

Getting to School Pre- and Mid-Pandemic

Findings from National, Cross-Sector Surveys of Parents on K–12 Transportation in the United States

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Virtual Legislator Training, Fall 2020



Research Questions

1. What are the ways transportation influences parents' decisions regarding where to send their child(ren) to school?
2. What are parents' major preferences, challenges, and concerns related to school transportation?
3. What are parents' experiences with transportation related to schooling?

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Overview of Sample

	Respondent Count	Respondent Percent	National Percent
Traditional Public	519	37%	84%
<i>FRL</i>	263	19%	
<i>Non-FRL</i>	246	17%	
Charter	350	25%	5%
<i>FRL</i>	228	16%	
<i>Non-FRL</i>	115	8%	
Religious Private	350	25%	7%
<i>FRL</i>	104	7%	
<i>Non-FRL</i>	237	17%	
Non-Religious Private	200	14%	2%
<i>FRL</i>	49	3%	
<i>Non-FRL</i>	132	9%	

number of parents responding (Q5): 1,419

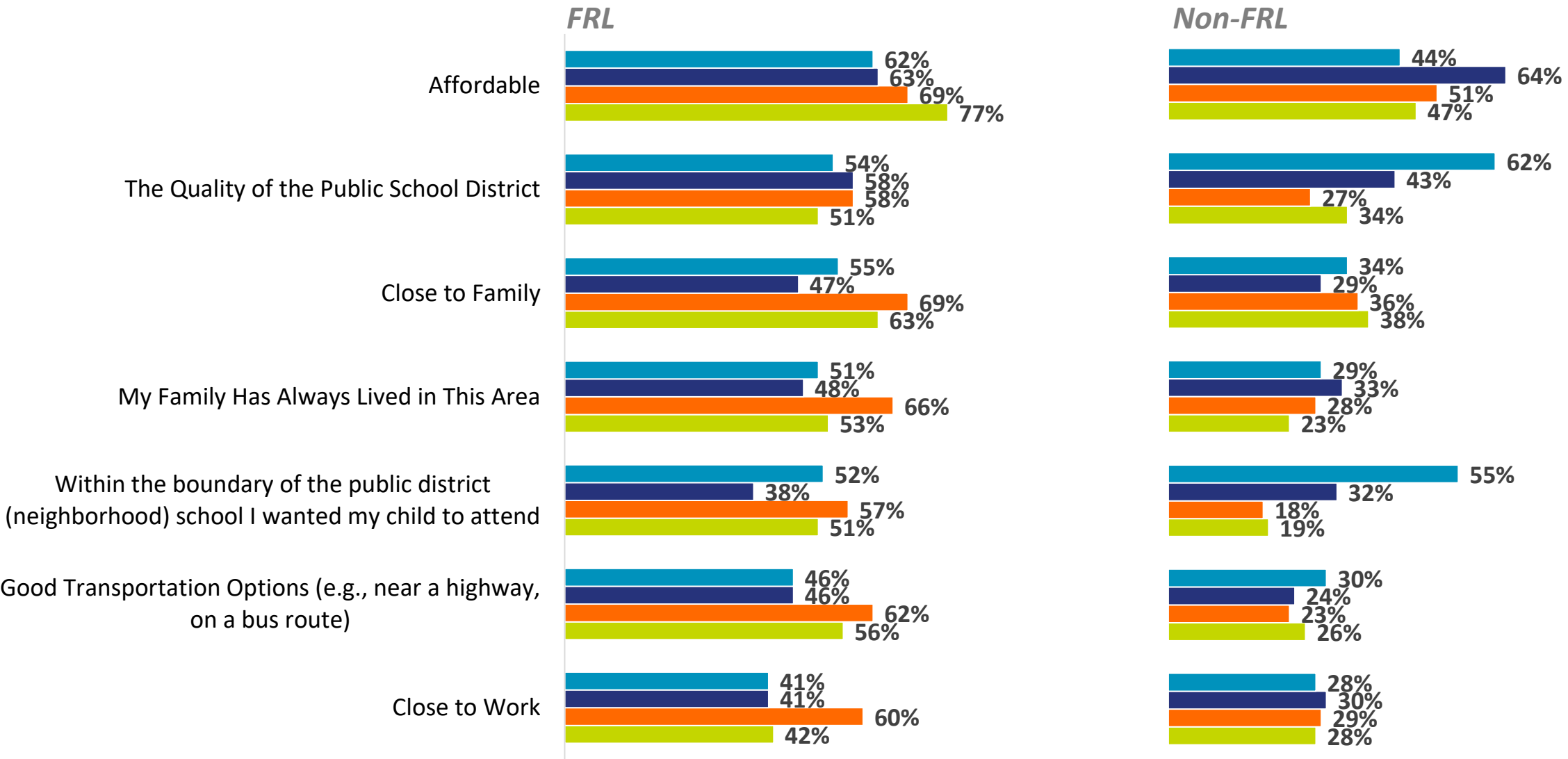
Note: Not all respondents replied to the question asking about FRL eligibility.

Sources: Author's calculations; Andrew D. Catt (2020, April 15), U.S. States Ranked by Educational Choice Share, 2020 [Blog post], retrieved from EdChoice website: <https://www.edchoice.org/engage/u-s-states-ranked-by-educational-choice-share-2020>; Stephen P. Broughman, Brian Kincel, and Jennifer Peterson (2019), *Characteristics of Private Schools in the United States: Results From the 2017-18 Private School Universe Survey* (NCES 2019-071), p. 6, table 1, retrieved from National Center for Education Statistics website: <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019071.pdf>

Factors Influencing Where to Live

Percent of Responding Parents Saying “Extremely / Very Influential”

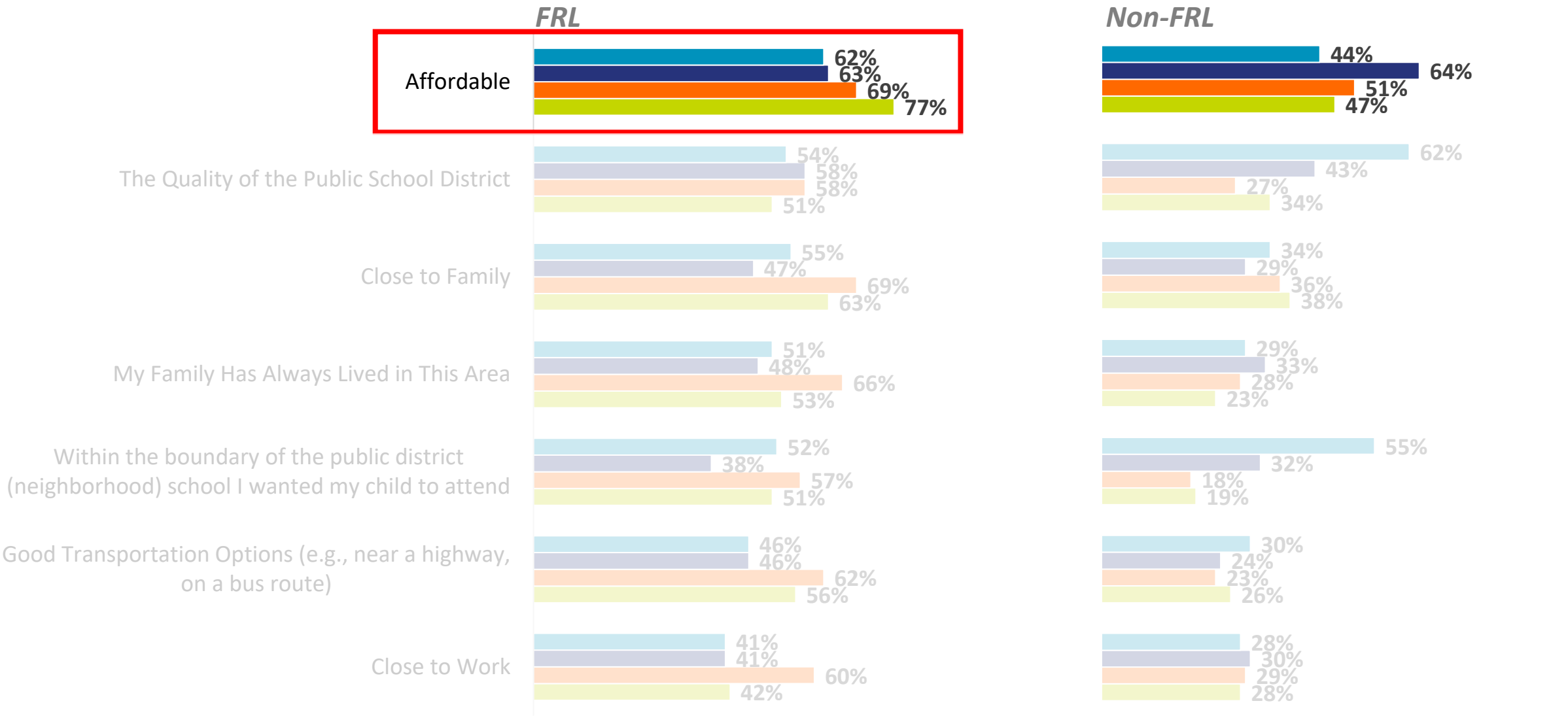
Traditional Public Charter Religious Private Non-Religious Private



Factors Influencing Where to Live

Percent of Responding Parents Saying “Extremely / Very Influential”

