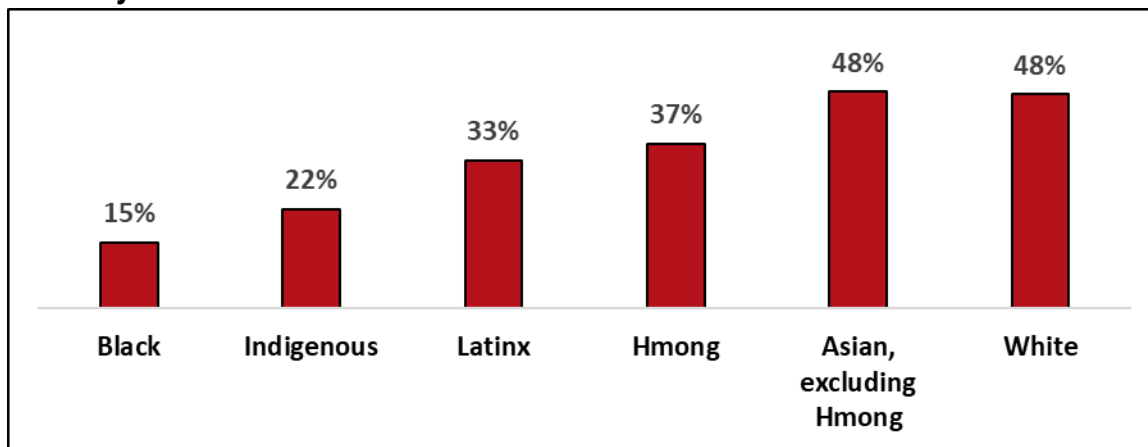


# Minnesota's Diverse Communities Survey:

## Attitudes toward the state's K-12 public schools

September 20, 2021

**The proportion of adults indicating that Minnesota's K-12 public schools offers children equal opportunities "just about always" or "most of the time" varies notably by race and ethnicity**



*Question: "Thinking about the Kindergarten through 12th grade public schools in Minnesota, how often do you think children of your race or ethnicity have the same opportunities as White children?" (for White respondents: "...how often do you think all children have the same opportunities, regardless of racial and ethnic background?")*

*Note: Graph shows proportion indicating "just about always" plus "most of the time."*

*Source: APM Research Lab's Minnesota's Diverse Communities Survey, April 26-June 14, 2021. N = 1,532 Minnesotans age 18 or older; the maximum overall margin of error is  $\pm 4.8$  percentage points.*

# Key findings

- White Minnesotans (48%) are significantly more likely to think all children, regardless of race and ethnicity, are afforded the same opportunities in the state’s K-12 public schools than BIPOC Minnesotans (30%).
  - More than four in 10 Black (45%) and Indigenous Minnesotans (42%) responded that children of their race or ethnicity “rarely” or “never” have the same opportunities as White children in the state’s K-12 public schools.
- Thirty-one percent of BIPOC women state that children of their racial or ethnic background “rarely” or “never” have the same educational opportunities as White children, compared with only 12% of White men, 20% of White women, and 23% of BIPOC men.
- Republicans (71%) are nearly three times more likely than Democrats (26%) to think that children of their race or ethnicity have the same opportunities as White children (or all children, regardless of race and ethnicity, have the same opportunities) in Minnesota’s K-12 public schools “just about always” or “most of the time.”
- More than half (57%) of Greater Minnesota residents think that children of their race or ethnicity have the same opportunities as White children (or all children, regardless of race and ethnicity, have the same opportunities) in Minnesota’s K-12 public schools “just about always” or “most of the time.” Roughly one-third (35%) of Twin Cities residents think the same way.
- Indigenous Minnesotans are the only racial and ethnic group that had more respondents who “never” trust the state’s public schools (10%) than those who trust public schools “just about always” (5%).
  - Indigenous Minnesotans responded with “just about always” at a significantly lower rate than Latinx (23%), Hmong (19%), Asian excluding Hmong (17%) and White (16%) Minnesotans.
- Democrats (64%) are more likely than Independents (48%) and Republicans (47%) to say they trust the state’s K-12 public schools to do the right thing “just about always” or “most of the time.”
- Those who finished only some college (45%) are significantly more likely to trust Minnesota’s K-12 public schools “only some of the time” or “never” compared to those who graduated college (28%).

