



The State of School Climate in K-12 Districts

Results and Analysis

School Year: 2025-2026



A Note from the Sogolytics Managed Research Team



School climate is the sum of what everyone in a school experiences every day.

Educators have long understood that school climate shapes what happens in classrooms every day. A growing body of research now reinforces that belief, showing that the way students, staff, and families experience school can have a direct impact on achievement, engagement, behavior, and long-term success.

A positive school climate creates the conditions for learning and success. When students feel safe, supported, respected, and connected, they are more likely to engage academically, achieve stronger outcomes, graduate, and experience greater well-being. The benefits extend beyond students. Schools with positive climates are also more successful at retaining staff, supporting educator satisfaction, and building the trust with families and communities that strengthens long-term success.

School climate is not defined by one program, policy, or survey score. It is shaped by many interconnected experiences: the quality of instruction, the consistency of expectations, the safety and inclusivity of the learning environment, the strength of relationships among students and adults, the effectiveness of communication, and the degree to which families feel welcomed and heard.

This annual benchmarking report offers school and district leaders a valuable point of comparison as they examine their own climate data. The findings are intended to support reflection, planning, and action to help leaders identify strengths, uncover gaps between community experiences, and guide continuous improvement efforts.

Survey Design

Sogolytics developed the School Climate Survey to help districts better understand the day-to-day experiences of students, staff, and families.

The Survey Was Designed With Three Goals in Mind

1

Measure how students, staff, and families experience school climate across seven key dimensions

2

Classify responses by level of agreement to surface areas of strength and concern

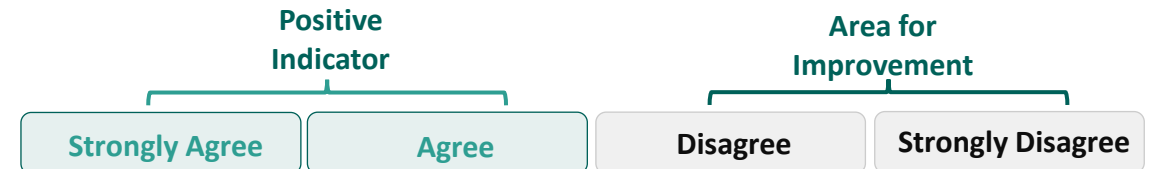
3

Identify where school climate can be celebrated and where targeted improvement is needed

The Survey Consists of Two Parts

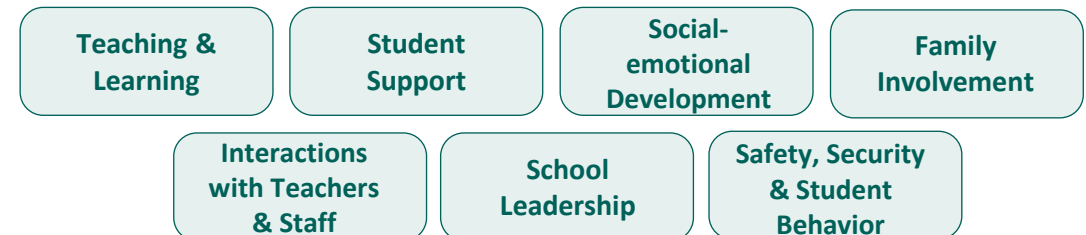
PART 1 — Quality of Education and Culture and Climate Score

Items measuring each participant's perception of the quality of education received and overall culture and climate. Responses use a four-point scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree).



PART 2 — Climate Dimensions

Items influencing school climate, falling under seven dimensions:



About the Report



This report presents School Climate results from up to 17 school districts that administered the survey during the 2025–2026 school year.

Survey administration varied by district, with most surveys remaining open for approximately two weeks.

Surveys were distributed through methods such as unique email invitations, secure, password enabled log-in landing pages, and public survey links posted on district or school websites, and could be completed on computers, tablets, or smartphones.

Parents/Guardians and campus-based staff members were able to take the survey for each child they had enrolled in a district school or for each campus at which they worked. Surveys were translated into selected languages when appropriate for district populations.

Figures and charts display average responses across all districts.

Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

N/A indicates that item was not asked to that respondent group.

Data labels below 5% are omitted from charts and graphs.

Summary of Methodology



Sogolytics Uses Census Sampling

Census sampling provides data reflective of all voices in the community. While all parents/guardians, campus-based staff, and secondary students within each district were invited to take the survey, not all participated. Statistical tests designed to infer the perceptions of a larger population from a smaller sample size are not appropriate; rather, descriptive statistics provide the most accurate representation of the data.

Types of Data Collection:

- ❖ Random Sampling: Involves selecting a representative subset of the population. It's practical for large populations but carries a risk of sampling errors.
- ❖ Census Sampling: Involves studying the entire population. It provides complete data without sampling error.

Census sampling can be more accurate and robust than random sampling:

- ❖ Full Representation: Includes every individual in the population, ensuring that all subgroups are represented.
- ❖ No Sampling Error: Since every individual is surveyed, there is no risk of sampling error, leading to more accurate data.
- ❖ Granular Insights: Provides detailed information about the entire population, enabling analysis at macro and micro levels.
- ❖ Non-Response Bias: This can be minimized since the goal is to reach everyone in the population. Since every individual is included, there is no selection bias, which can occur in random sampling if the sample is not perfectly representative.

Key Findings and Insights

Key Takeaway

*Where is the gap between the school we intend to provide
and the one students experience?*



Where are the biggest perception gaps between adults and students?



Are these gaps narrowing or widening over time? Are they consistent across schools, grade levels, or student groups?



What factors could be contributing to these differences in perception?

Executive Summary



Key Findings from the 2025-2026 School Year

- ❖ **Adults working in schools view school climate more positively than students.** Across all major dimensions, campus-based staff reported the highest levels of agreement, including Teaching and Learning (90%), Family Involvement (91%), and Safety, Security, and Student Behavior (88%). Parents/Guardians rated these areas slightly lower (80%, 87%, and 78%, respectively), while secondary students reported the lowest levels of agreement (73%, 80%, and 66%).
- ❖ **Adults consistently view student support and preparedness more positively than students themselves.** 92% of campus-based staff said that students receive the individual support they need, compared with 78% of parents/guardians and 68% of secondary students. Likewise, 89% of campus-based staff and 81% of parents/guardians believe students are prepared for the next grade level and life after high school, while 74% of secondary students share that view.
- ❖ **Real-world relevance and meaningful feedback remain opportunities for improvement in Teaching and Learning.** The lowest-rated instructional item across all respondent groups was whether teachers show how lessons relate to life outside school. Agreement ranged from 56% among secondary students to 67% among parents/guardians and 85% among campus-based staff. Student ratings were also comparatively lower on receiving helpful feedback from teachers (70%).
- ❖ **The largest student-staff perception gap centers on personal support rather than academics.** Most secondary students (81%) said that an adult is available to help with academic concerns, but fewer felt they had an adult to turn to for a personal problem (68%) or believed teachers genuinely care about them (70%). Campus-based staff reported high agreement across all three items, with 98% on the first item and 97% on the remaining two.