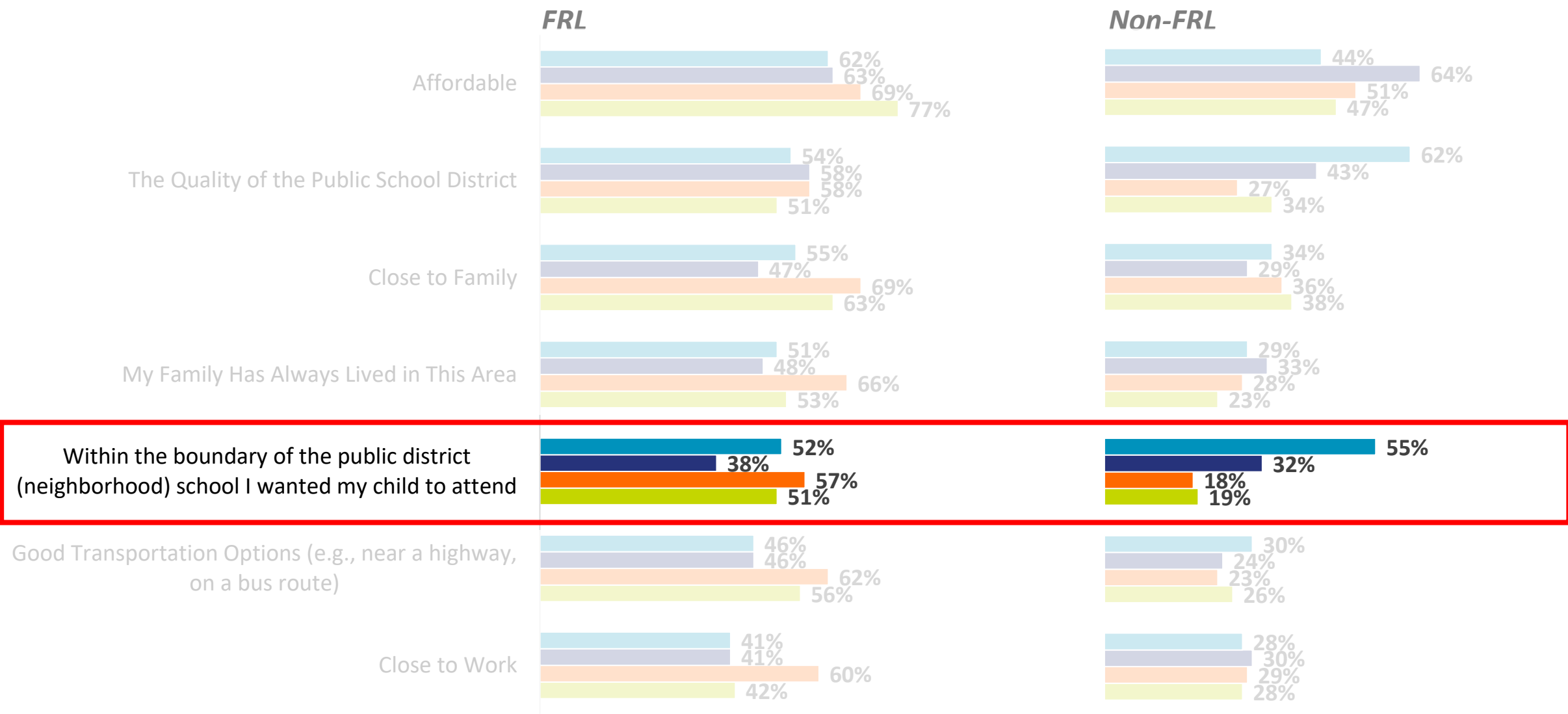
■ Traditional Public ■ Charter ■ Religious Private ■ Non-Religious Private



Factors Influencing Where to Live

Percent of Responding Parents Saying “Extremely / Very Influential”

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How Long Parents Would Allow Child to Commute One-Way to Attend "Better Fit" School (Cumulative)

	>60 minutes	>50 minutes	>40 minutes	>30 minutes	>20 minutes	>10 minutes
Traditional Public	1%	4%	9%	15%	36%	68%
<i>FRL</i>	2%	5%	11%	15%	36%	62%
<i>Non-FRL</i>	<1%	3%	7%	13%	36%	75%
Charter	2%	6%	13%	16%	41%	65%
<i>FRL</i>	3%	8%	14%	18%	38%	59%
<i>Non-FRL</i>	0%	3%	11%	14%	46%	78%
Religious Private	1%	3%	8%	16%	41%	71%
<i>FRL</i>	4%	7%	11%	20%	38%	70%
<i>Non-FRL</i>	0%	2%	8%	14%	43%	73%
Non-Religious Private	2%	5%	11%	17%	36%	63%
<i>FRL</i>	4%	6%	10%	12%	29%	63%
<i>Non-FRL</i>	2%	5%	12%	19%	42%	67%

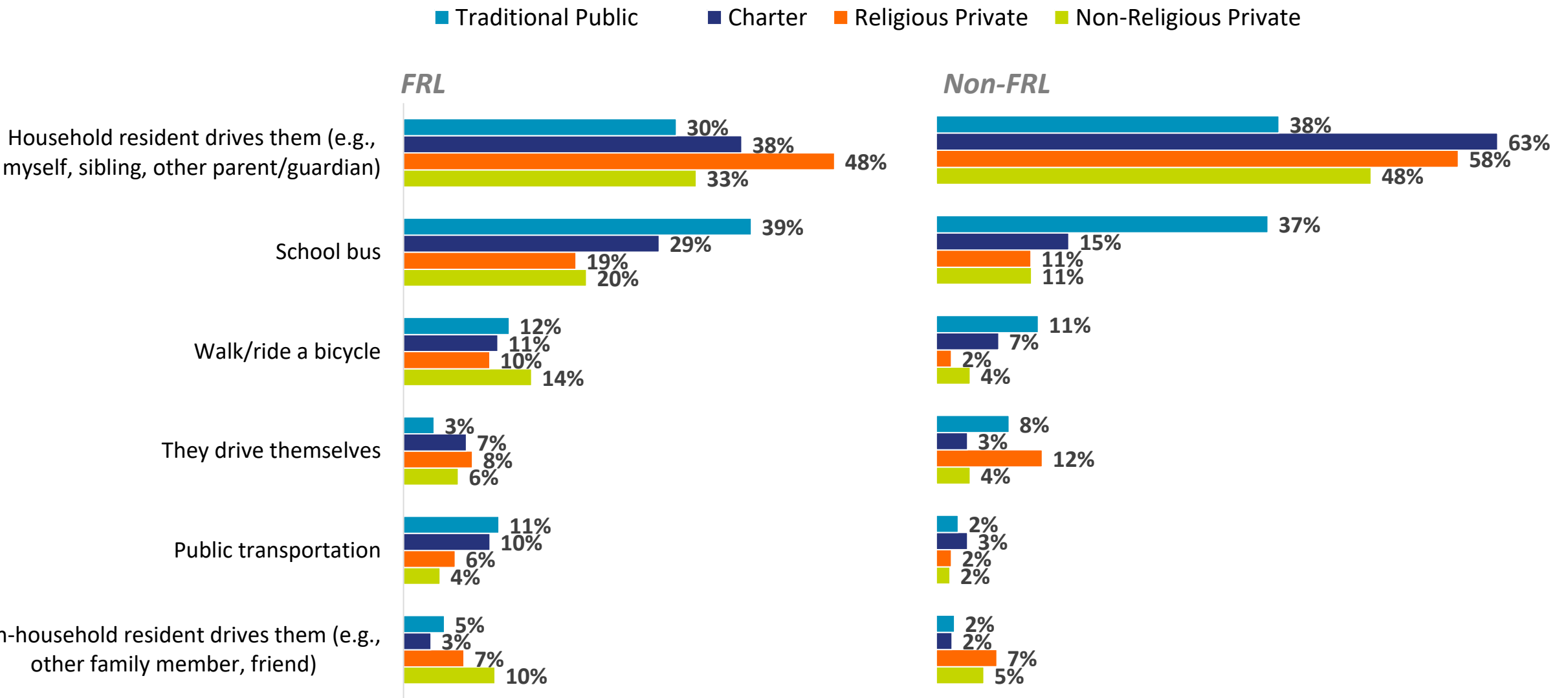
number of parents responding: 518 Traditional Public (263 FRL; 245 Non-FRL); 350 Charter (228 FRL; 115 Non-FRL); 350 Religious Private (104 FRL; 237 Non-FRL); 200 Non-Religious Private (49 FRL; 132 Non-FRL)

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Planned Method of Transportation to School, Before School Year Started

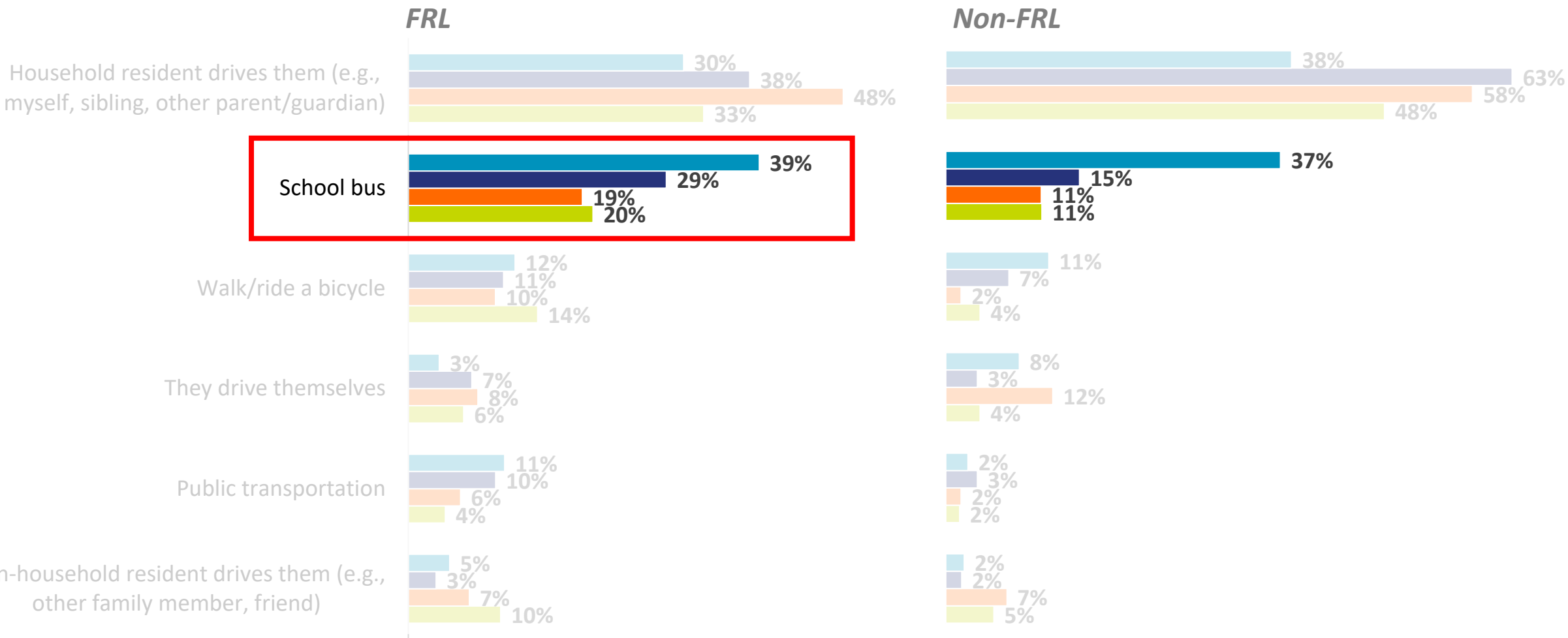
Percent of Responding Parents Saying “Extremely / Very Influential”