# Introduction

Minnesota is generally thought of as a highly educated state; 43% of Minnesotans age 25 to 34 hold a bachelor's degree, ranking 8<sup>th</sup> highest in the nation.<sup>1</sup> But the state still struggles with some urgent issues with regard to education, including student mental health, gaps in early childhood education, career and technical education, and persistent education disparities.<sup>2</sup> In 2019, a report from the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis found that Minnesota is one of the worst states in the country for education achievement gaps.<sup>3</sup>

This report is part of a series the APM Research Lab is publishing from the Minnesota's Diverse Communities survey, conducted from April 26 to June 14, 2021. Among other topics, the survey asked Minnesotans about their attitudes toward the state's K-12 public schools:

1. Generally speaking, how much of the time do you think you can trust the Kindergarten through 12th grade public schools in Minnesota to do what is right?
  - Just about always
  - Most of the time
  - Only some of the time
  - Never
  - Not applicable – have not had any experience with Minnesota public schools
  
2. *For BIPOC respondents:* Thinking about the Kindergarten through 12th grade public schools in Minnesota, how often do you think children of your race or ethnicity have the same opportunities as White children?  
*For White respondents:* Thinking about the Kindergarten through 12th grade public schools in Minnesota, how often do you think all children have the same opportunities, regardless of racial and ethnic background?
  - Just about always
  - Most of the time
  - Rarely
  - Never
  - Not applicable – have not had any experience with Minnesota public schools

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mncompass.org/topics/quality-of-life/workforce?educational-attainment#1-6806-g>

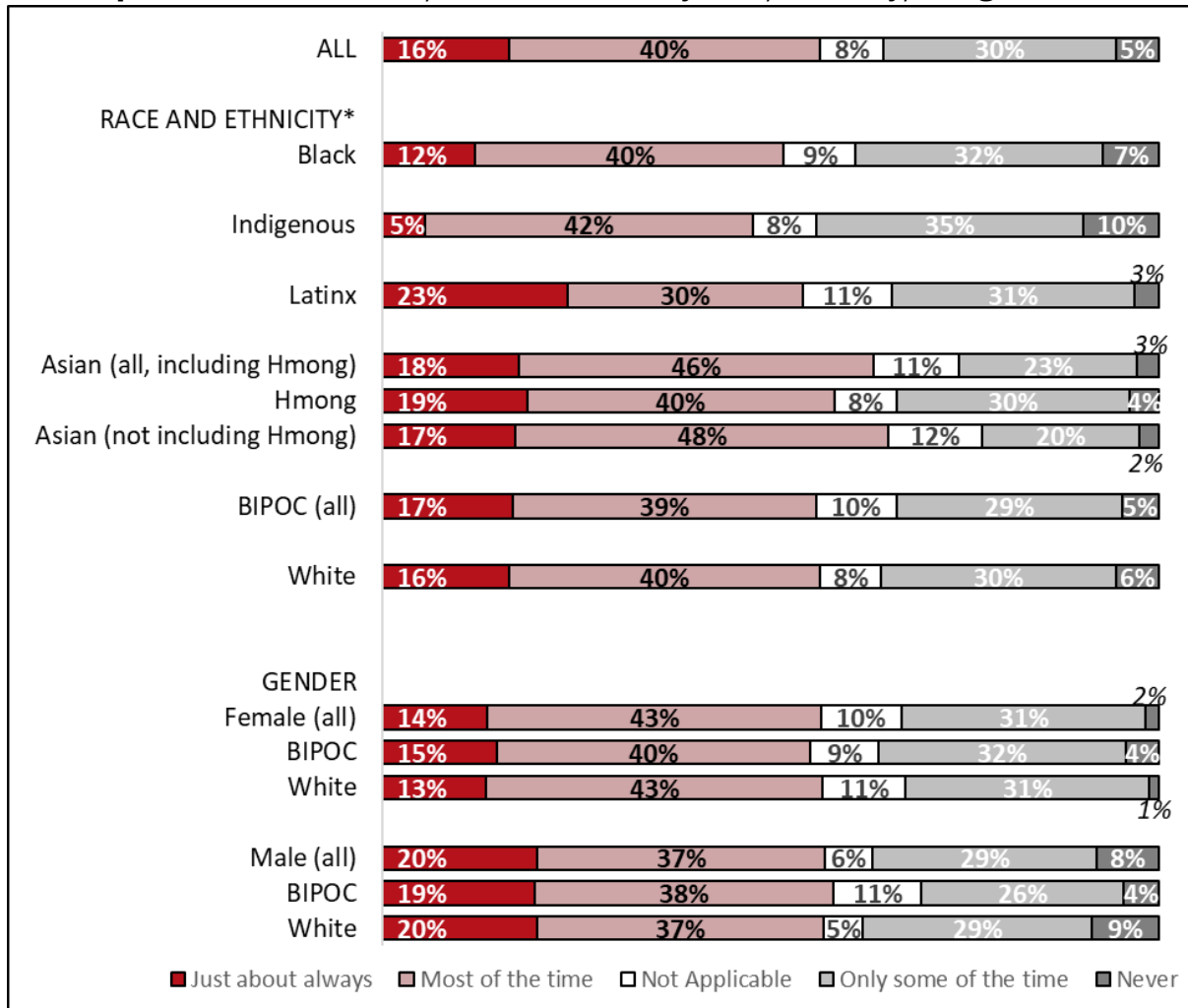
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2020/01/20/4-education-issues-minnesota-lawmakers-want-to-tackle-in-2020>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2019/10/14/mn-among-worst-achievementgap-states>