Executive Summary (Continued)

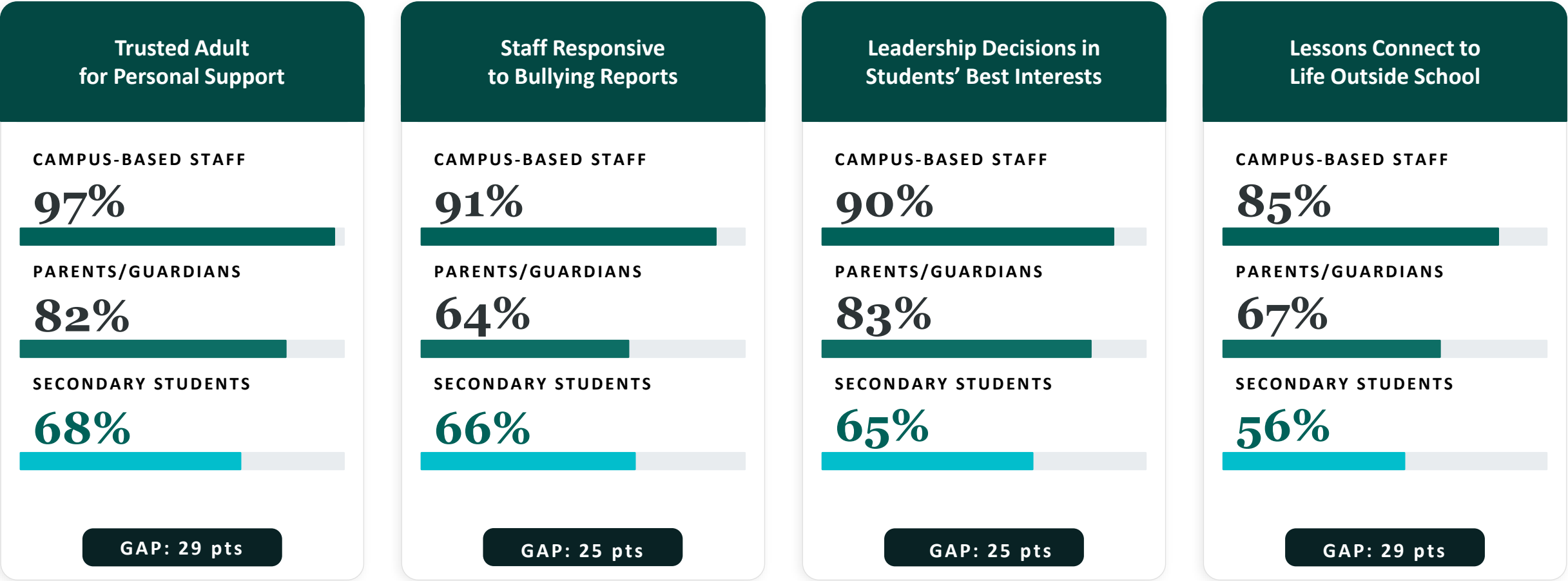


Key Findings from the 2025-2026 School Year

- ❖ **Confidence in school leadership varies by respondent group.** 90% of campus-based staff said that school leaders make decisions in the best interests of all students, compared with 83% of parents/guardians and 65% of secondary students. An additional 16% of secondary students selected "Don't Know," suggesting many have limited visibility into leadership decisions.
- ❖ **Students view the school's physical environment less positively than adults.** Fewer than three-quarters of secondary students (74%) said their school is safe, compared with 91% of parents/guardians and 95% of campus-based staff. Similar differences appeared in perceptions of school facilities, with 63% of secondary students saying their school is clean and well maintained, compared with 89% of parents/guardians and 90% of campus-based staff.
- ❖ **Student behavior reveal the district's largest perception gaps.** Safety, Security, and Student Behavior was the lowest-rated dimension overall, with campus-based staff rating it 22 percentage points higher than secondary students. The gap is evident in perceptions of peer respect: 55% of secondary students said students treat each other with respect compared with 71% of parents/guardians and 77% of campus-based staff. Views also diverged on how schools respond to bullying. While 91% of campus-based staff said staff respond appropriately to reported bullying, agreement dropped to 66% among secondary students and 64% among parents/guardians. More than one in four parents/guardians (27%) selected "Don't Know" on this item, suggesting many families have limited visibility into how bullying incidents are handled.

The Most Consistent Finding: Adults and Students See School Differently

On nearly every dimension, staff rate their schools higher than parents/guardians, who rate them higher than students



Schools that rely only on adult feedback to assess school climate risk overlooking important differences in how students experience the school environment.

From Data to Action: Four Strategic Priorities

The most actionable implications from the 2025-2026 benchmark across all dimensions

1 Close the Adult-Student Perception Gap

WHAT THE DATA SAYS

On support, safety, fairness, and leadership decisions, staff see a better school than students experience.

HOW TO RESPOND

- Administer student-facing items annually
- Share findings with students and ask for their interpretation
- Avoid averaging scores across groups
- Track improvements over time and determine where gaps in improvement between groups emerges

2 Make Real World Relevance an Instructional Standard

WHAT THE DATA SAYS

56% of students connect lessons to life, the lowest-rated instructional item. 85% of staff believe they are making this connection.

HOW TO RESPOND

- Add relevance to instructional observation frameworks
- Invest in PD for project-based and career-connected learning
- Ask students directly: what would make this lesson feel relevant?

3 Build Proactive Support Structures for Students

WHAT THE DATA SAYS

Staff perceive access to a trusted adult as widespread, while only 68% of students report experiencing it.

HOW TO RESPOND

- Implement advisory structures that assign adult relationships proactively
- Track student-reported support access as a leading retention indicator
- Survey students on what support would be most useful — not just availability

4 Move Family Engagement from Access to Influence

WHAT THE DATA SAYS

Families feel informed and welcomed, but input opportunities lag 10-20 points behind.

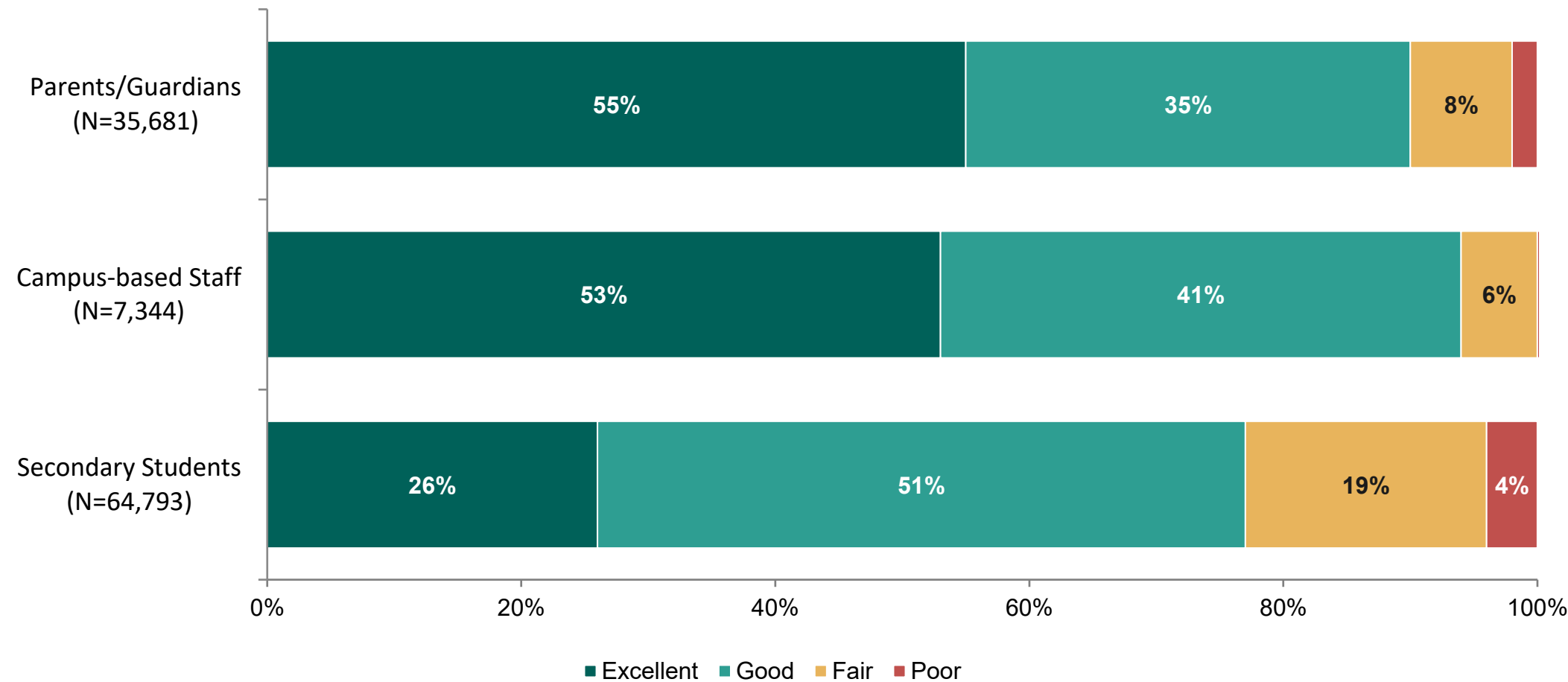
HOW TO RESPOND

- Create structured input cycles tied to planning decisions
- Report back to families on how their feedback shaped decisions
- Track the community input item separately as a strategic KPI