Planned Method of Transportation to School, Before School Year Started

Percent of Responding Parents Saying “Extremely / Very Influential”

Traditional Public Charter Religious Private Non-Religious Private



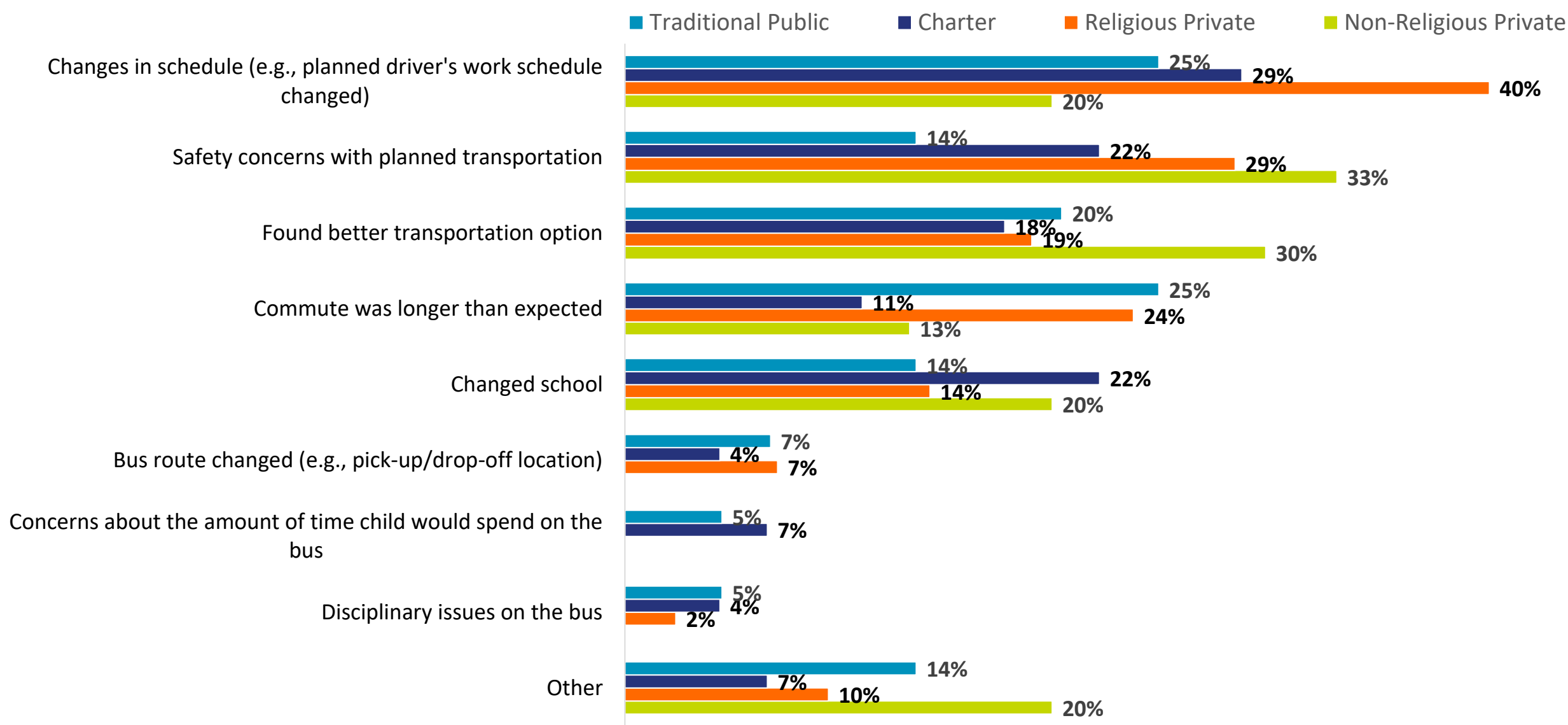
Are Parents Still Using Method of Transportation Planned Before School Year Started?

	No
Traditional Public	8%
<i>FRL</i>	10%
<i>Non-FRL</i>	6%
Charter	13%
<i>FRL</i>	16%
<i>Non-FRL</i>	6%
Religious Private	12%
<i>FRL</i>	25%
<i>Non-FRL</i>	7%
Non-Religious Private	15%
<i>FRL</i>	24%
<i>Non-FRL</i>	9%

number of parents responding: 519 Traditional Public (263 FRL; 246 Non-FRL); 350 Charter (228 FRL; 115 Non-FRL); 350 Religious Private (104 FRL; 237 Non-FRL); 200 Non-Religious Private (49 FRL; 132 Non-FRL)

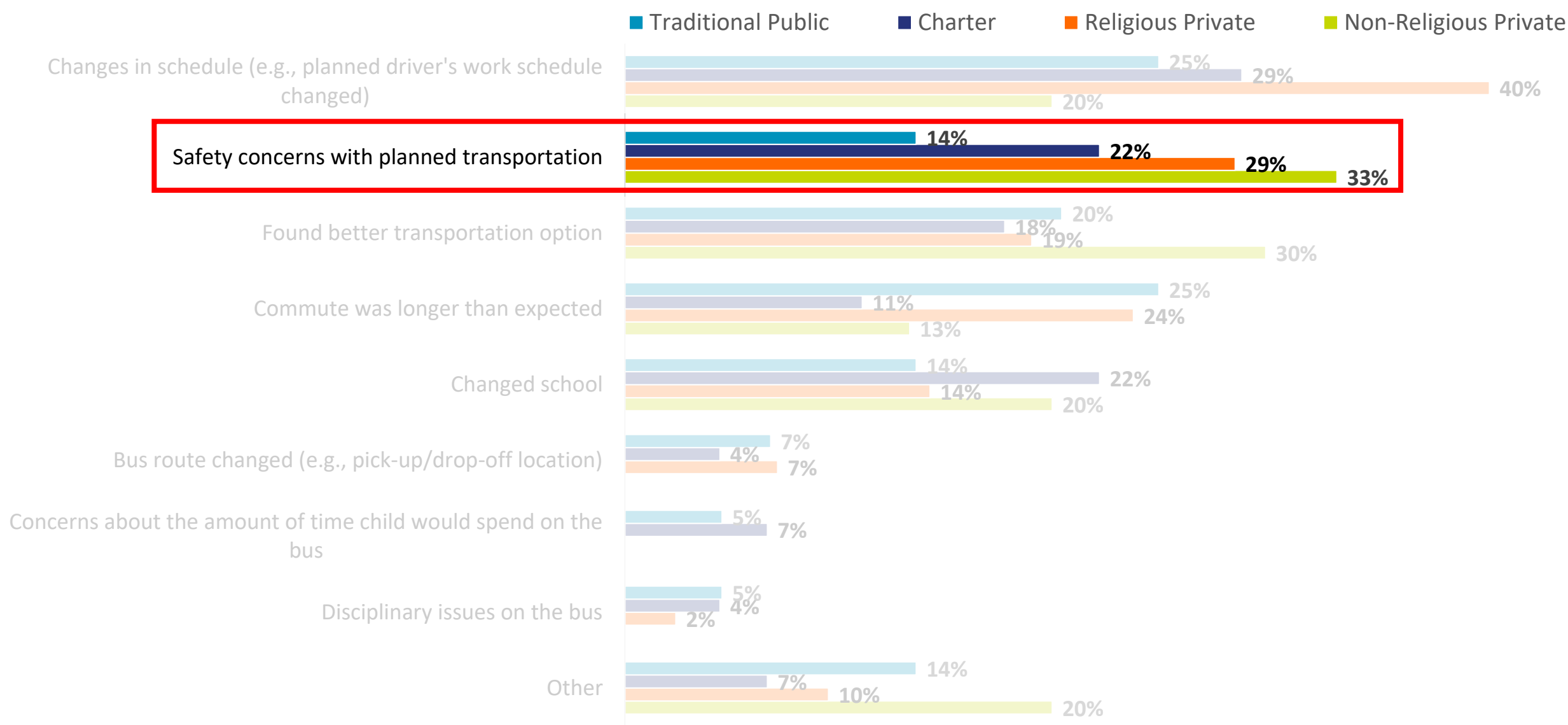
Reasons Child's Planned Transportation to School Changed

Percent of Responding Parents



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Percent of Responding Parents



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Transportation Provided by School

Percent of Responding Parents

Traditional Public Charter Religious Private Non-Religious Private

My child's school...

