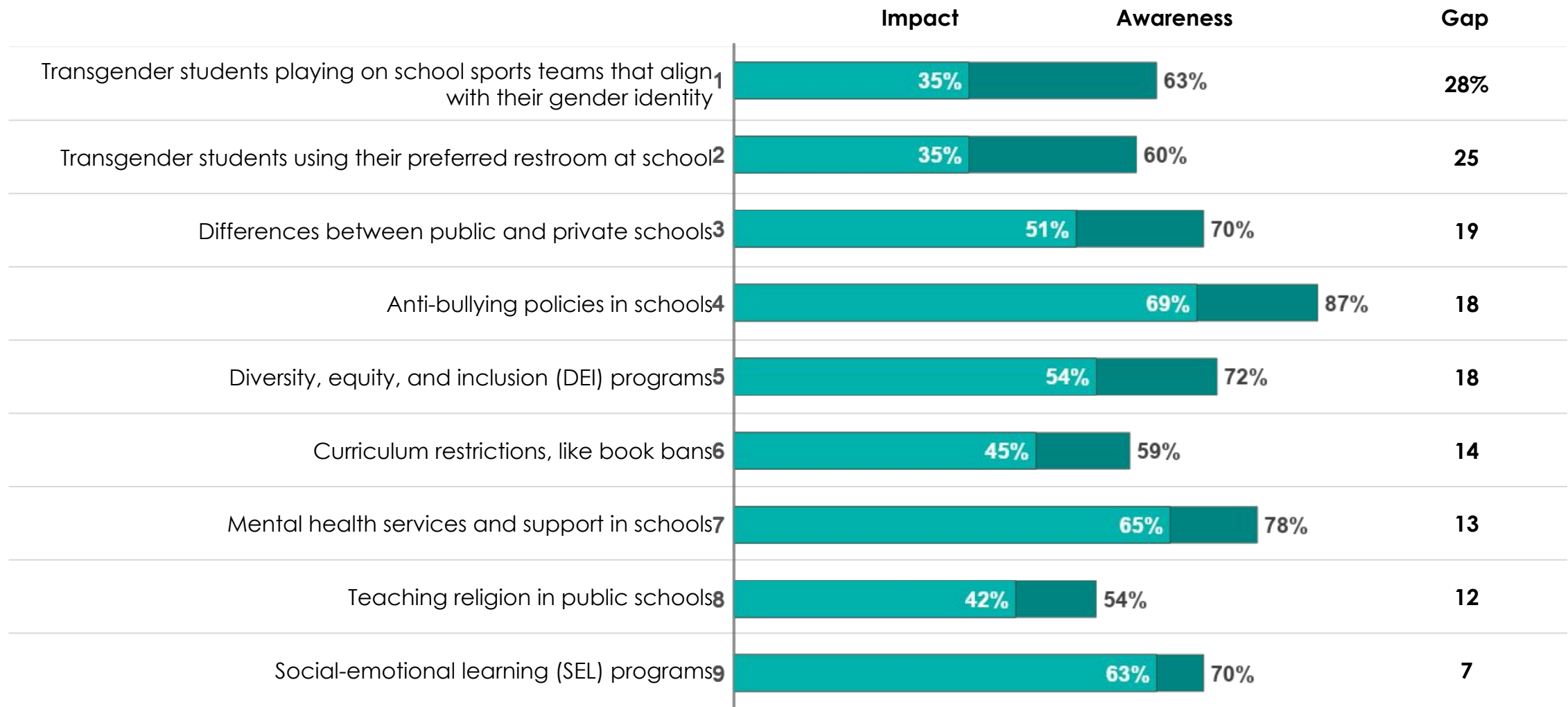
## Issue Impact on Students





Transgender issues are more commonly known than personally relevant.  
SEL programs have both high awareness and high impact.