Comparisons by Respondent Group

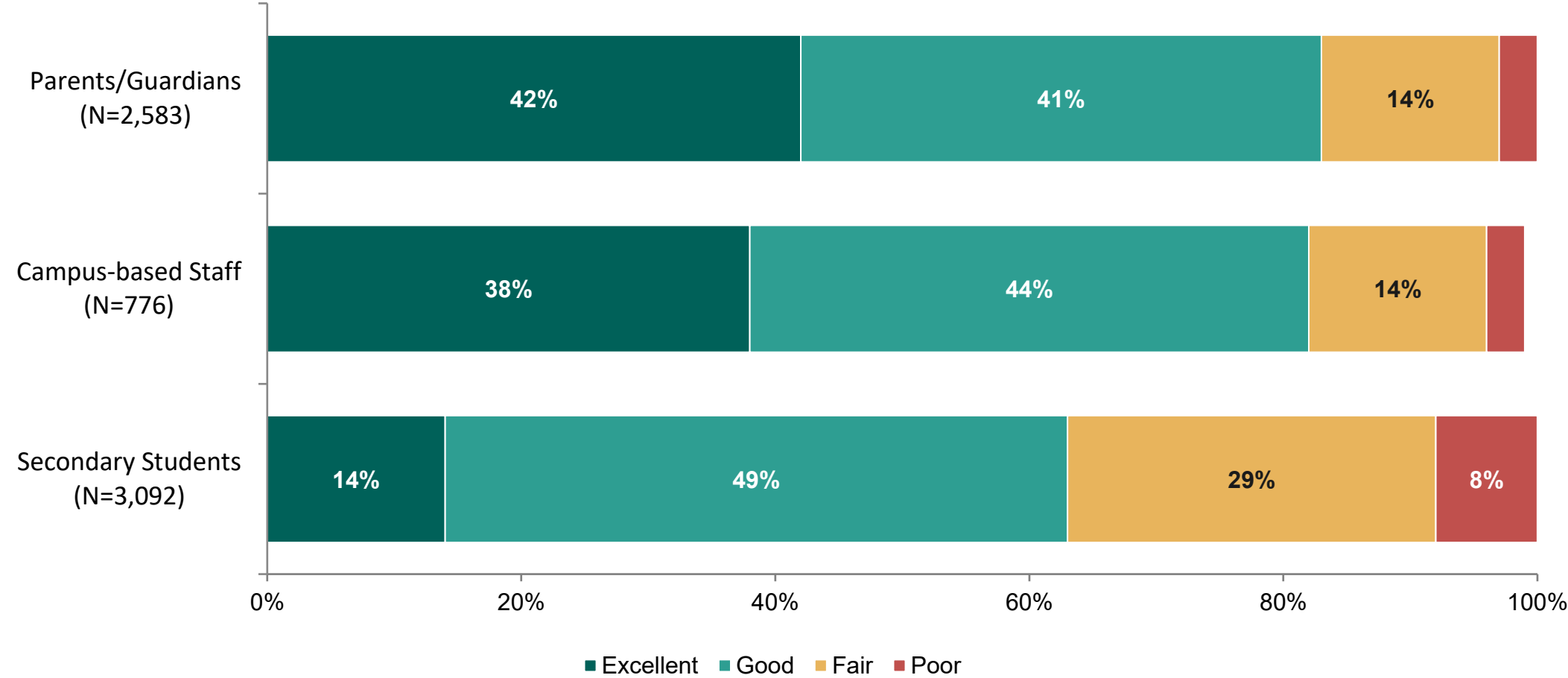
Quality of Education

How would you rate the overall quality of the education at this school?

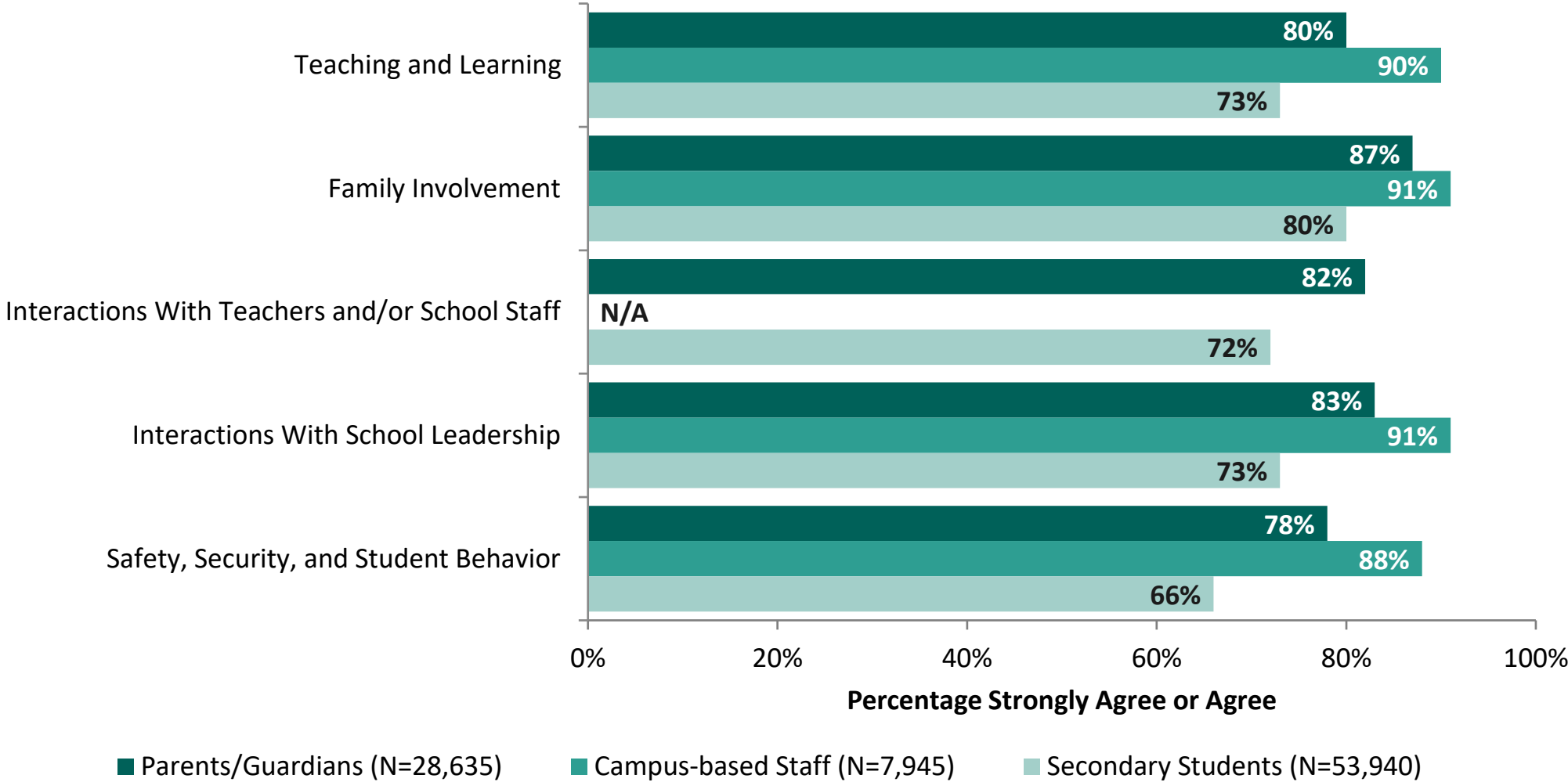


Overall Culture and Climate

How would you rate the overall culture and climate (environment) at this school?