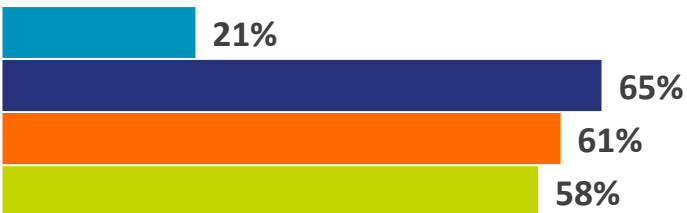
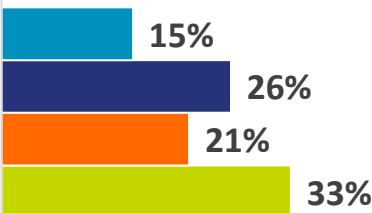
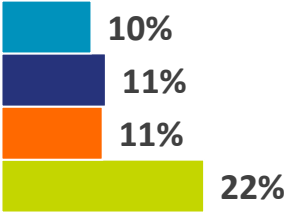
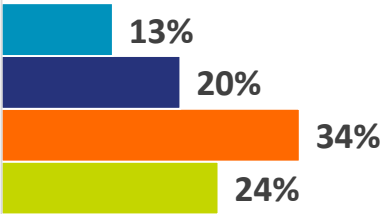
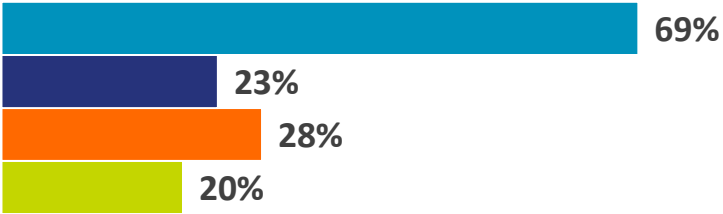
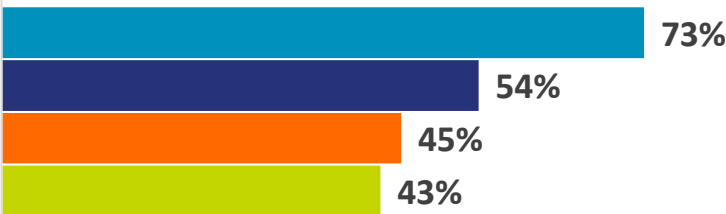
...provides transportation at no extra cost.

...provides transportation for an extra fee.

...does not provide any transportation.

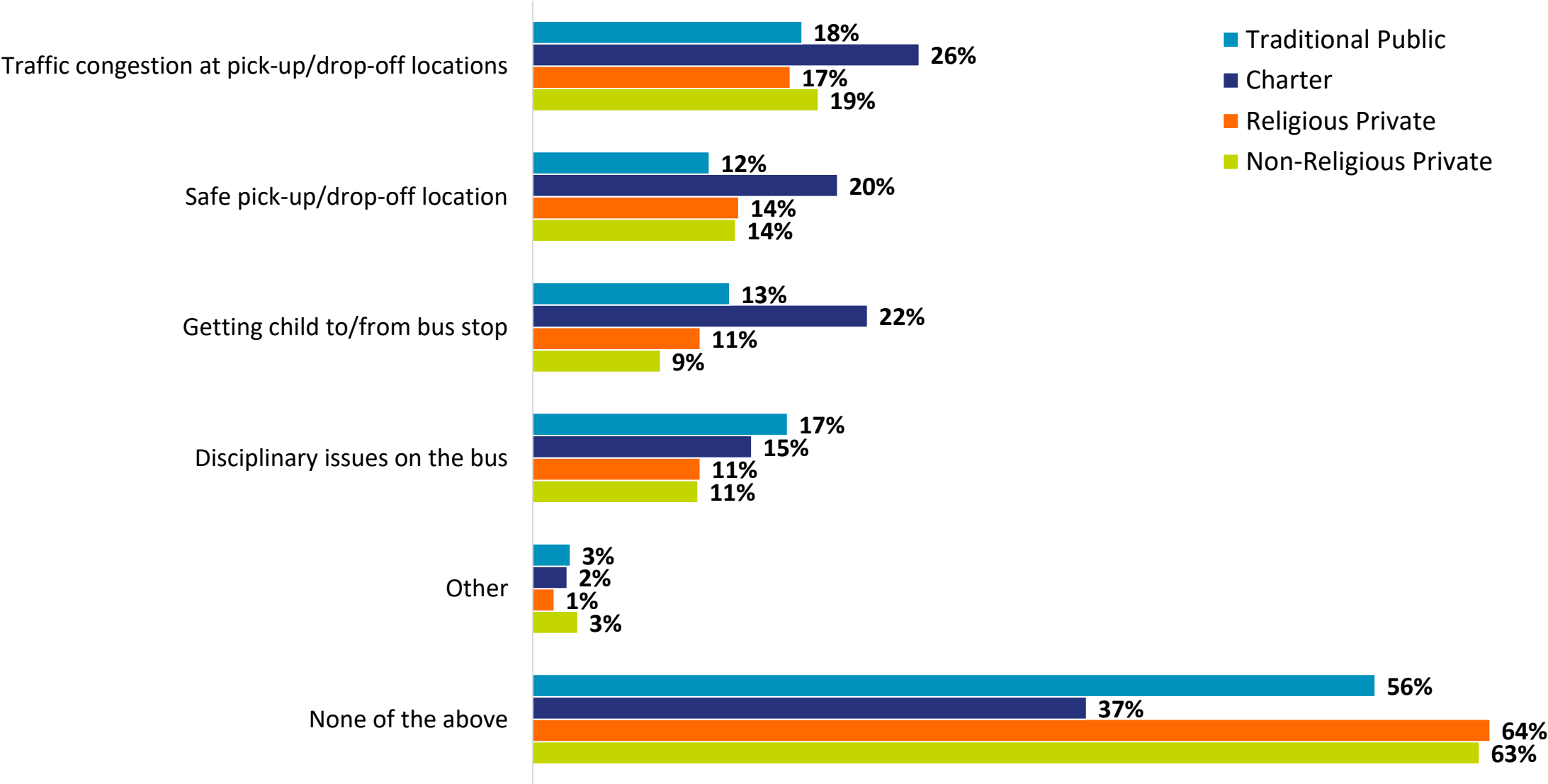
FRL

Non-FRL



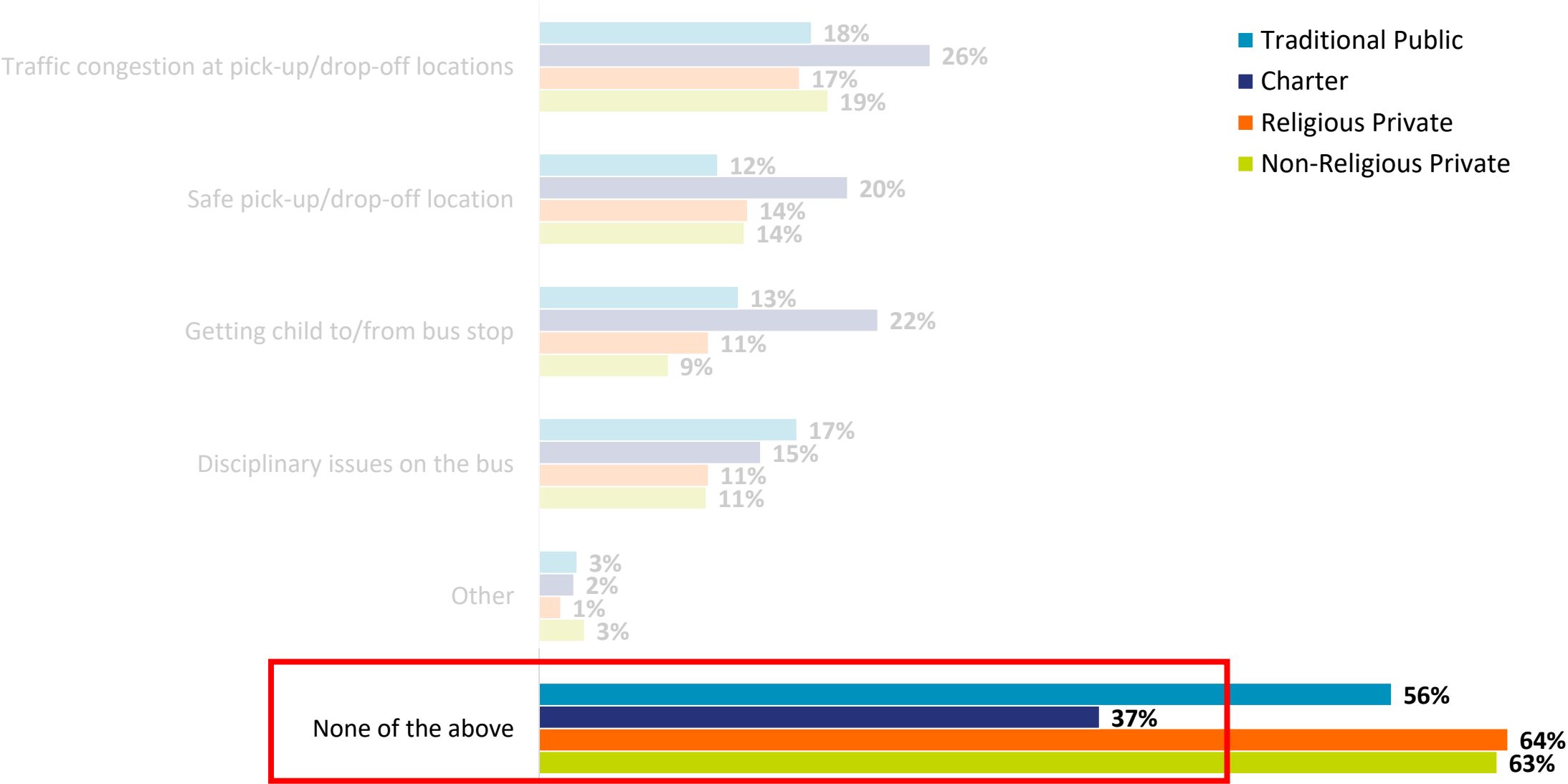
Transportation Issues with School or District