## Gap Analysis of Issue Awareness and Impact Attributes Ranked by Gap (Awareness – Impact)

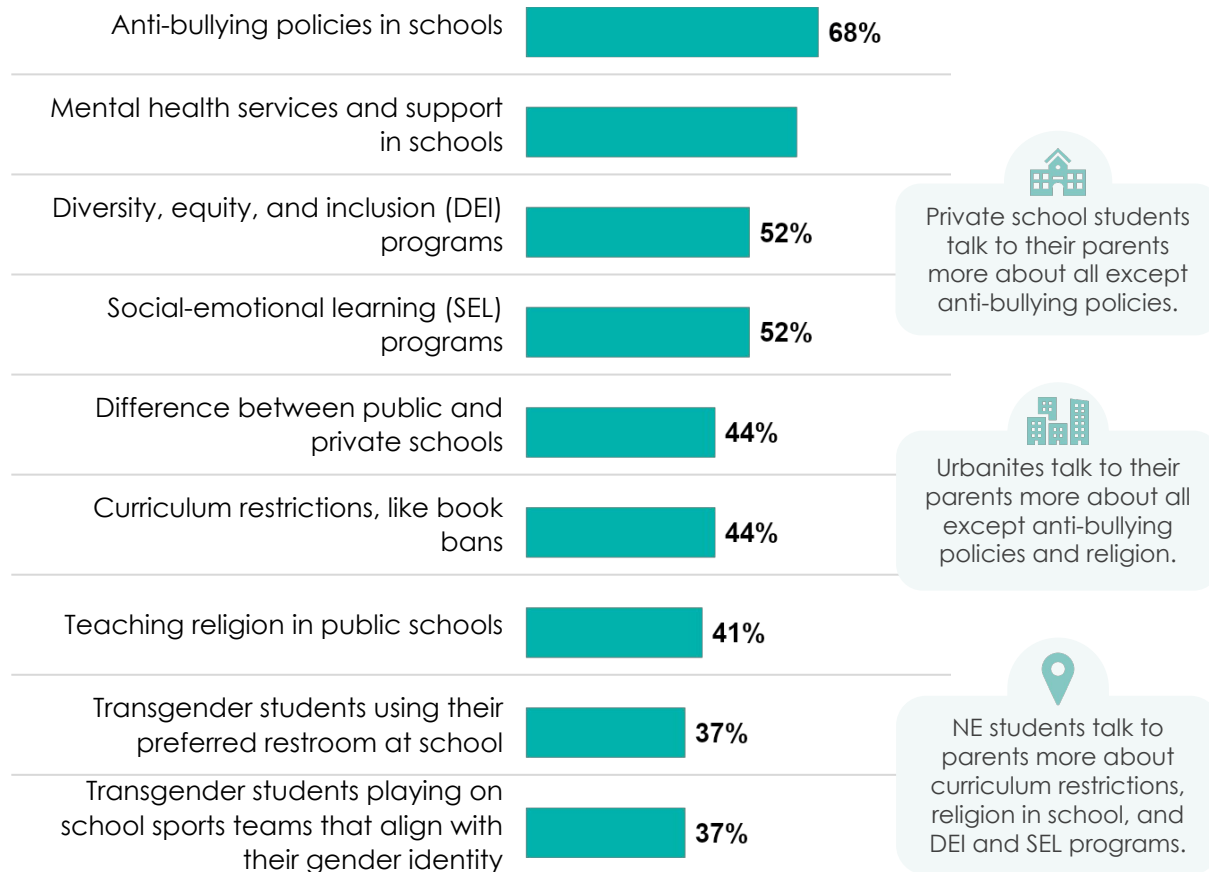


Base: Total Students (n=1,000) / Q7. How much have you heard or seen lately about these school topics – from your parents, teachers, social media, or the news? / Note: 4pt. scale, where 1=I don't know and 4=A lot / Q8. How much have these topics affected you personally, or been part of your personal experience? / Note: 4pt. scale, where 1=I don't know and 4=A lot

Students are largely aligned with their parents' beliefs, and frequently discuss a range of topics with them, especially bullying and mental health.

## Frequency Talked About With Parents/Guardians

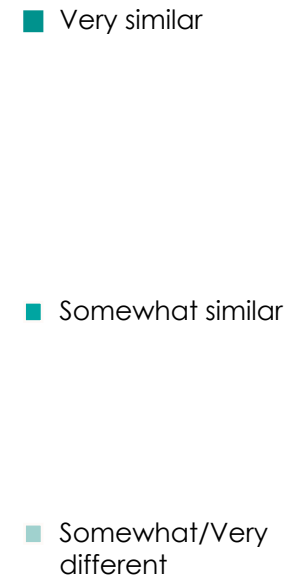
% Very/Somewhat Often



## Student-Parent Beliefs Alignment

Very/Somewhat similar

84%



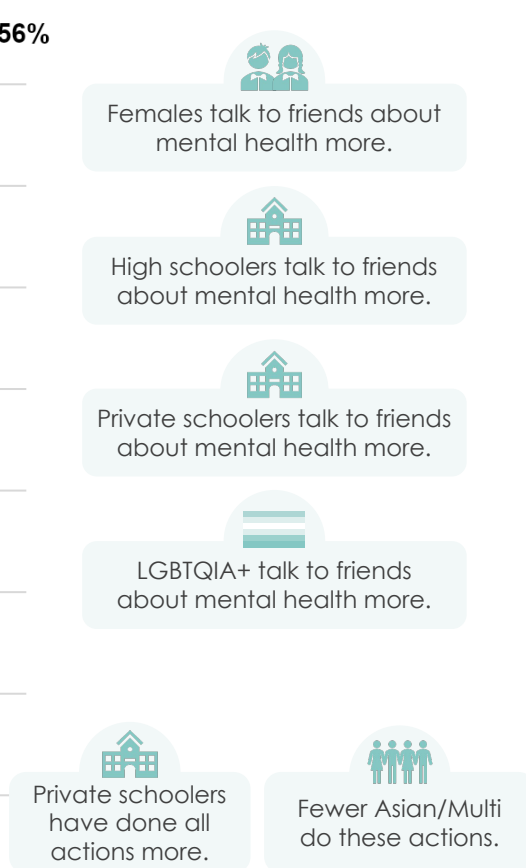
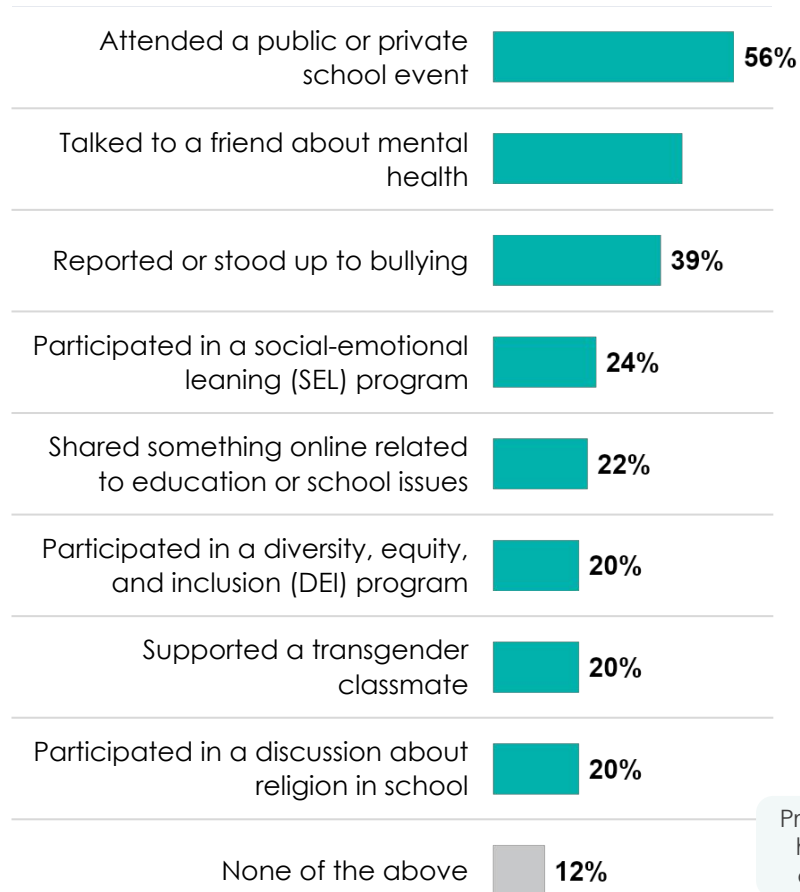
6% Not sure/don't know

White students have higher alignment with parents' beliefs.

More LGBTQIA+ students have different beliefs from their parents, but most still have similar beliefs to them.

Most students are likely to speak out on issues they care about. In fact, 2 in 5 students have reported or stood up to bullying in the past year.