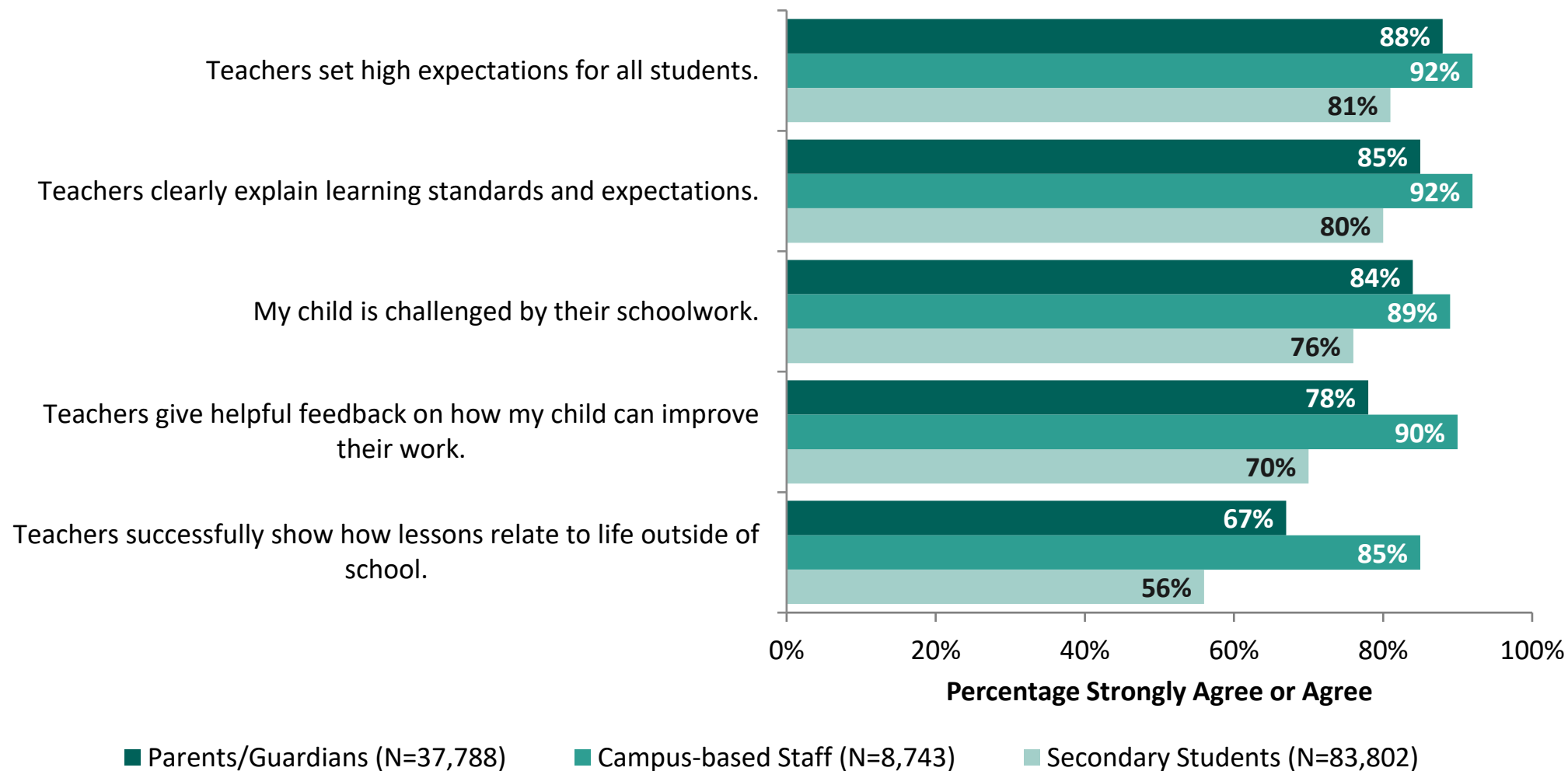
Dimension Scores



Answer options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know
This graph shows the average of Strongly Agree or Agree responses for all items within each dimension. N/A indicates that dimension is not relevant to that respondent group.