Percent of Responding Parents



Transportation Issues with School or District

Percent of Responding Parents



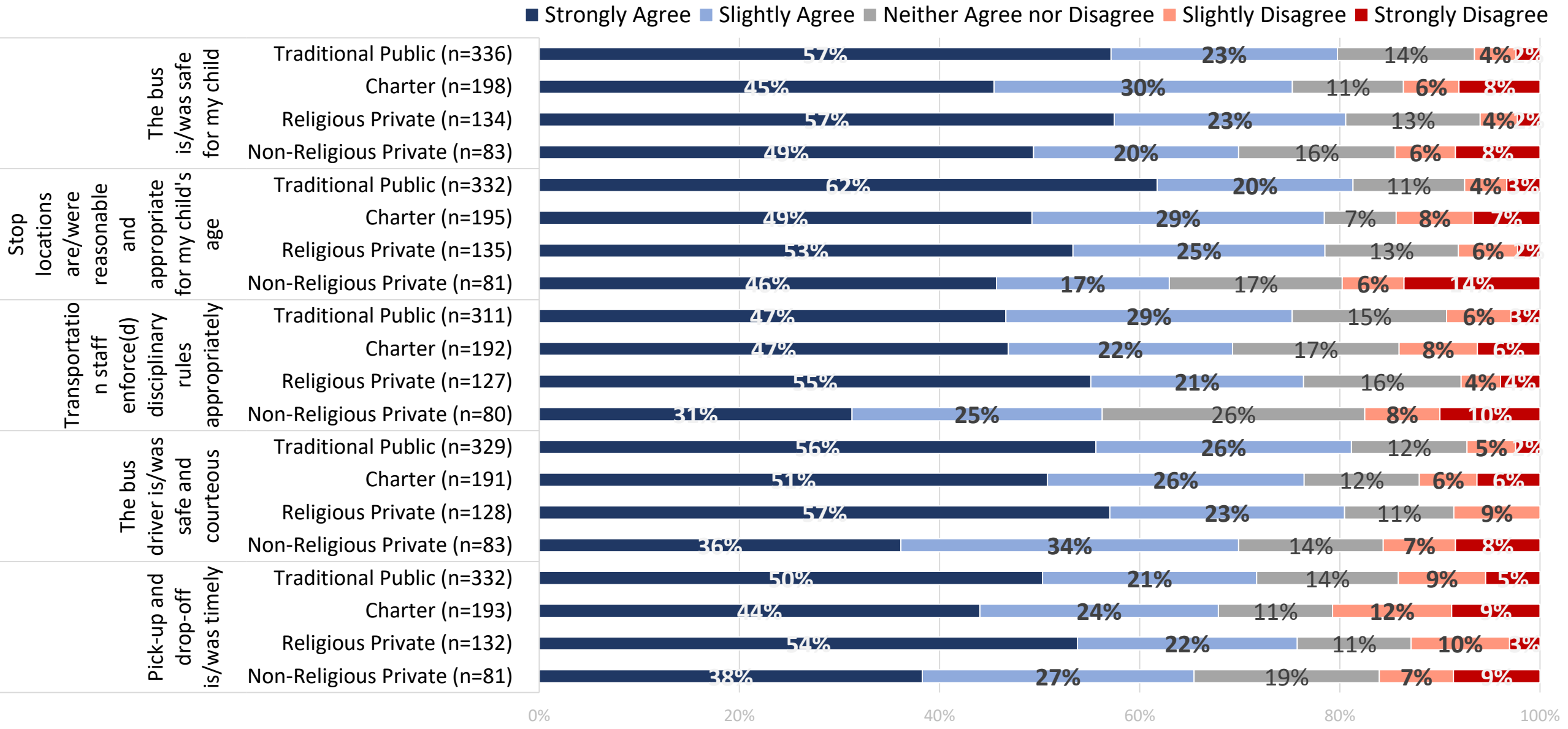
Has Child Ever Ridden the Bus to Get to School?

	Yes
Traditional Public	43%
<i>FRL</i>	<i>54%</i>
<i>Non-FRL</i>	<i>32%</i>
Charter	45%
<i>FRL</i>	<i>60%</i>
<i>Non-FRL</i>	<i>22%</i>
Religious Private	29%
<i>FRL</i>	<i>52%</i>
<i>Non-FRL</i>	<i>19%</i>
Non-Religious Private	34%
<i>FRL</i>	<i>53%</i>
<i>Non-FRL</i>	<i>22%</i>

number of parents responding: 315 Traditional Public (158 FRL; 153 Non-FRL); 262 Charter (157 FRL; 98 Non-FRL); 302 Religious Private (82 FRL; 212 Non-FRL); 170 Non-Religious Private (38 FRL; 117 Non-FRL)

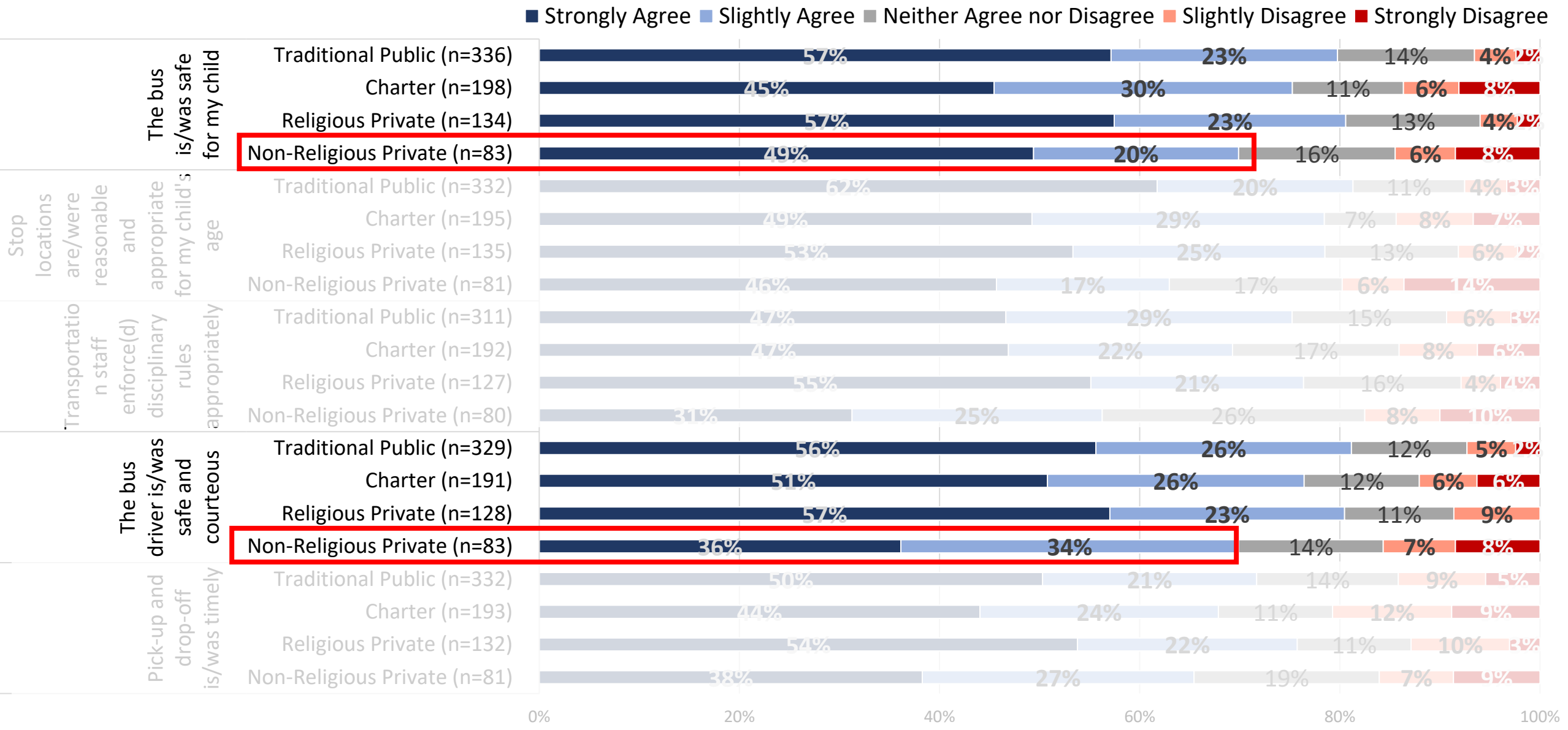
Parents' Agreement with Aspects of Child's Bus Experience