## Actions Taken in Last Year



## Likelihood to Speak Out on Issue

Very/Somewhat likely

74%

Very likely

34%

Somewhat likely

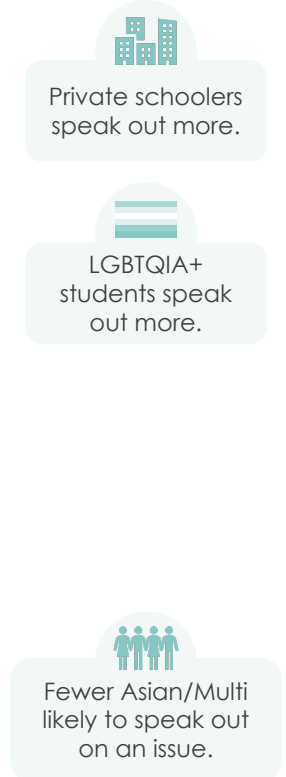
40%

Neither likely nor unlikely

18%

Somewhat/Very unlikely

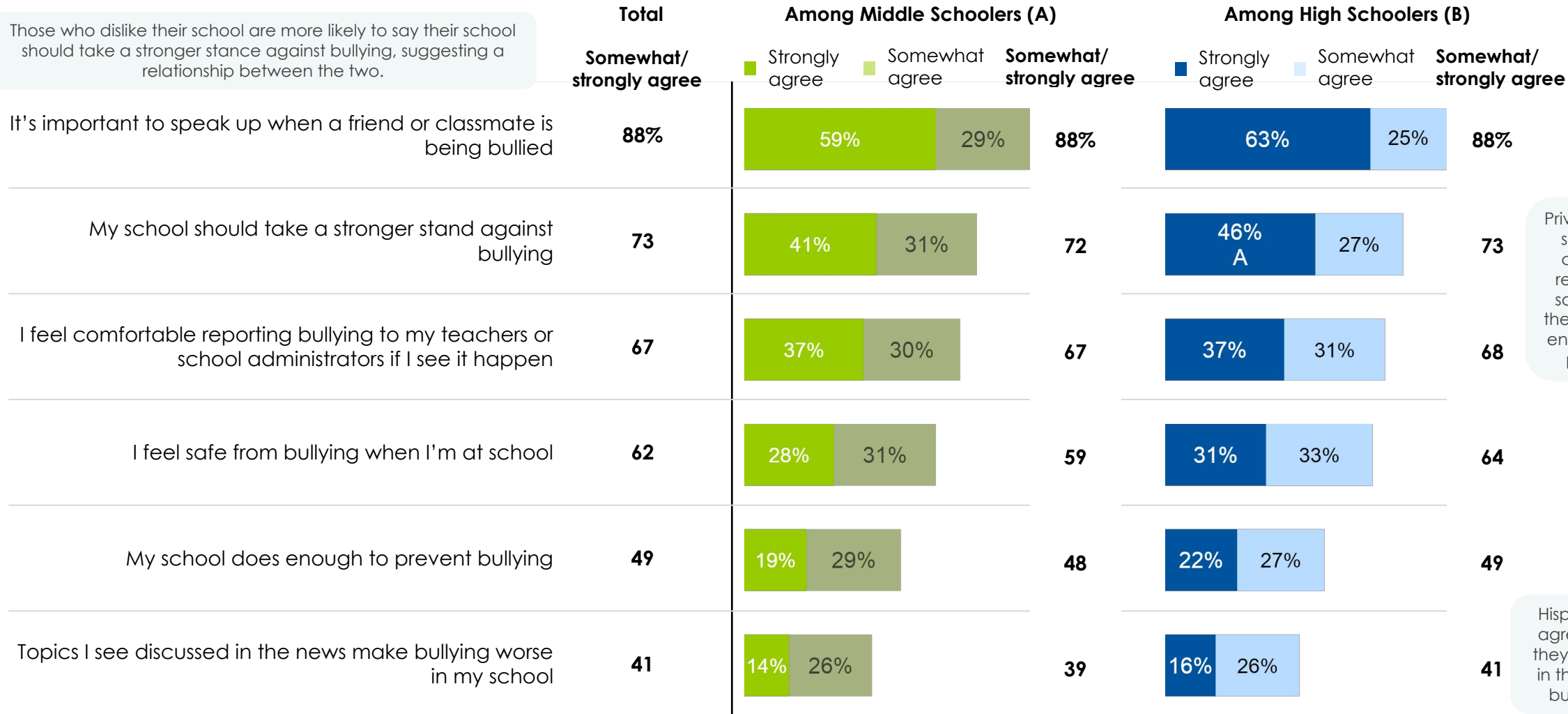
8%



9 in 10 students agree that it is important to speak up when bullying occurs, and only half think their school does enough to prevent it.

## Attitudes Towards Bullying

Those who dislike their school are more likely to say their school should take a stronger stance against bullying, suggesting a relationship between the two.



Private schoolers say they feel comfortable reporting, feel safe, and that their school does enough bullying prevention.

Hispanic students agree that topics they see discussed in the news make bullying worse.



Students believe that schools should offer mental health resources, but fewer feel like their school has adequate resources in this area.

## Attitudes Towards Mental Health

Students in the West think schools should offer mental health resources.

**Total**  
**Somewhat/  
strongly agree**

**Among Middle Schoolers (A)**

Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

**Somewhat/  
strongly agree**

**Among High Schoolers (B)**

Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

**Somewhat/  
strongly agree**

I think schools should offer mental health resources

**86%**

51%

33%

**83%**

58% 'A

29%

**87% A**

I should be taught how to take care of my mental health

**85**

48%

37%

**85**

35%

**84**

Talking about mental health at school is helpful

**75**

37%

**74**

31%

**76**

I feel like my school really cares about my mental health

**59**

29%

33%

**61**

28%

29%

**57**

I feel comfortable talking about my mental health at school with teachers and school administrators