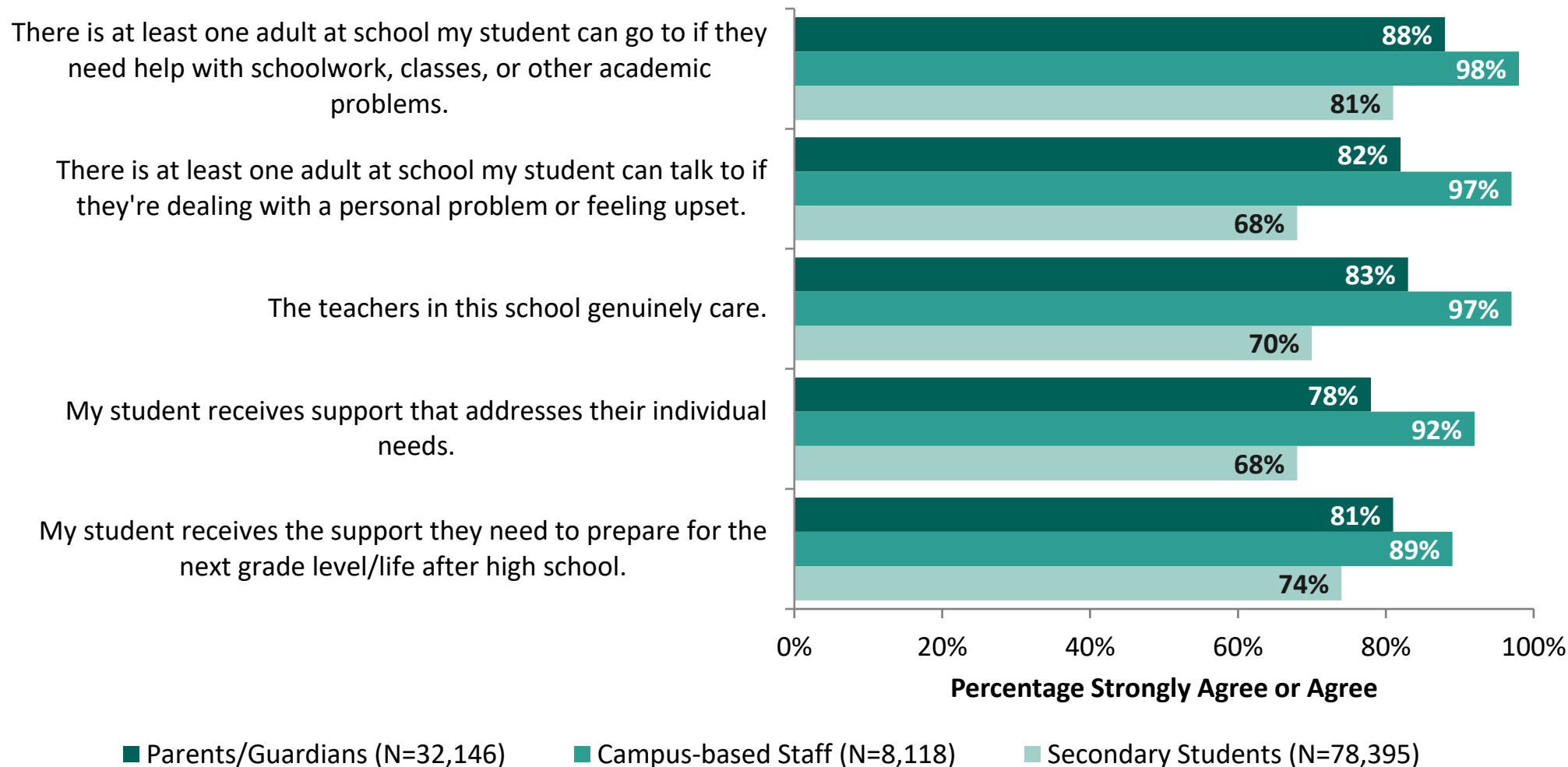
Teaching and Learning

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



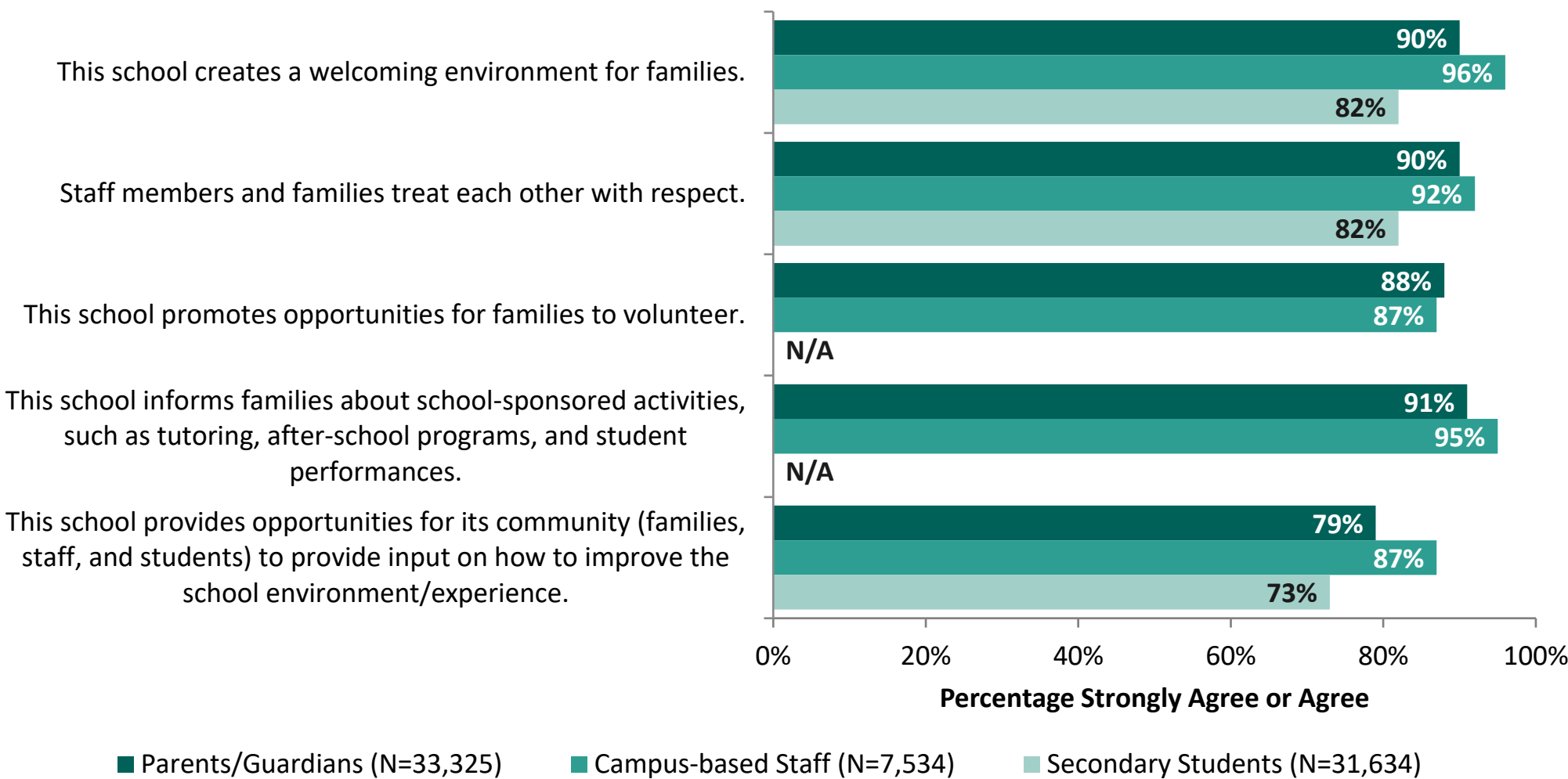
Student Support and Relationships

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Family Involvement

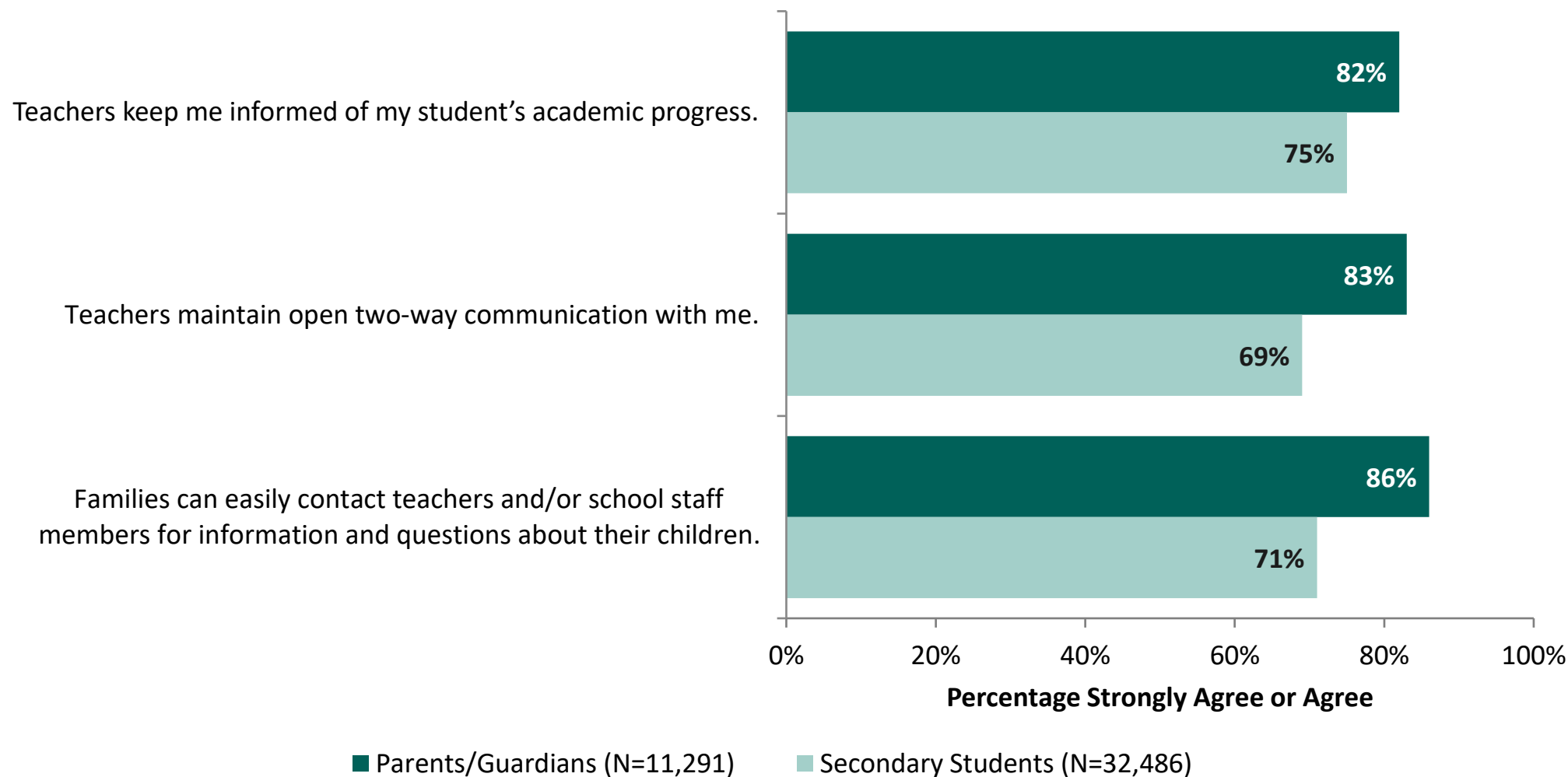
How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



N/A indicates that item was not asked to that respondent group.