Percent of Responding Parents



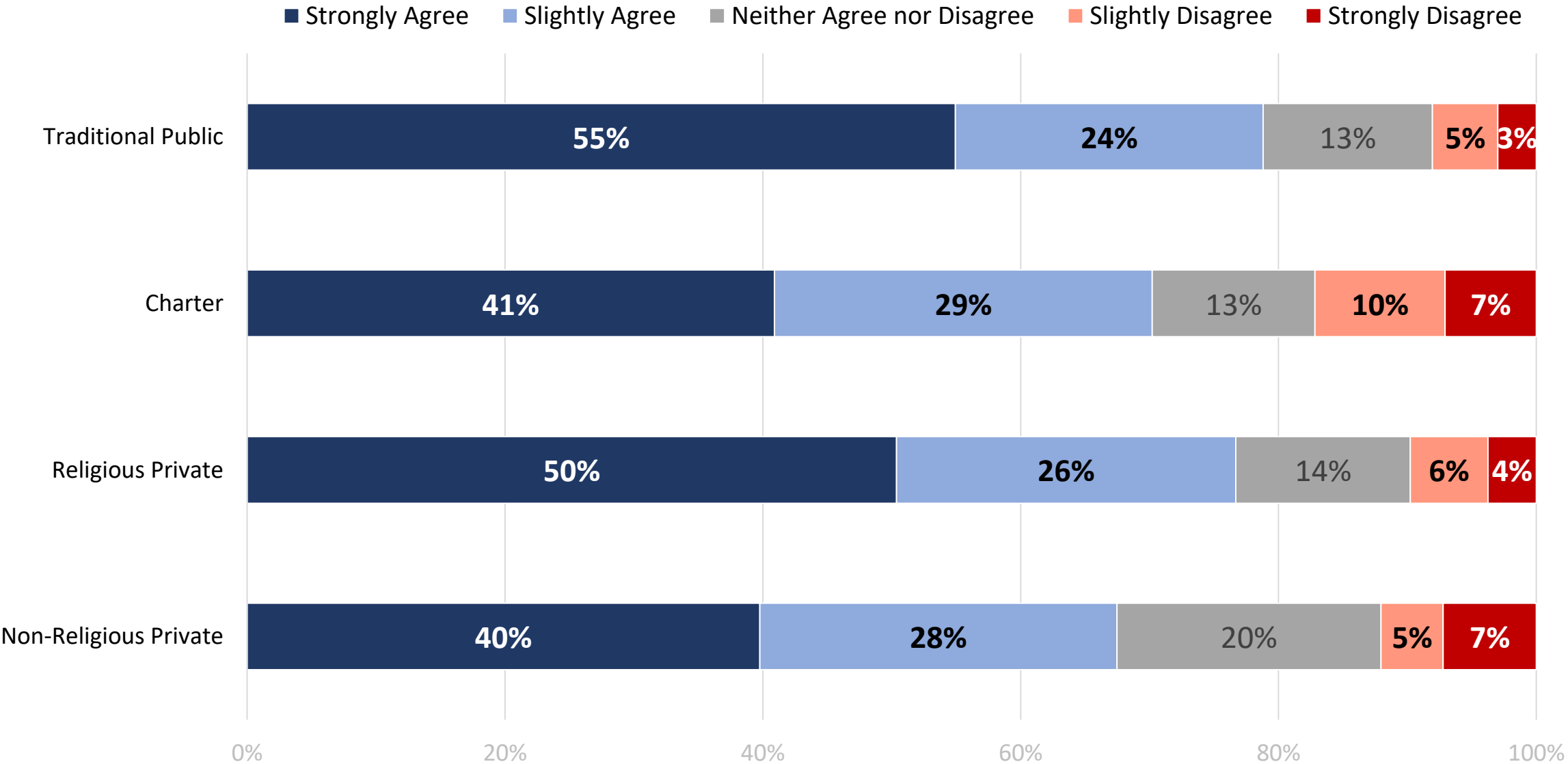
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Percent of Responding Parents



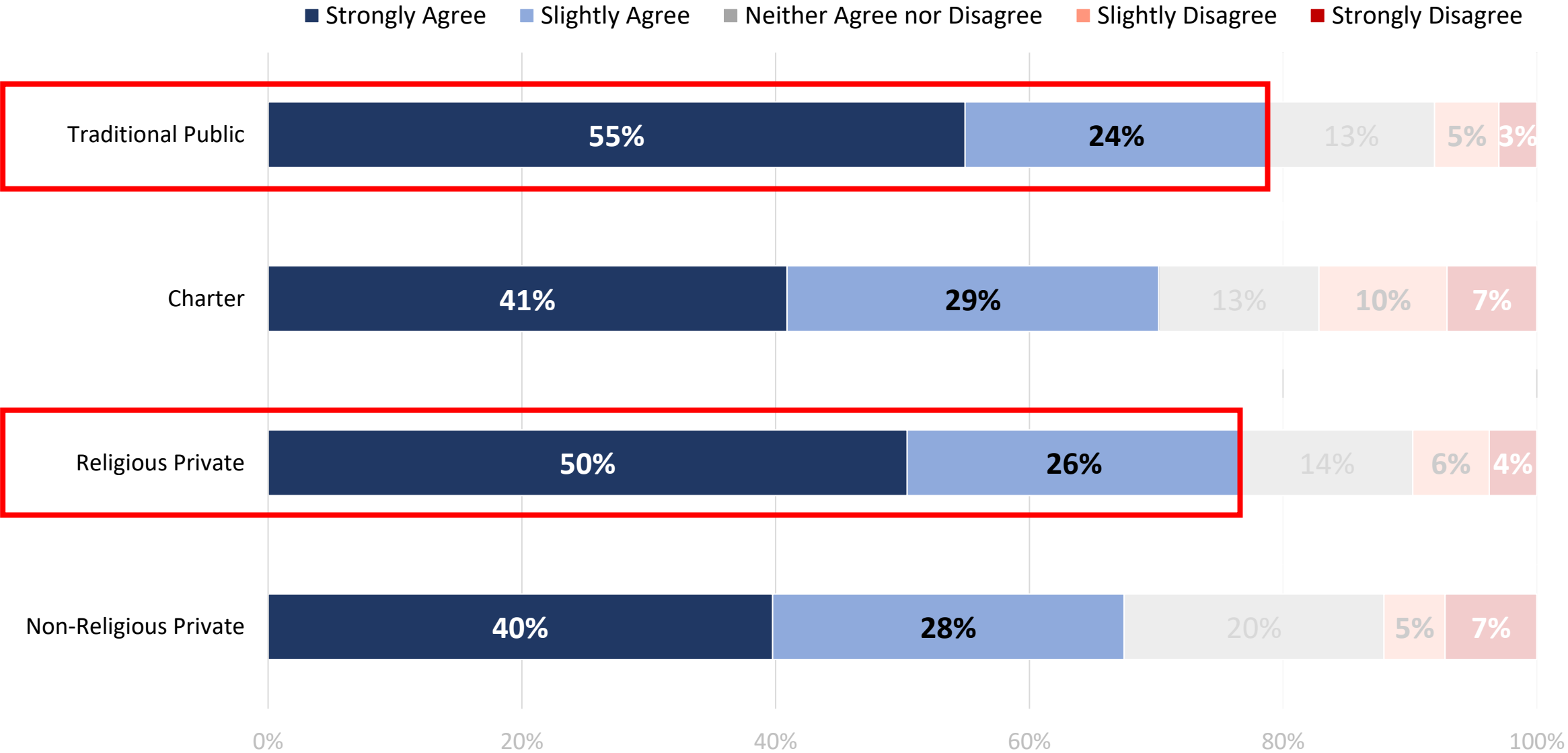
Parents' Agreement with Being Overall Satisfied with Child's School Bus Transportation

Percent of Responding Parents



Parents' Agreement with Being Overall Satisfied with Child's School Bus Transportation

Percent of Responding Parents



Key Takeaways/Thoughts

- Although about 50 percent of parents across all school types report that their child's commute to school is within 10 minutes of home, **approximately two-thirds of parents reported that they would be willing to commute more than 10 minutes if it meant that their child could attend a school that was a “better fit.”**
- Parents with children that attend a traditional public school are generally more satisfied with their bus service than parents with children in other school types, particularly in areas such as safe bus drivers and staff enforcing appropriate disciplinary rules. The survey reveals the possibility **that choice schools may have more difficulty in satisfactorily serving their students' families via school buses, compared to public schools whose transportation system is typically embedded within the infrastructure.**
- In general, the survey finds that the mode of transportation to school is relatively unlikely to change during the school year, with **nearly 90 percent of parents reporting that they currently rely on the same mode of transportation** that they had planned to use at the beginning of the school year.
- Notably, **nearly half of parents drive, or have a household resident drive, their children to school.** With the high incidence of households driving their children to school, it is worth noting that parents most often report difficulties related to traffic and congestion at school sites for drop-off and pick-up, suggesting that more efficient systems for household drivers to approach a school may be beneficial in improving the school commuting process.

School Transportation During a Pandemic

We saw an opportunity to survey even more parents to try to understand if and how COVID-19 impacts parent transportation decisions. We surveyed a **nationally representative sample** based on region, race/ethnicity, and income from **June 24th to July 4th**, 2020. The analysis includes **787 responses from 544 unique respondents** following data cleaning. Respondents with multiple children were given the option to retake the survey for each child, hence the larger number of responses than respondents.