**59**

26%

30%

**56**

28%

32%

**61**

I feel like my school offers enough mental health resources to me

**54**

22%

30%

**53**

24%

31%

**55**

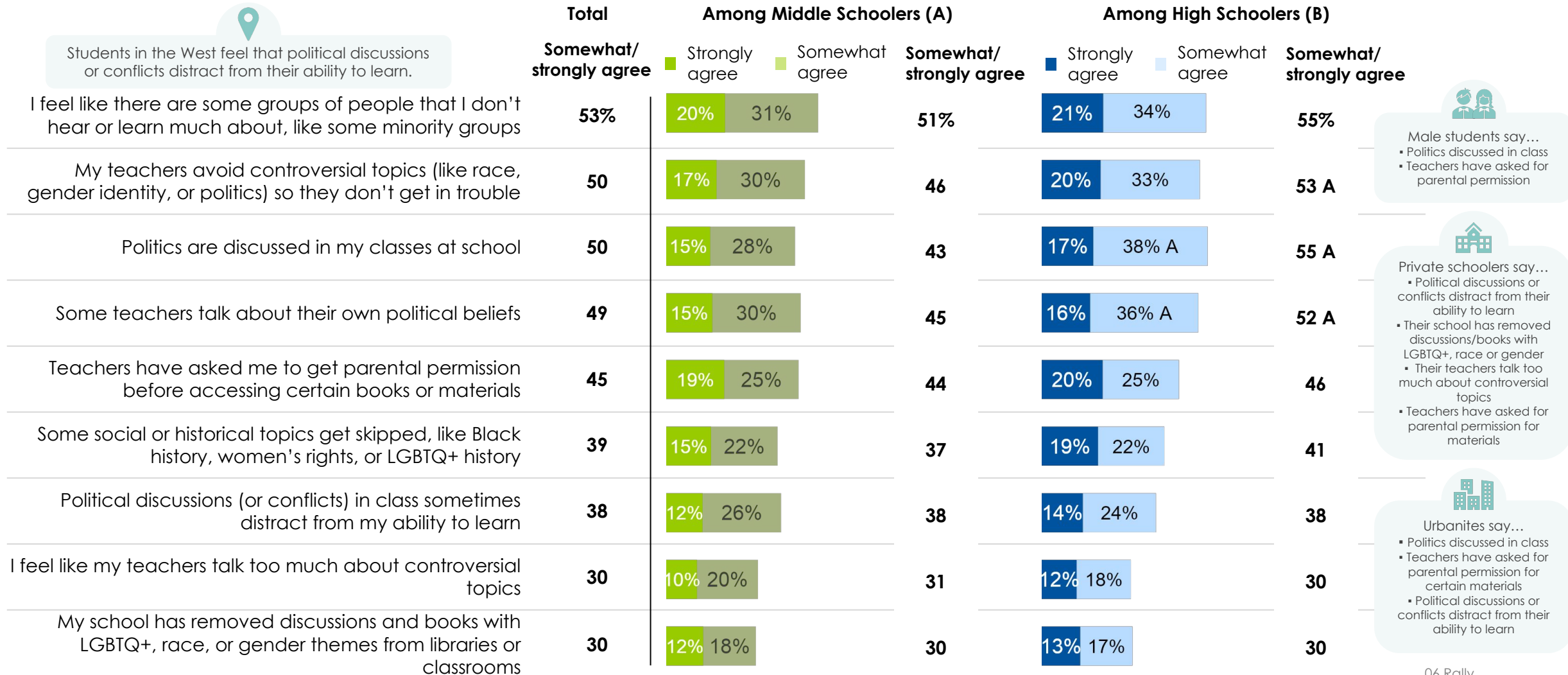
Private schoolers feel their school offers enough mental health resources and cares about their mental health.

Urbanites feel their school offers enough mental health resources.

Asian/multi less likely to feel comfortable talking about mental health at school with teachers.

Half of students feel that some minority groups are not covered at school, that teachers avoid topics for fear of retaliation, and/or that political topics are discussed, including teachers' own beliefs.

## Attitudes Towards School Curriculum



Base: Total Students (n=1,000) / Total Middle Schoolers (n=427), High Schoolers (n=573) / Q12. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? / Note: 6pt. scale, where 1=I don't know and 4=Strongly agree / Sig testing: A/B

Only a slim majority feel comfortable learning about different religions at school, suggesting many have resistance to this topic.

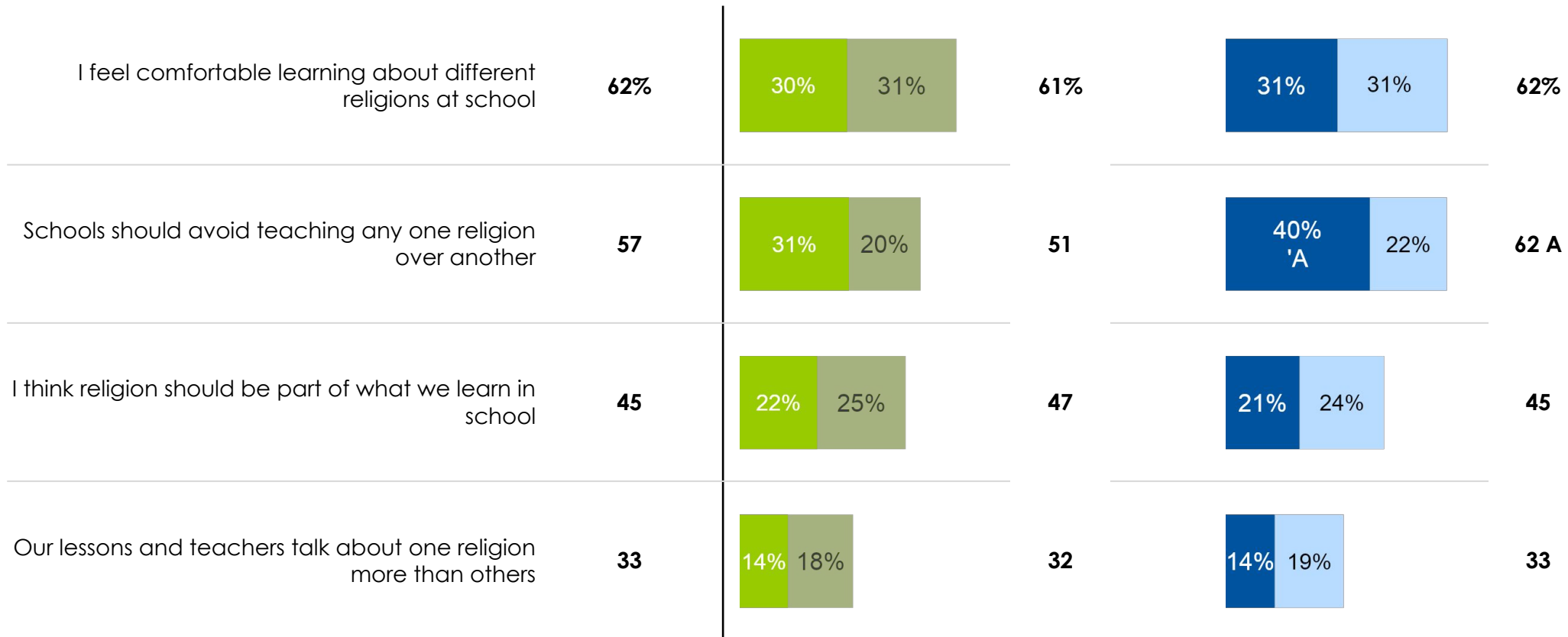
## Attitudes Towards Religion in School Curriculum