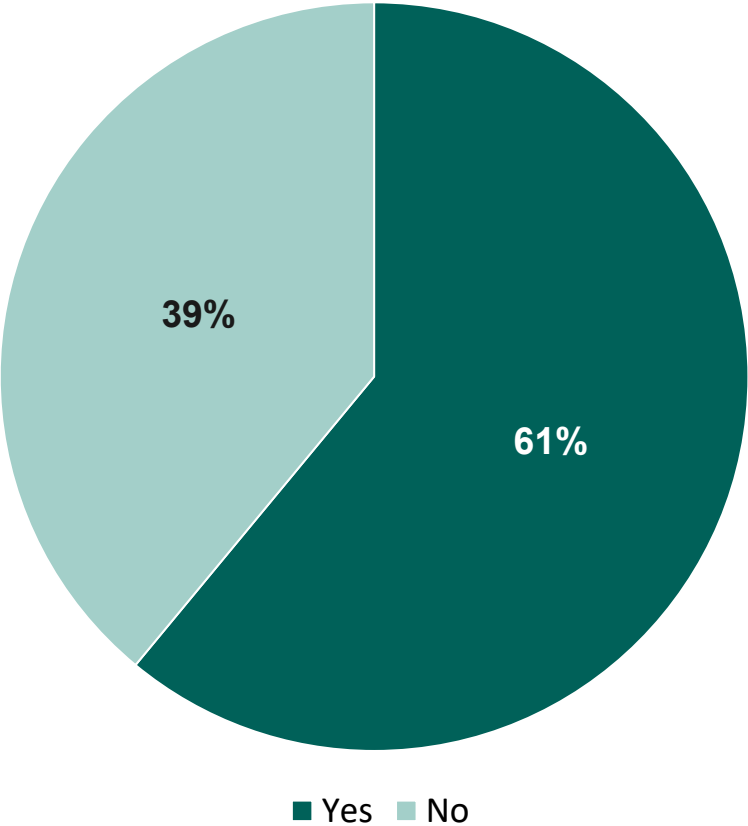
Interactions With Teachers and/or School Staff

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

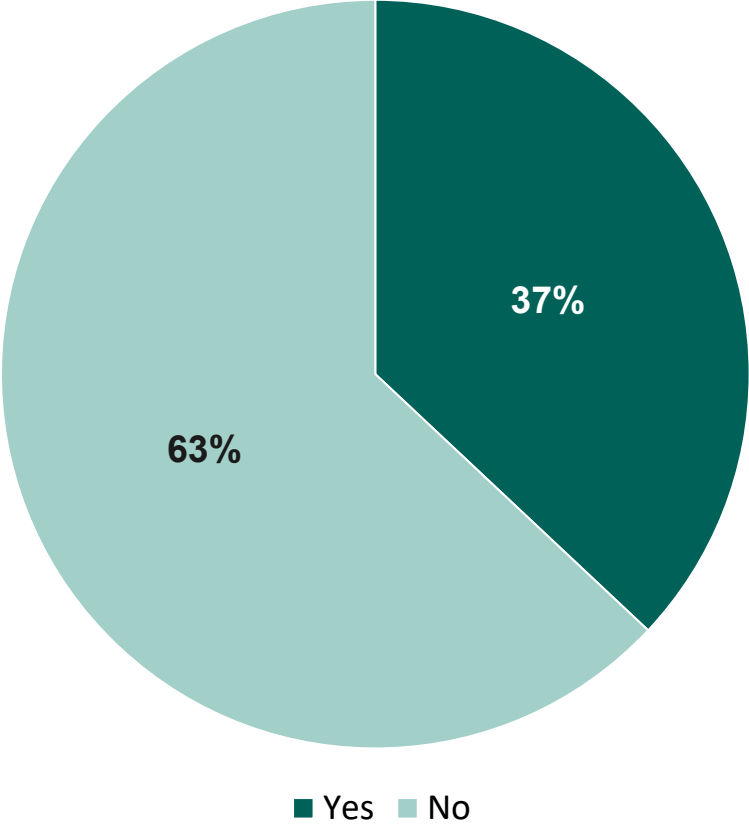


Interactions With Teachers and/or School Staff (Continued)

This past school year, have you reached out to your (child's) teacher or another school staff member with a need or concern?



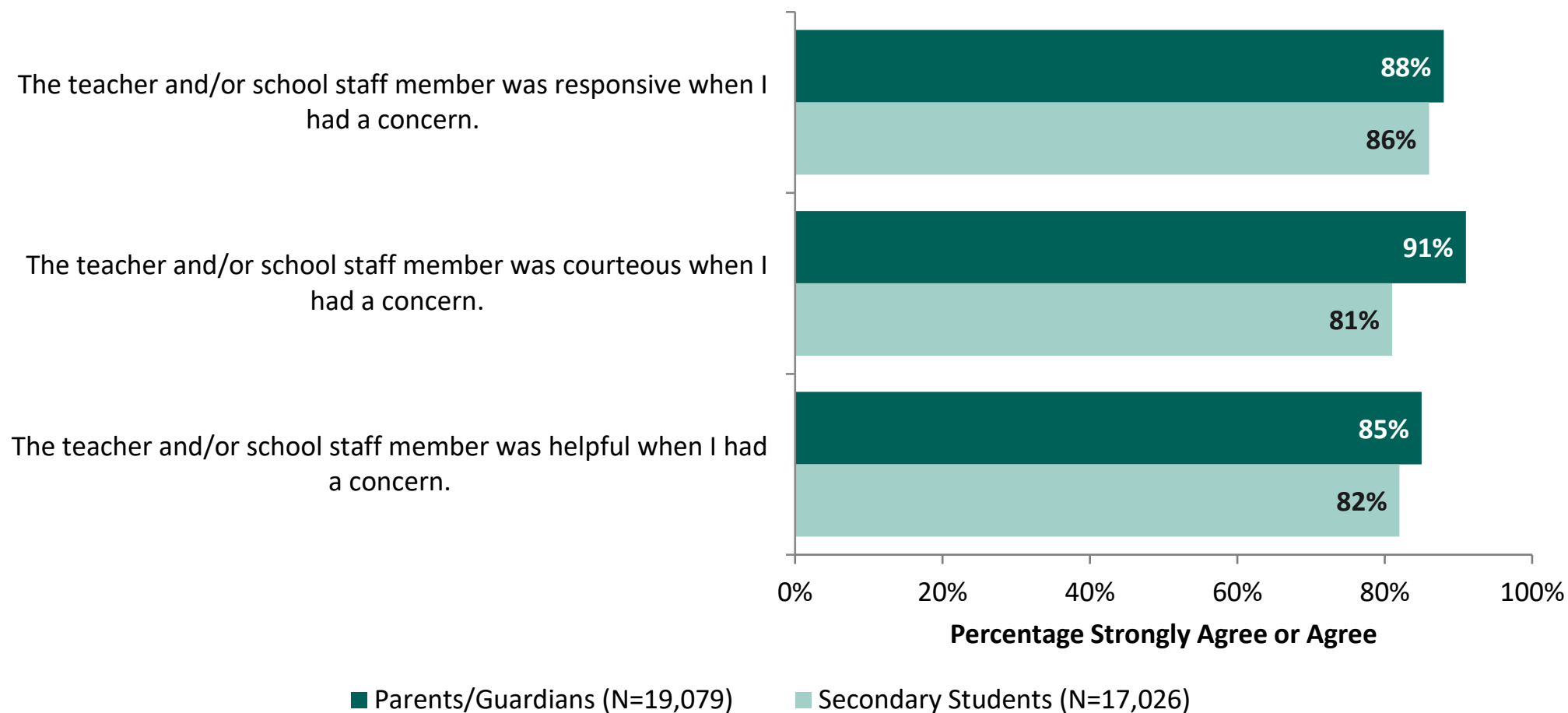
Parents/Guardians (N=31,245)