Key Findings

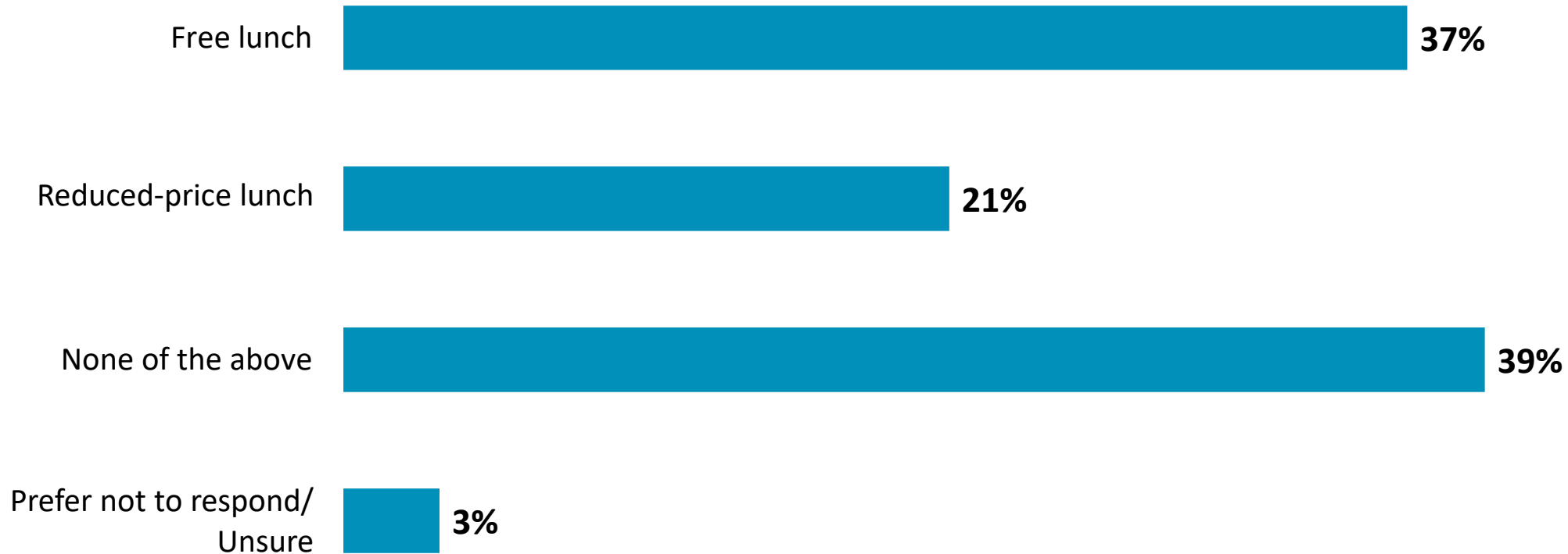
- **As of June/July, a majority of parents (56%) would opt to enroll their child in a setting where all classes would be held in a building, although it varies depending on the parents' school type.** Sixty-one percent of public school parents prefer all classes in the building, compared to charter (43%), religious private (47%), and non-religious private school parents (43%).
- **A small portion of parents are planning to newly homeschool their children in the fall.** Public (2%), charter (1%), religious private (8%), and non-religious private school parents (20%) are more likely to opt for this type of schooling this coming school year.
- **Among parents whose children will attend school in person this fall, nearly two out of five say their child will get to school with a household resident who drives them.** Thirty-one percent of public school parents, 23% of charter school parents, 8% of religious private, and 33% of non-religious private school parents would send their children on the school bus.
- **Charter school parents, compared to other parents, tend to report higher levels of concern when thinking about their child's transportation to school.** For example, 70% of charter school parents report being moderately or extremely concerned about the school building entrance/exit being virus-free, compared to 63% of public school, 45% of religious private school, and 65% of non-religious private school parents.

Survey Project and Profile

Survey Sponsor	Walton Family Foundation
Survey Developer	EdChoice
Survey Data Collection & Quality Control	Hanover Research
Interview Dates	June 22 to July 4, 2020
Interview Method	Web
Interview Length	2 minutes, 8 seconds (median)
Language(s)	English only
Sampling Method	Panel
Population Sample	Nationwide sample of school parents
Sample Size	Traditional public school parents, N= 378 (partial and complete) Charter school parents, N= 54 (partial and complete) Magnet school parents, N= 39 (partial and complete) Religious private school parents, N= 48 (partial and complete) Non-religious private school parents, N= 25 (partial and complete)
Weighting	Yes: Region, Race/Ethnicity, and Income
Oversampling	No

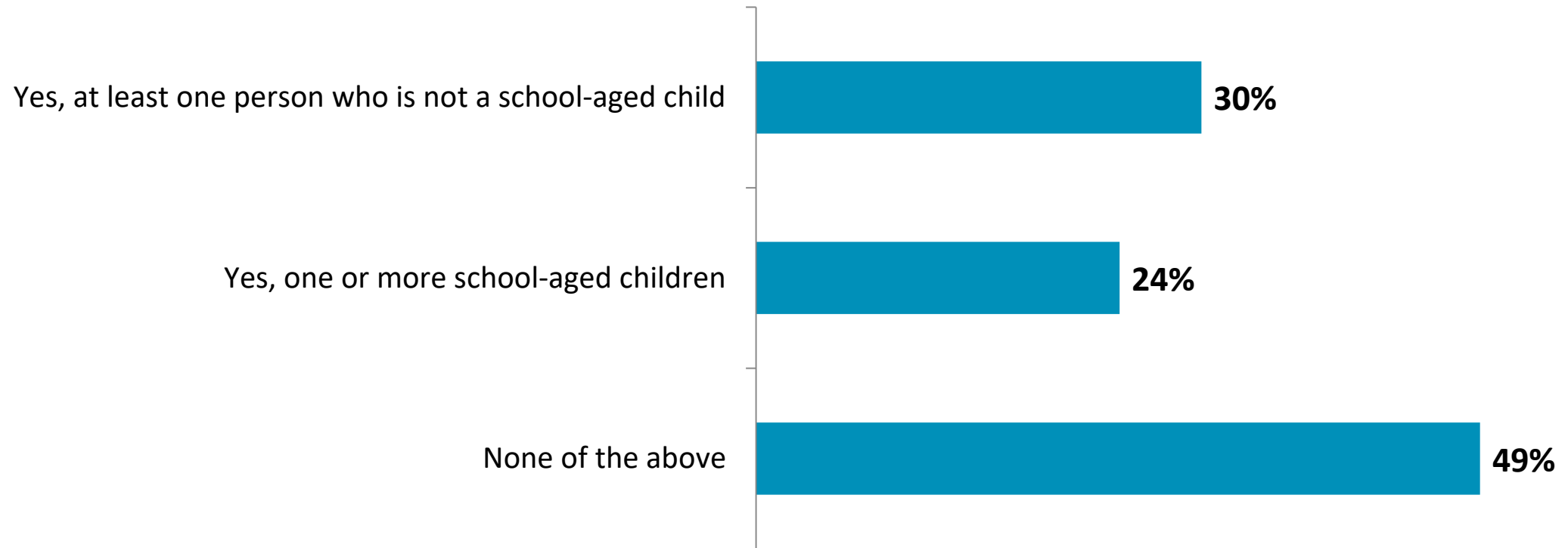
Nearly three out of five parents (58%) said their child qualifies for free or reduced-price lunch.

Does your child qualify for any of the following?
(n=787)



Roughly one out of four parents (24%) said at least one of their children is or might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Is there a person who lives in your household that has any of the following conditions* or characteristics? Please select all that apply.

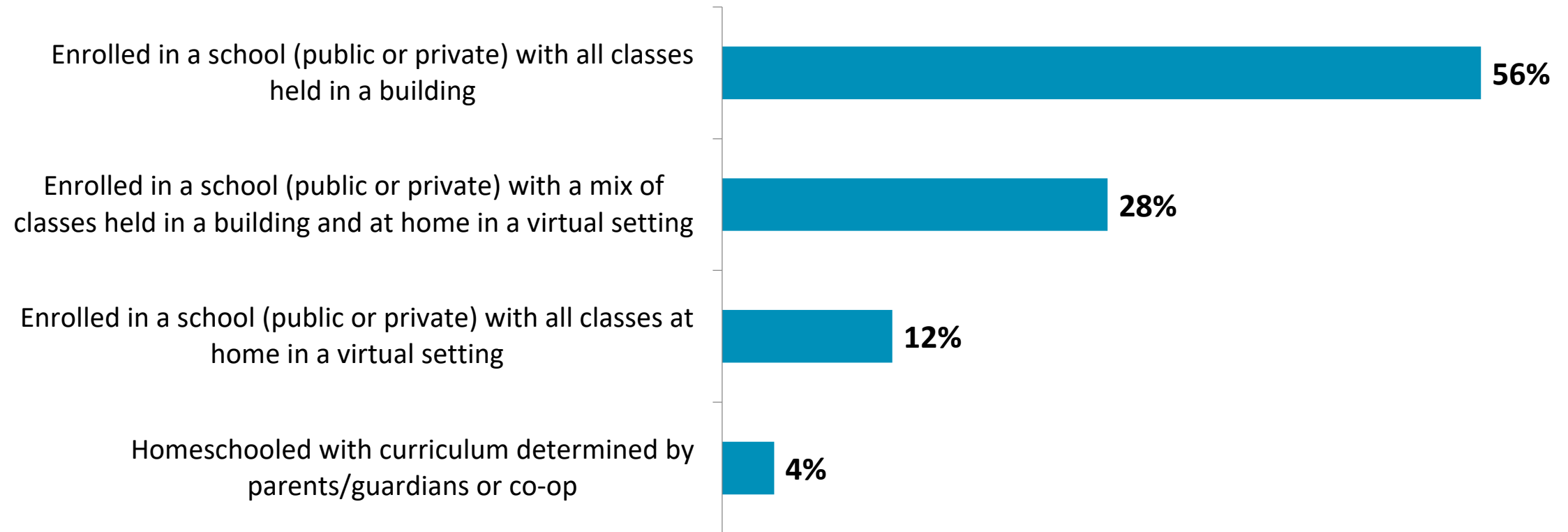


* Conditions include moderate to severe asthma or chronic lung disease, diabetes, severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher), a serious heart condition, chronic kidney disease and undergoing dialysis, liver disease, age 65 years or older, immunocompromised

More than four out of five parents (84%) would prefer their child take at least some of their classes physically in a building (non-virtual).