# Trust in K-12 public schools

A majority of Minnesotans (56%) responded that they trust K-12 public schools in Minnesota to do what is right either “just about always” or “most of the time.” However, a substantial amount—more than one-third of Minnesotans—responded that they “only some of the time” or “never” trust the schools.

**Graph 1:**  
Trust in public K-12 education; detailed results by race, ethnicity, and gender



Question: “Generally speaking, how much of the time do you think you can trust the Kindergarten through 12th grade public schools in Minnesota to do what is right?”

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding or omission of “don’t know” and “refused” responses. Starred heading (\*) indicates statistically significant difference between at least some of the categories of respondents in the grouping; lack of star indicates that the responses of the categories of respondents are not statistically different.

Source: APM Research Lab’s Minnesota’s Diverse Communities Survey, April 26-June 14, 2021. N = 1,532 Minnesotans age 18 or older; the maximum overall margin of error is ±4.8 percentage points.

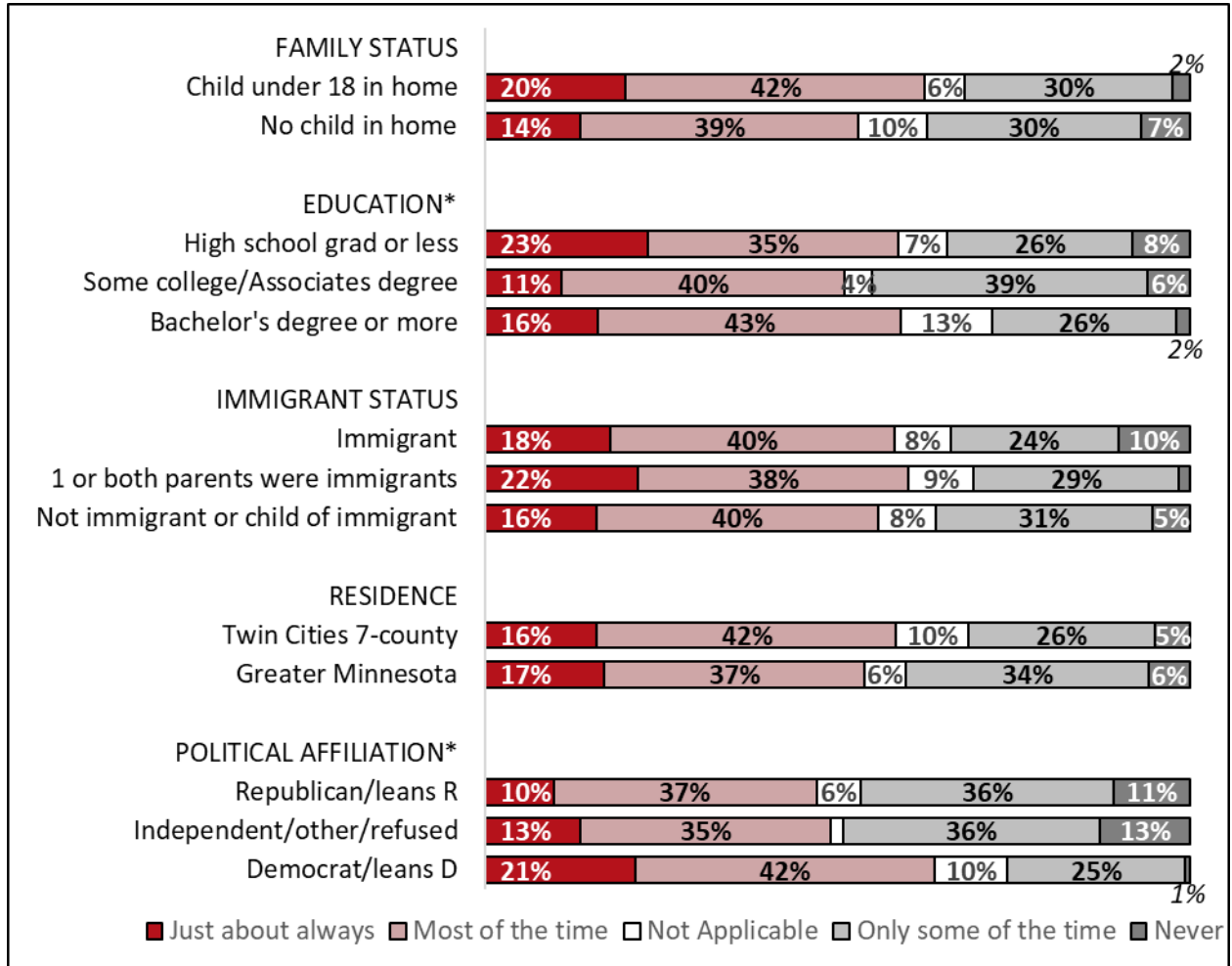
Overall, White and BIPOC Minnesotans have equivalent levels of trust in the state’s K-12 public schools. The racial and ethnic group that stands out among all others, however, is Indigenous Minnesotans. Indigenous Minnesotans are the only group that had more respondents who “never” trust the state’s public schools (10%) than those who trust public schools “just about always” (5%). Only one in 20 Indigenous Minnesotans “just about always” trust the schools—a rate that is significantly lower than those of Latinx (23%), Hmong (19%), Asian excluding Hmong (17%) and White (16%) Minnesotans. Black Minnesotans also had a higher proportion (12%) respond “just about always” compared to Indigenous Minnesotans.

There are also notable differences across political parties. Democrats (64%) are more likely than Independents (48%) and Republicans (47%) to say they trust the state’s K-12 public schools to do the right thing “just about always” or “most of the time.” More than one in 10 Independents (13%) and Republicans (11%) responded that they “never” trust the schools to do the right thing, compared to just 1% of Democrats.

Those who finished some college (45%) were also significantly more likely to say they trust the K-12 public schools “only some of the time” or “never” compared to those who graduated college (28%).

**Graph 2:**

**Trust in K-12 public education by family and immigrant status, educational attainment, area of residence, and political affiliation**



Question: “Generally speaking, how much of the time do you think you can trust the Kindergarten through 12th grade public schools in Minnesota to do what is right?”

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding or omission of “don’t know” and “refused” responses. Starred heading (\*) indicates statistically significant difference between at least some of the categories of respondents in the grouping; lack of star indicates that the responses of the categories of respondents are not statistically different.

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# Belief in equal opportunity for racial and ethnic groups at K-12 public schools

Nearly half (45%) of Minnesotans think that all children, regardless of their racial and ethnic background, have the same opportunities “just about always” or “most of the time”; more than one-quarter of Minnesotans responded with “some of the time” and roughly one-fifth responded with “rarely” or “never.”