Secondary Students (N=47,597)

Interactions With Teachers and/or School Staff (Continued)

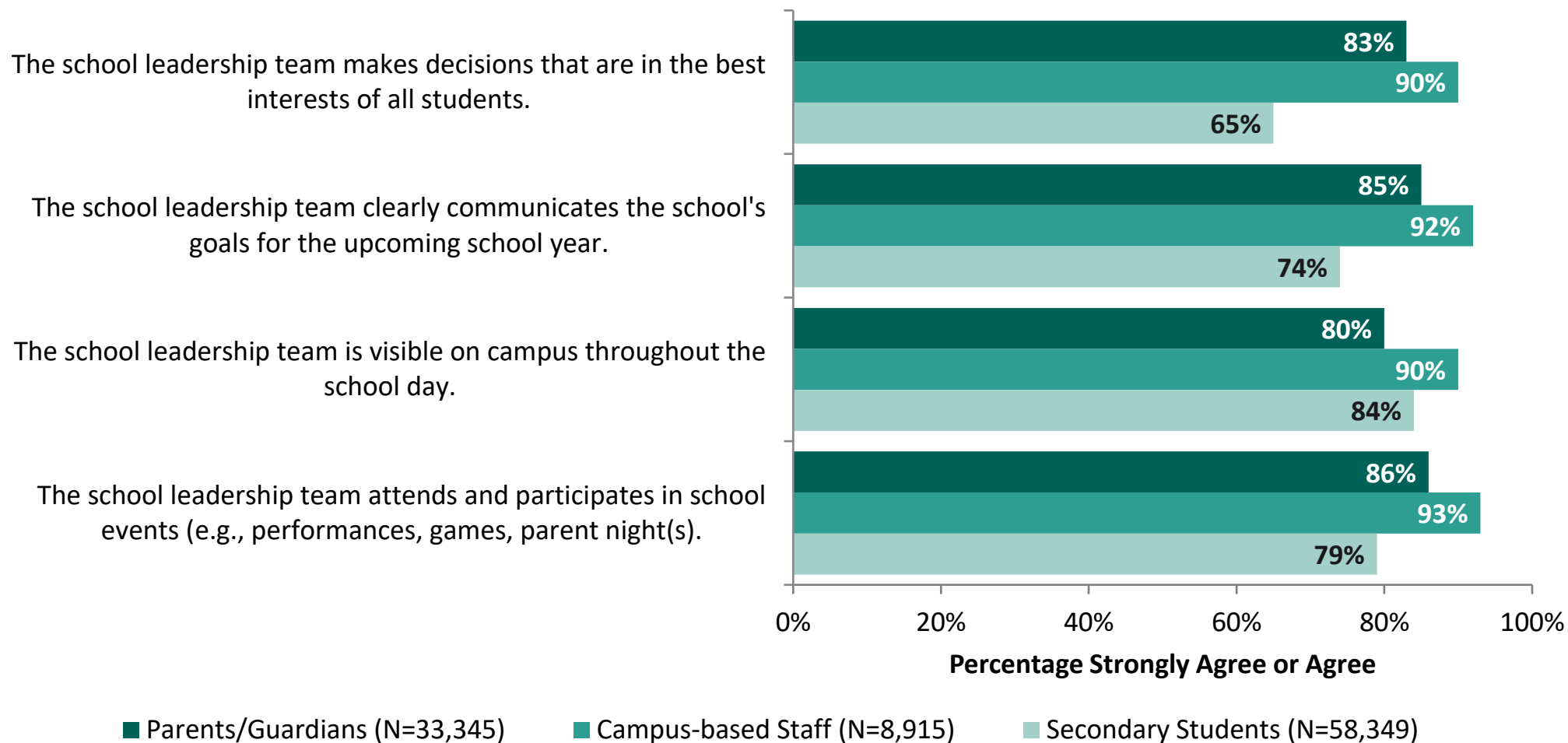
How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Only participants who reached out to a teacher/school staff member answered these questions.

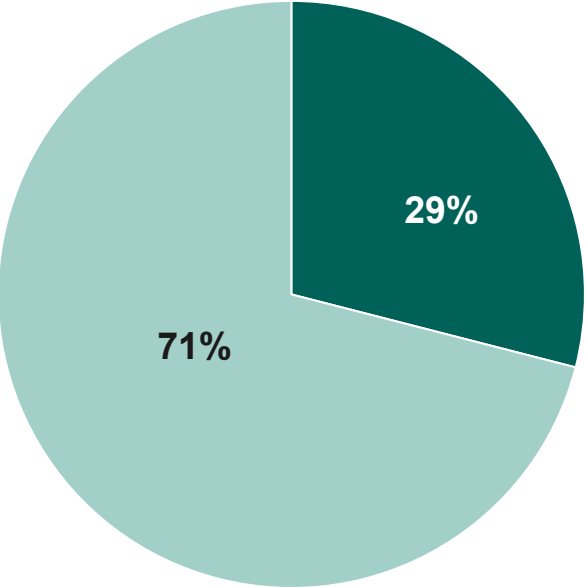
Interactions With School Leadership

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



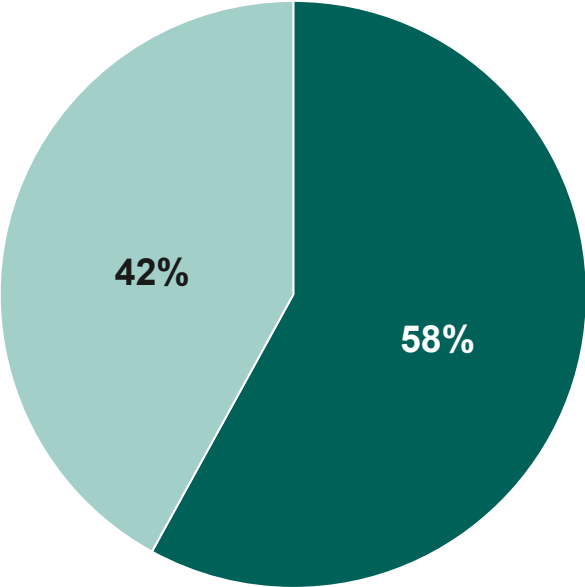
Interactions With School Leadership (Continued)

This past school year, have you reached out to a member of the school leadership team with a need or concern?