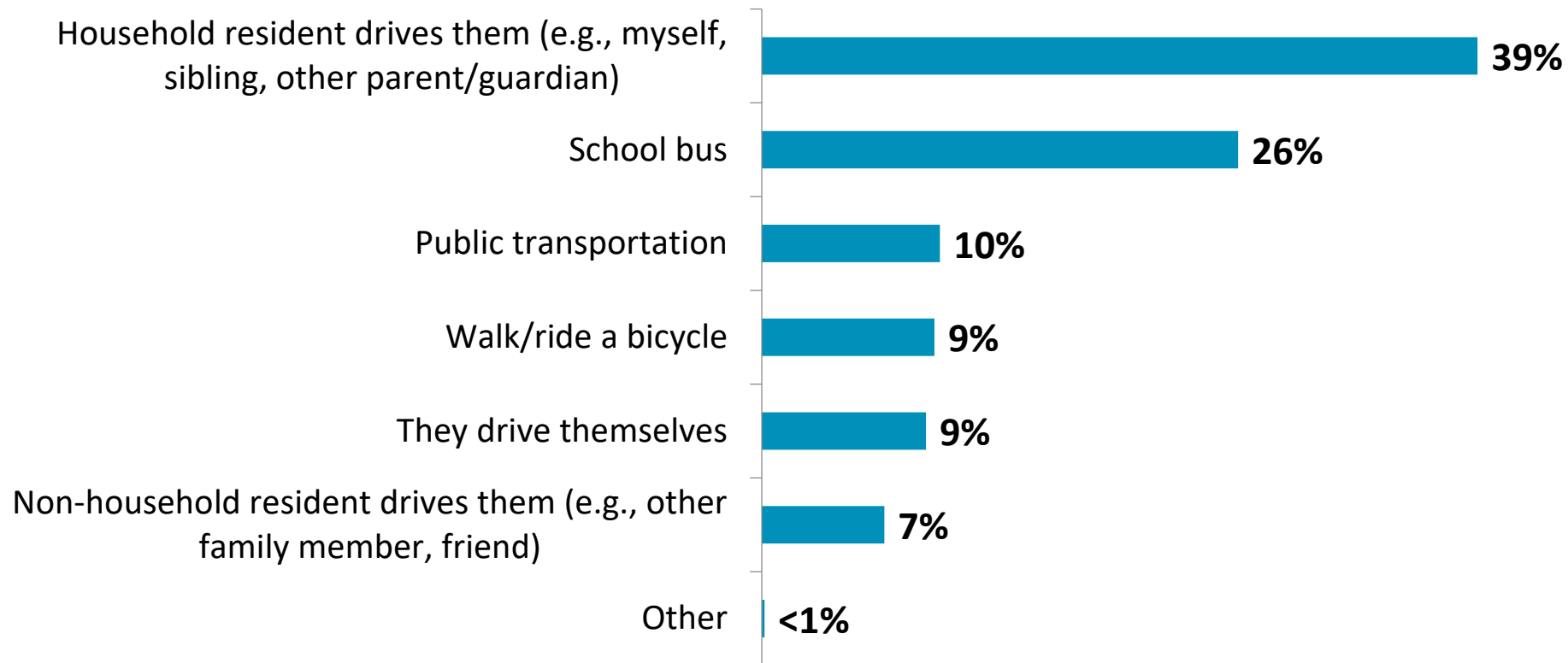
If you were to make the decision today, what would your child's schooling experience look like in the fall?

(n=787)



More than one-fourth of responding parents (26%) intend to have their child take a school bus to get to school this fall.

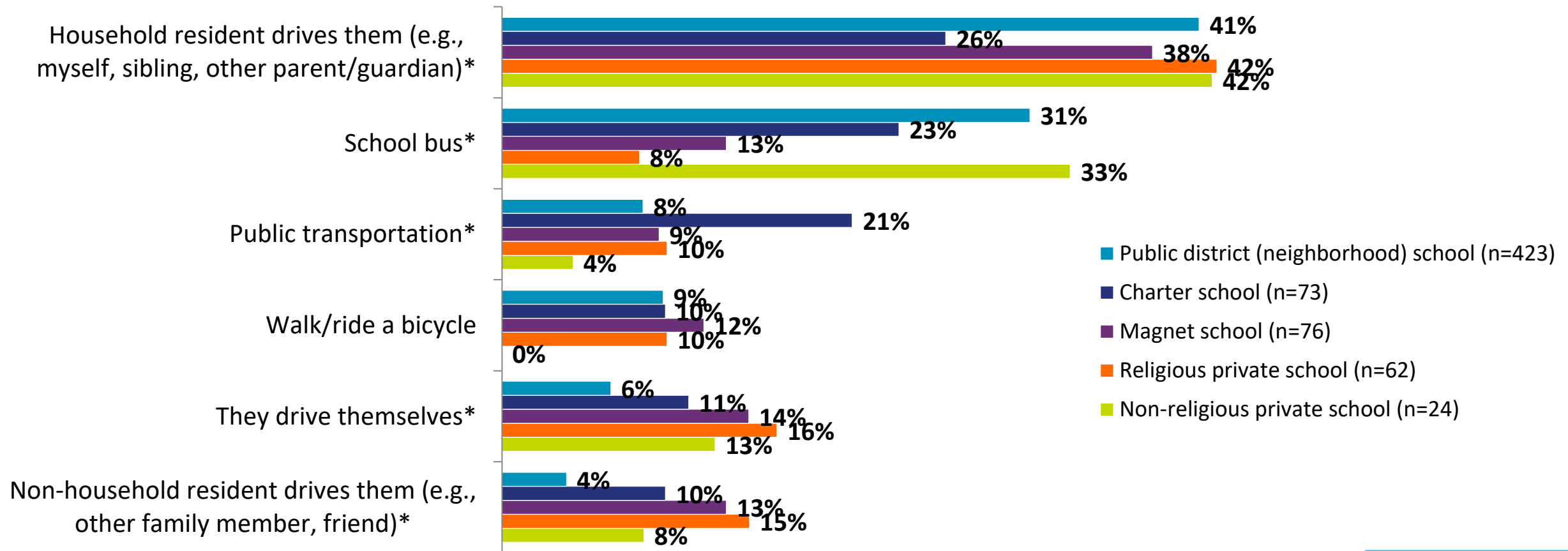
If you were to make the decision today, how would your child get to school in the fall (i.e., next school year)?
(n=658)



Note: Question shown to respondents who say their child will attend school in a building this fall.

Non-religious private school parents (33%) and traditional school parents (31%) are most likely to say their child will be taking a school bus to school this fall.

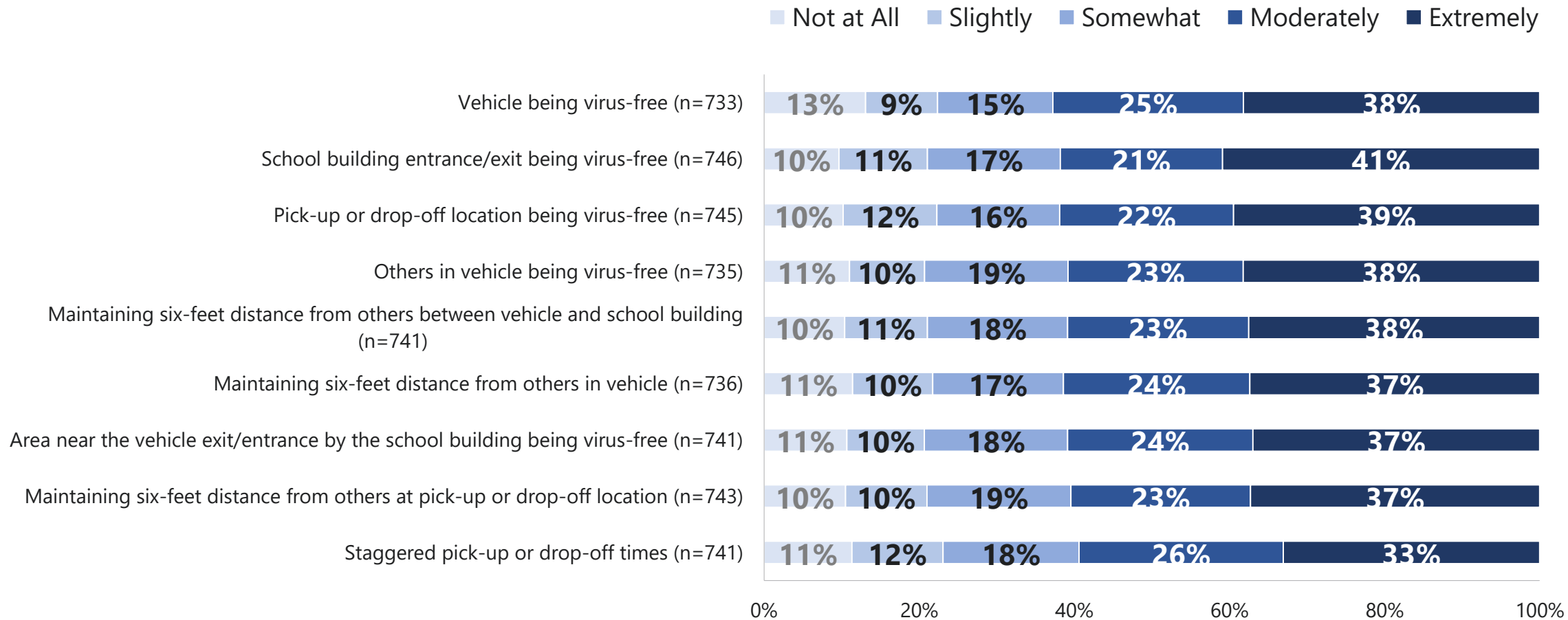
If you were to make the decision today, how would your child get to school in the fall (i.e., next school year)?



Note: Question shown to respondents who say their child will attend school in a building this fall.

Nearly two-fifths of responding parents are extremely concerned with some aspect of their child's transportation to school being virus free and/or six-feet distance from others being maintained.

If you were to send your child to a school building next year, how concerned are you about the following aspects of your child's transportation to school, assuming the COVID-19 pandemic continues into the next school year?



Note: Question shown to respondents who say their child will attend school in a building this fall.

TRANSPORTING SCHOOL CHOICE STUDENTS

A Primer on States' Transportation Policies
Related to Private, Charter, and
Open Enrollment Students

Michael Q. McShane
Michael Shaw



Thank you!

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