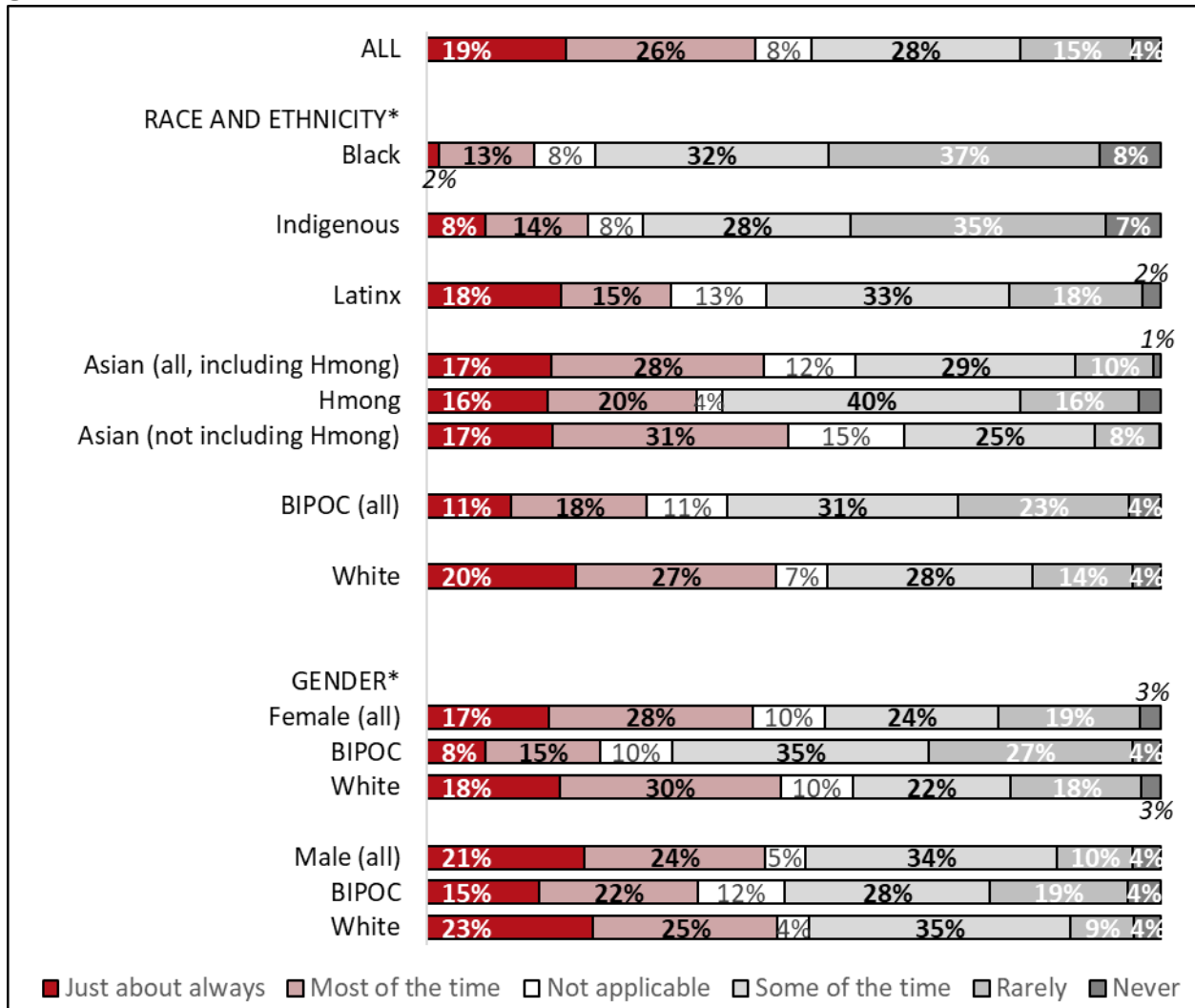
This question on equal opportunity laid bare stark differences across racial and ethnic lines. White Minnesotans (48%) are significantly more likely to believe all children, regardless of race and ethnicity, are afforded the same opportunities in the state’s K-12 public schools than BIPOC Minnesotans (30%). A notably low proportion of Black Minnesotans, 15%, believe that children of their race have the same opportunities as White children in the state’s public schools “just about always” or “most of the time.” Nearly half (45%) of Black Minnesotans responded that Black children are “rarely” or “never” given the same opportunities as White children.

Besides Black Minnesotans, Indigenous Minnesotans are also less likely than other racial and ethnic groups to believe that children of their background have the same opportunities as White children in the state’s K-12 public schools. Indigenous Minnesotans are nearly twice as likely to believe that equal opportunity is provided “rarely” or “never” (42%) than “just about always” or “most of the time” (22%).

While the proportions are not as low as Black and Indigenous Minnesotans, the proportions of Latinx and Hmong Minnesotans who believe that children of their ethnic backgrounds have the same opportunities as White students are significantly lower than the proportion of Whites who believe that all children have the same opportunities. In response to the question, 33% of Latinx adults and 37% of Hmong adults indicated either “just about always” or “most of the time,” compared with 48% of both White adults and Asian Minnesotans who do not identify as Hmong.