Those who like their school have higher comfort learning about religions, believe it should be a part of what they learn, and that their lessons/teachers talk about one more

**Total**  
**Somewhat/  
strongly agree**

**Among Middle Schoolers (A)**  
**Strongly agree** **Somewhat agree**  
**Somewhat/  
strongly agree**

**Among High Schoolers (B)**  
**Strongly agree** **Somewhat agree**  
**Somewhat/  
strongly agree**



Private schoolers, likely because many have religious affiliations, agree religion should be a part of what they learn and that one religion is talked about more.

Asian/multi less likely to agree that their lessons and teachers talk about one religion more than others.

Half of students believe they should be allowed self-expression, while others believe it is context-specific or that schools should have rules in place.

## What “Show up as themselves” Means

### 69% Being authentic/True to oneself

“It means being able to **express** your **true personality and beliefs** without fear, and most students can do this some of the time but not always.”

- Male, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Private School (secular)

“It just means **being yourself** and **not pretending** to be something you're not.”

- Female, 10<sup>th</sup> Grade, Public School

### 19% Accepting School Environment

“It means **being yourself without** the **fear of discrimination or bullying or hate** of any kind.”

- Male, 7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Magnet School

“To ‘show up as themselves’ means students **feel safe, accepted, and free to express their true identity**. While some students can, many still hide parts of themselves due to **fear of judgment or exclusion**.”

- Male, 10<sup>th</sup> Grade, Charter School

### 17% Challenges due to peer pressure and school restrictions

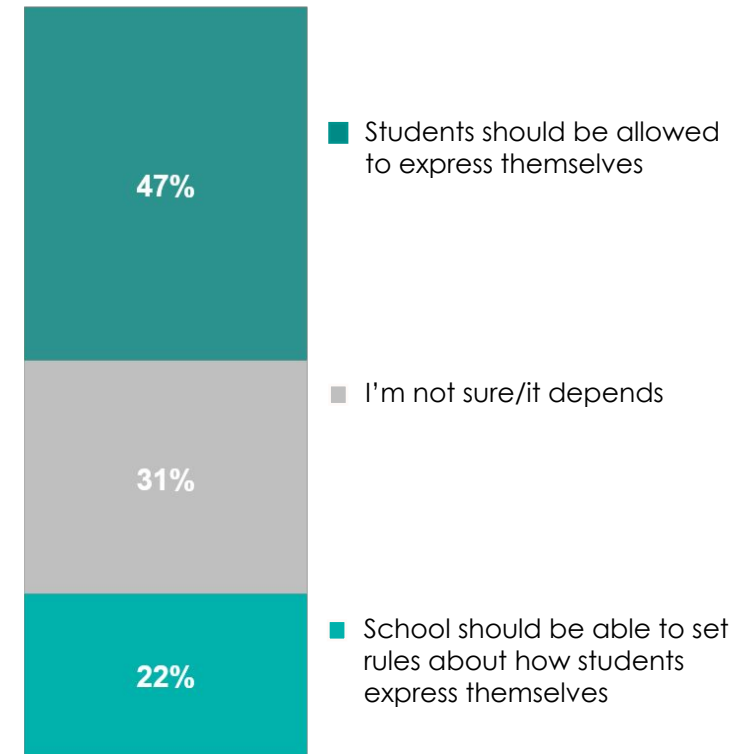
“I feel like we **should be able to dress how ever we want**. But we **can't do** that without being **judged or bullied**.”

- Female, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade, Public School

“No we have **rules** about **acceptable attire and dress codes, personal hygiene codes**. You have to look a certain way or be sent home to correct.”

- Male, 11<sup>th</sup> Grade, Public School

## Freedom of Students to Express Themselves



■ Students should be allowed to express themselves

■ I'm not sure/it depends

■ School should be able to set rules about how students express themselves



More middle schoolers say “I’m not sure/It depends.”



More private schoolers say schools should be able to set rules.

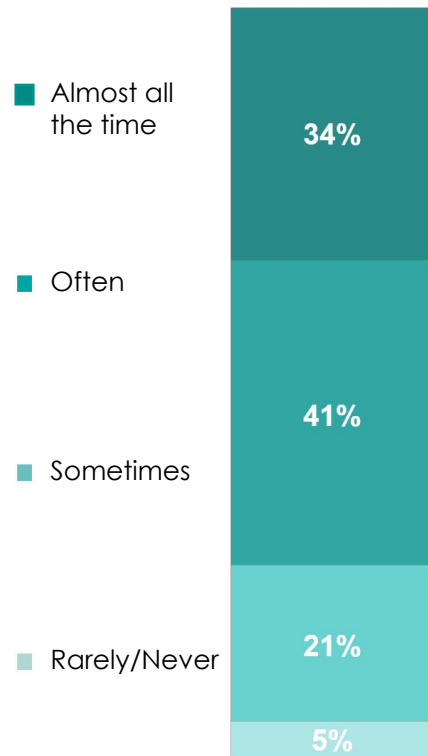


Asian/multi students mention challenges to being true self due to peer pressure less than other groups



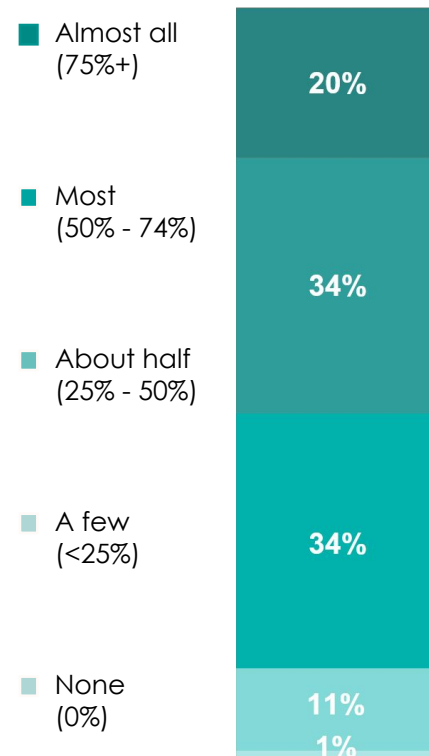
Most students have racial diversity in their friend groups, opportunities to be around other cultures, and feel respected at school.

### Time Spent with Different Race/Ethnicity



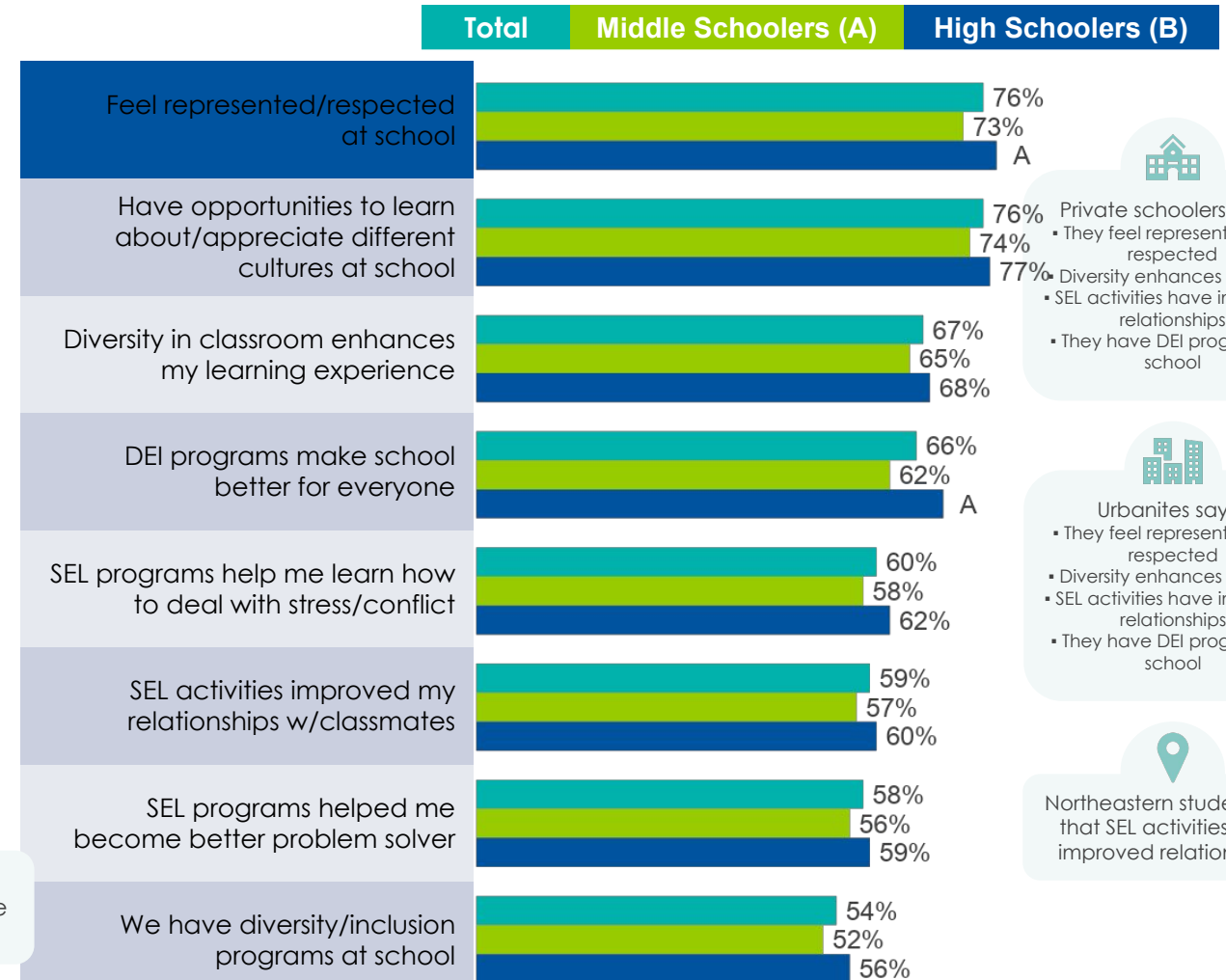
High schoolers, Non-Midwesterners, Urbanites, minority race/ethnicities and/or LGBTQIA+ students are more likely to spend time with different races and ethnicities.

### Friends are Same Race/Ethnicity



More private schoolers have friends who are the same race/ethnicity.

### Attitudes Towards DEI and SEL (% Agree)



Private schoolers say...

- They feel represented and respected
- Diversity enhances learning
- SEL activities have improved relationships
- They have DEI programs at school

Urbanites say...

- They feel represented and respected
- Diversity enhances learning
- SEL activities have improved relationships
- They have DEI programs at school

Northeastern students say that SEL activities have improved relationships.

When asked about how peers respond to gender and sexual orientation, students typically mention acceptance and respect, especially high schoolers. Others mention having traditional views, discomfort, or confusion.