While overall similar proportions of men and women see equal opportunity for Minnesota’s K-12 students, BIPOC women stand out as particularly skeptical. Thirty-one percent of BIPOC women state that children of their racial or ethnic background “rarely” or “never” have the same educational opportunities as White children, compared with only 12% of White men, 20% of White women and 23% of BIPOC men.

**Graph 3:**  
**Perceived equality of educational opportunities; detailed results by race, ethnicity, and gender**



Question: “Thinking about the Kindergarten through 12th grade public schools in Minnesota, how often do you think children of your race or ethnicity have the same opportunities as White children?” (for White respondents: “...how often do you think all children have the same opportunities, regardless of racial and ethnic background?”)

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding or omission of “don’t know” and “refused” responses. Starred heading (\*) indicates statistically significant difference between at least some of the categories of respondents in the grouping; lack of star indicates that the responses of the categories of respondents are not statistically different.

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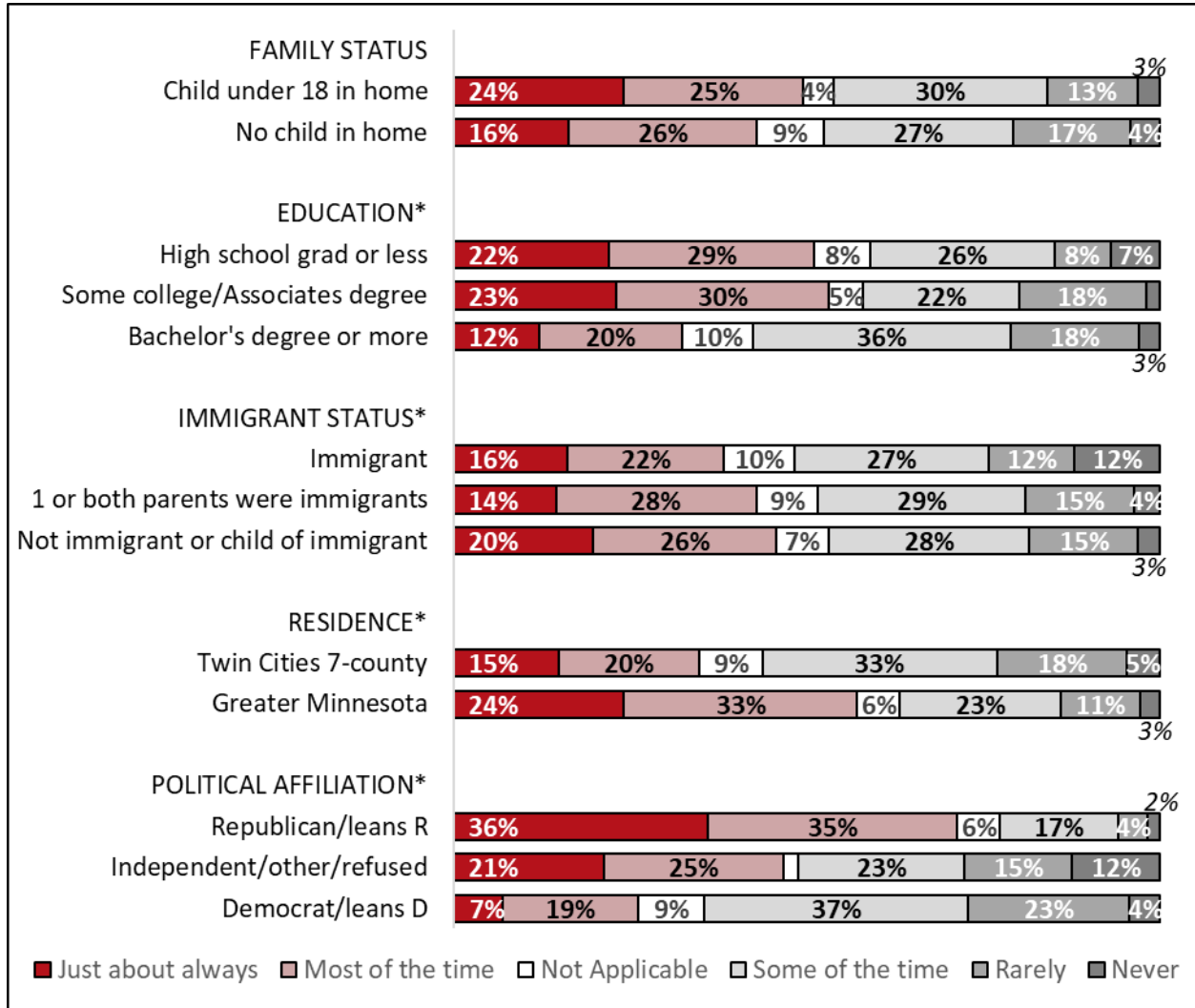