## Perspectives about Gender and Sexual Orientation

|   | Total      | Middle Schoolers<br>(A)  | High Schoolers<br>(B)   |
|---|------------|--|---|
| Acceptance and Respect (net)                        | <u>54%</u> | <u>44%</u>   | <u>61% A</u>  |
| Acceptance for diverse identities                   | 28         | 22   | 33 A  |
| Non-judgmental/Open minded                          | 27         | 19   | 32 A  |
| Respectful of a person's identity/How they identify | 12         | 10   | 13  |
| Emphasis on personal choice                         | 6          | 4  | 7 A   |
| Females are more likely to express this view        |            | "I think <b>different people have different opinions</b> and people just need to be <b>respectful to each other.</b> "<br>- Female, 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade, Public School   | "Most are <b>open-minded, supportive, and accept diverse identities and orientations.</b> "<br>- Male, 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade, Private School (religious)  |
| Asian/multi students less likely to express this    |            |  |   |
| Traditional, Binary View                            | <u>16</u>  | <u>19</u>  | <u>15</u>   |
| Males are more likely to express this view          |            | " <b>You're born boy or girl</b> and that's it. <b>Boys can't be girls and vice versa.</b> "<br>- Male, 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade, Public School   | "I would say that not all of us act like tv news portrays us. <b>Not all of us want to switch genders</b> or are <b>ok with girls in the boy's locker room or guys in the girls.</b> "<br>- Male, 10 <sup>th</sup> Grade, Public School |
| Confusion, Discomfort and Avoidance                 | <u>14</u>  | <u>13</u>  | <u>15</u>   |
|   |            | "I would say that there are <b>many kids</b> who are <b>confused</b> and say they are confused. They say they are <b>scared</b> of getting kicked from their home for being part of the LGBTQIA+."<br>- Female, 7 <sup>th</sup> Grade, Public School | "It's <b>very confusing.</b> "<br>- Female, 11 <sup>th</sup> Grade, Private School (secular)  |
| Don't know/Nothing                                  | <u>16</u>  | <u>20 B</u>  | <u>12</u>   |

Gender and sexual orientation diversity in friend groups is moderate; most students have friends who are their same gender/orientation.

## Gender and Sexual Orientation Summary

Middle and high schoolers think **21%** of the population are transgender

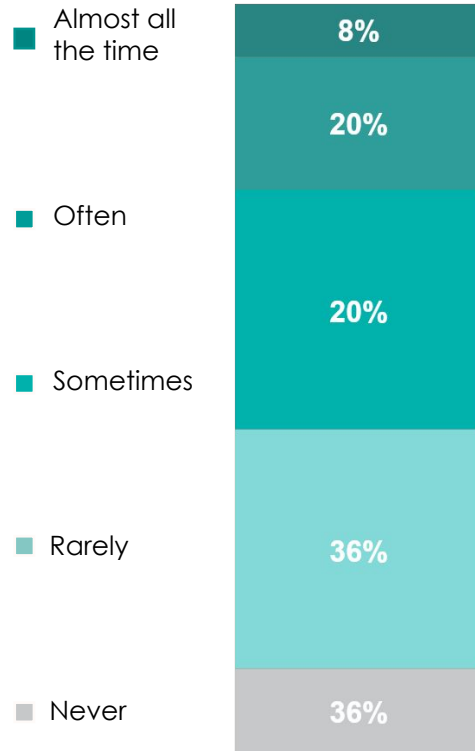
High schoolers spend more time with people with different sexual orientations.

Urbanites spend more time with people with different sexual orientations.

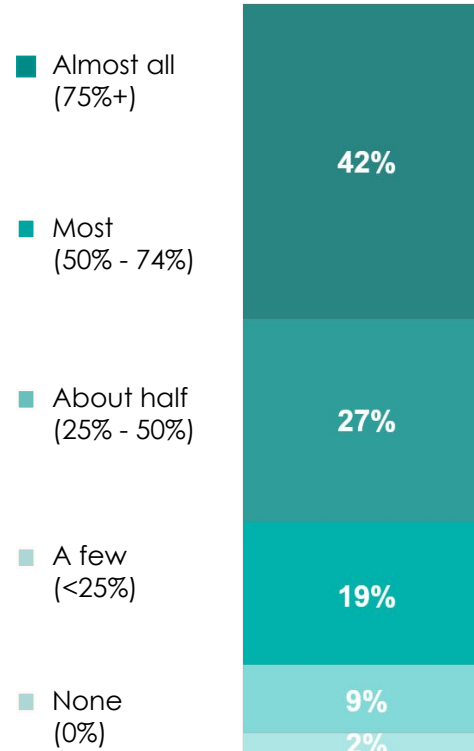
Private schoolers spend more time with people with different sexual orientations.

LGBTQIA+ students spend more time with people with different sexual orientations.

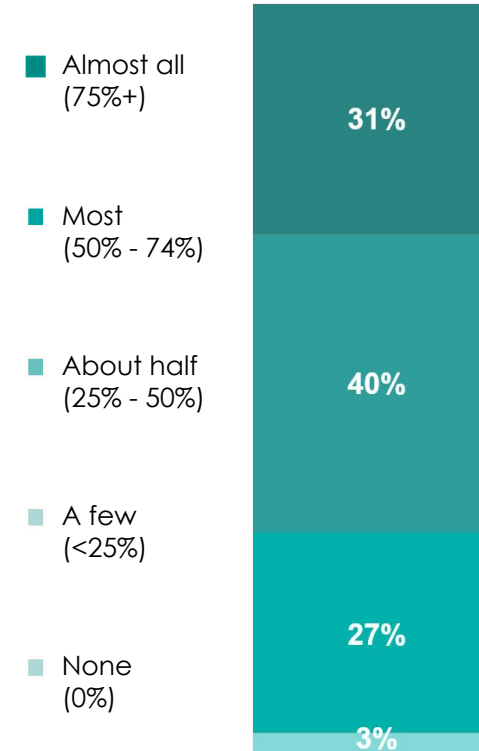
### Time Spent with Different Sexual Orientation



### Friends are Same Sexual Orientation



### Friends are Same Gender



Asian/Multi students...  
• Identify as LGBTQIA+  
• Have few/no friends of the same sexual orientation  
• Spend more time with people with different sexual orientations  
• More friends are same gender

The most common reaction to peers with non-traditional gender expression is to treat them the same way. Nearly all students agree that everyone should feel safe and included at school no matter their gender identity.

## Reaction to Non-Traditional Gender Students

Reactions are positive:

- High schoolers
- Private schoolers
- Urbanites
- Females
- LGBTQIA+ students

**Positive (net)** 48%

Treat person same as before

Supportive and respectful 27%

Make person feel included/accepted 20%

**Negative (net)** 32%

Talk about it behind person's back 20%

Say mean things/make fun of person 16%

Avoid the person 14%

Don't say much 28%

**Curious (net)** 25%

Ask questions in a nice way 18%

Want to learn more 15%

Seem uncomfortable/avoid talking about 21%

Haven't seen this happen at my school 17%

Bathroom usage is a more divisive topic; ~1 in 3 agree that students should use their preferred bathroom.

## Attitudes Towards Gender Identity (% Agree)

Total Middle Schoolers (A) High Schoolers (B)

Everyone should feel safe/included at school no matter gender identity

86%

83%

A

Students should be able to use whichever pronouns they prefer

62%

57%

65%

Teachers/staff always use chosen name/pronouns

55%

53%

56%

Not fair for transgender girls to play on girls' sports teams

54%

48%

A

Okay for students to play on sports team that aligns with gender identity

40%

40%

39%

Transgender students should be allowed to use bathroom that matches gender identity

37%

35%

38%

Learn about trans and nonbinary people in class/school-wide discussions

35%

30%

A

Students should be able to use whichever bathroom they prefer

30%

30%

30%

My school has gender-neutral bathrooms, locker rooms, or changing options

29%

27%

30%

Teachers/administrators argue about gender and sports teams

26%

26%

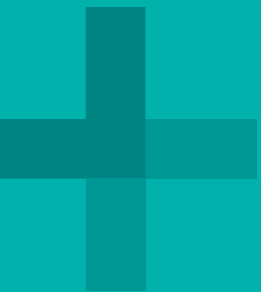
27%



Males say...

- It's okay for students to play on sports teams that align with gender identity
- They learn about trans and non-binary people
- Students should be able to use whichever bathroom they like





# APPENDIX



**Emerge smarter.**



This study is among total middle and high school students.

### Demographic Profile (Asked of Student)

|                            | Total Students<br>(n=1,000) | Middle School<br>Students<br>(n=427)<br>A | High School<br>Students<br>(n=573)<br>B |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Gender</b>              |                             |   |   |
| Male                       | 50%                         | 49%                                       | 50%                                     |
| Female                     | 50                          | 51  | 49                                      |
| <b>LGBTQIA+ (% Yes)</b>    | 8                           | 7   | 9                                       |
| <b>Transgender (% Yes)</b> | 2                           | 2   | 2                                       |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>           |                             |   |   |
| White                      | 52                          | 55  | 50                                      |
| Hispanic                   | 25                          | 22  | 28 A                                    |
| Black                      | 14                          | 13  | 14                                      |
| Multiracial                | 7                           | 7   | 6                                       |
| Asian                      | 2                           | 3   | 2                                       |
| <b>Age</b>                 |                             |   |   |
| 11-12                      | 27                          | 60  | 2                                       |
| 13-14                      | 30                          | 40  | 23                                      |
| 15-16                      | 28                          | 0   | 49                                      |
| 17-18                      | 15                          | 0   | 27                                      |

Ages reflect the  
incoming class in 2025

|                            | Total Students<br>(n=1,000) | Middle School<br>Students<br>(n=427)<br>A | High School<br>Students<br>(n=573)<br>B |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---|
| <b>School Type</b>         |                             |   |   |
| Public school              | 84%                         | 81%                                       | 86% A                                   |
| Private school (secular)   | 6                           | 7   | 5                                       |
| Private school (religious) | 5                           | 5   | 5                                       |
| Charter school             | 4                           | 5   | 3                                       |
| Magnet school              | 1                           | 2   | 0                                       |
| Montessori school          | 0                           | 0   | 0                                       |

### Boost Groups

|                            | Total Students | Middle School<br>Students | High School<br>Students |
|----------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Black Students             | n=211          | n=100                     | n=111                   |
| Asian/Multiracial Students | n=200          | n=100                     | n=100                   |
| Students in the Northeast  | n=226          | n=106                     | n=120                   |

Base: Total Students (n=1,000) / S1 / S2 / D1 / D2 / D3 / D4 / D5 / D6

Green indicates over indexing to Total (120+); Red indicates under indexing to Total (≤80) Sig testing: A/B

Demographics are based to census.

## Household Profile (Asked of Parent)

|                       | Total Students<br>(n=1,000) | Middle School<br>Students<br>(n=427)<br>A | High School<br>Students<br>(n=573)<br>B |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Region</b>         |                             |   |   |
| South                 | 39%                         | 41%                                       | 39%                                     |
| Midwest               | 21                          | 21  | 21                                      |
| West                  | 21                          | 19  | 22                                      |
| Northeast             | 19                          | 19  | 18                                      |
| <b>Urbanicity</b>     |                             |   |   |
| Urban                 | 40                          | 39  | 40                                      |
| Suburban              | 35                          | 37  | 33                                      |
| Rural                 | 26                          | 24  | 27                                      |
| <b>HH Income</b>      |                             |   |   |
| < \$25k               | 9                           | 12 B                                      | 7                                       |
| \$25k – \$49.9k       | 16                          | 15  | 17                                      |
| \$50k – \$99.9k       | 29                          | 28  | 29                                      |
| \$100k+               | 46                          | 45  | 47                                      |
| <b>Avg. HH Income</b> | \$99,739                    | \$98,285                                  | \$100,823                               |

|                         | Total Students<br>(n=1,000) | Middle School<br>Students<br>(n=427)<br>A | High School<br>Students<br>(n=573)<br>B |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Avg HH Size</b>      | 4.0                         | 4.3 B                                     | 3.9                                     |
| <b>HH Composition</b>   |                             |   |   |
| <b>Child(ren) (net)</b> | <b>100%</b>                 | <b>100%</b>                               | <b>100%</b>                             |
| Child(ren) under 18     | 99                          | 99  | 98                                      |
| Child(ren) 18+          | 16                          | 10  | 20 A                                    |
| Spouse/partner          | 72                          | 75  | 70                                      |
| Parent(s)               | 7                           | 9   | 6                                       |
| <b>Sibling(s) (net)</b> | <b>3</b>                    | <b>3</b>                                  | <b>3</b>                                |
| Sibling(s) under 18     | 0                           | 0   | 0                                       |
| Sibling(s) 18+          | 3                           | 3   | 3                                       |
| Roommate(s)             | 3                           | 2   | 3                                       |
| Other extended family   | 2                           | 2   | 2                                       |
| Grandparent(s)          | 1                           | 1   | 1                                       |

# Documents

Click the images below to open research related files.



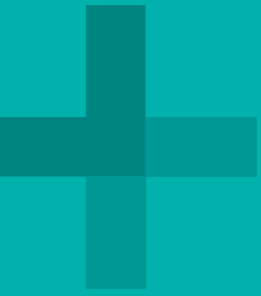
Questionnaire



Verbatims



Data Tables



# Thanks for working with us!

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