There are also key differences by political affiliation. Looking at the proportions that responded with “just about always” or “most of the time,” Republicans (71%) are nearly three times more likely than Democrats (26%) to think that children of their racial or ethnic background have the same opportunities as White children (or all children, regardless of race and ethnicity, have the same opportunities) in Minnesota’s K-12 public schools. Independents fall in the middle with 45%. Roughly one-quarter (27%) of both Democrats and Independents responded that children of their racial or ethnic background “rarely” or “never” have the same opportunities as White children (or all children “rarely” or “never” have the same opportunities) at Minnesota’s K-12 public schools. Only 6% of Republicans felt the same way.

Besides political affiliation, notable differences also exist among Minnesota’s rural and urban residents. More than half (57%) of respondents who live in the Greater Minnesota region answered with “just about always” or “most of the time” compared to only one-third (35%) of those who live in the Twin Cities who responded the same way. Alternatively, 23% of Twin Cities residents believe children of their racial or ethnic background “rarely” or “never” have the same opportunities as White children (or all children “rarely” or “never” have the same opportunities) in the state’s K-12 public schools. This compares to 14% of Greater Minnesota residents who feel the same way.

Additionally, 12% of immigrants indicated that their children “never” have the same opportunities as White children, which is a significantly higher proportion than those who are not immigrants.

**Graph 4:  
Equality of educational opportunities across race and ethnicity, as perceived according to family and immigrant status, educational attainment, area of residence, and political affiliation**



Question: “Thinking about the Kindergarten through 12th grade public schools in Minnesota, how often do you think children of your race or ethnicity have the same opportunities as White children?” (for White respondents: “...how often do you think all children have the same opportunities, regardless of racial and ethnic background?”)

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding or omission of “don’t know” and “refused” responses. Starred heading (\*) indicates statistically significant difference between at least some of the categories of respondents in the grouping; lack of star indicates that the responses of the categories of respondents are not statistically different.

Source: APM Research Lab’s Minnesota’s Diverse Communities Survey, April 26-June 14, 2021. N = 1,532 Minnesotans age 18 or older; the maximum overall margin of error is ±4.8 percentage points.

# Acknowledgments

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We are especially thankful to the members of the listening sessions who helped us pretest an early version of the survey, and for the 1,532 Minnesotans who participated in the survey. This activity is made possible in part by the Minnesota Legacy Amendment's Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund, as well as funding from the Bush Foundation, and the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation.

## About the survey

SSRS of Glen Mills, Pennsylvania conducted the Minnesota Diverse Communities Survey, with data-collection occurring from April 26 to June 14, 2021 among a sample of N=1,532 Minnesota adults. The overall design effect for the study was 3.68, with a margin of error of +/- 4.8 percentage points.

Group	Completes (unweighted)	DEFF	Margin of error
Black	278	1.92	± 8.1 percentage points
Indigenous	170	1.75	± 9.9 percentage points
Latinx	185	1.63	± 9.2 percentage points
Hmong	252	1.68	± 8 percentage points
Asian (except Hmong)	145	1.92	± 11.3 percentage points
White	502	1.66	± 5.6 percentage points
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,532</b>	<b>3.68</b>	± <b>4.8</b> percentage points

In the analysis the responses are weighted to more accurately reflect Minnesota’s population. For additional details about the sample and survey methodology, as well as transparency disclosures relevant to the American Association of Public Opinion, the Roper Center and CNN, please see: <https://www.apmresearchlab.org/mdc-survey>.

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General contact: [info@apmresearchlab.org](mailto:info@apmresearchlab.org) | [apmresearchlab.org](http://apmresearchlab.org)  
Media: Elle Lyons ([eloyns@americanpublicmedia.org](mailto:eloyns@americanpublicmedia.org); 651-290-1219)