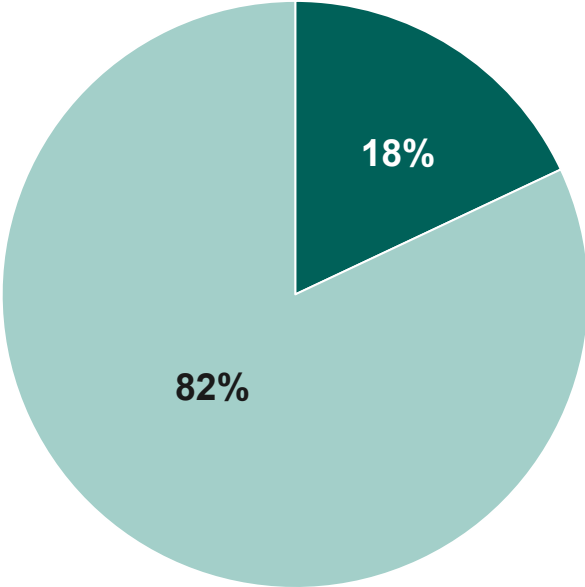
■ Yes ■ No

Parents/Guardians (N=36,755)



■ Yes ■ No

Campus-based Staff (N=8,402)

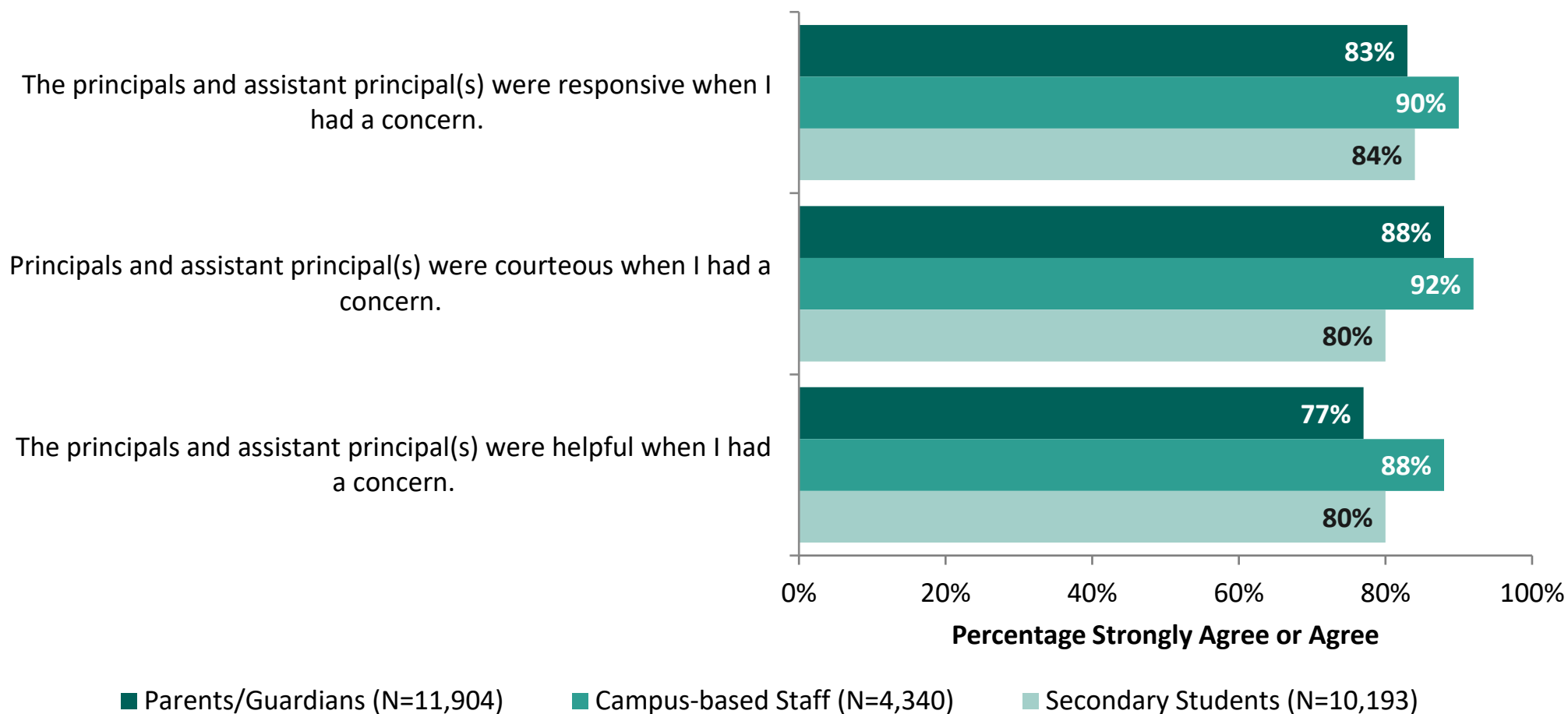


■ Yes ■ No

Secondary Students (N=60,244)

Interactions With School Leadership (Continued)

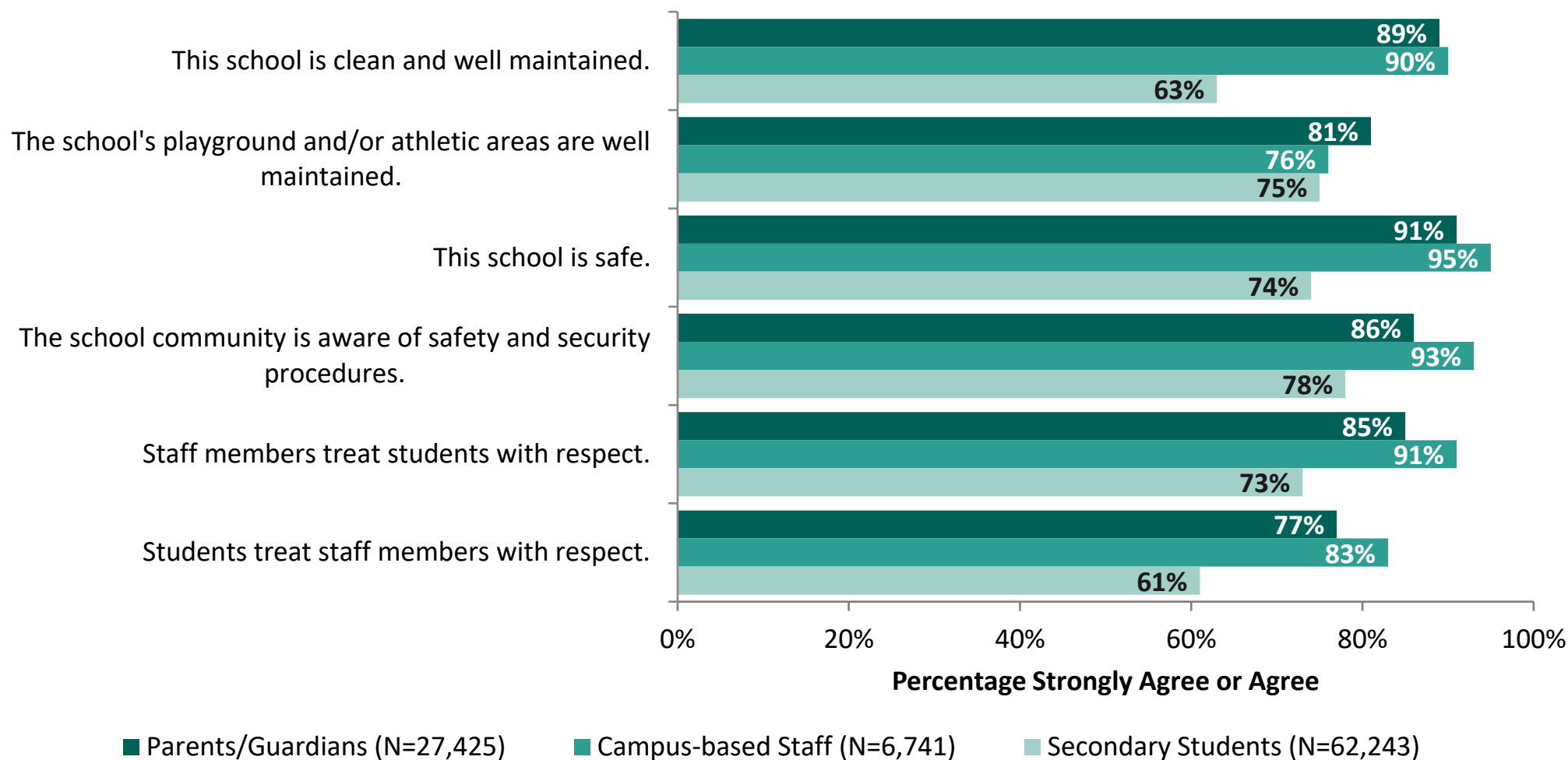
How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Only participants who reached out to school leadership answered these questions.

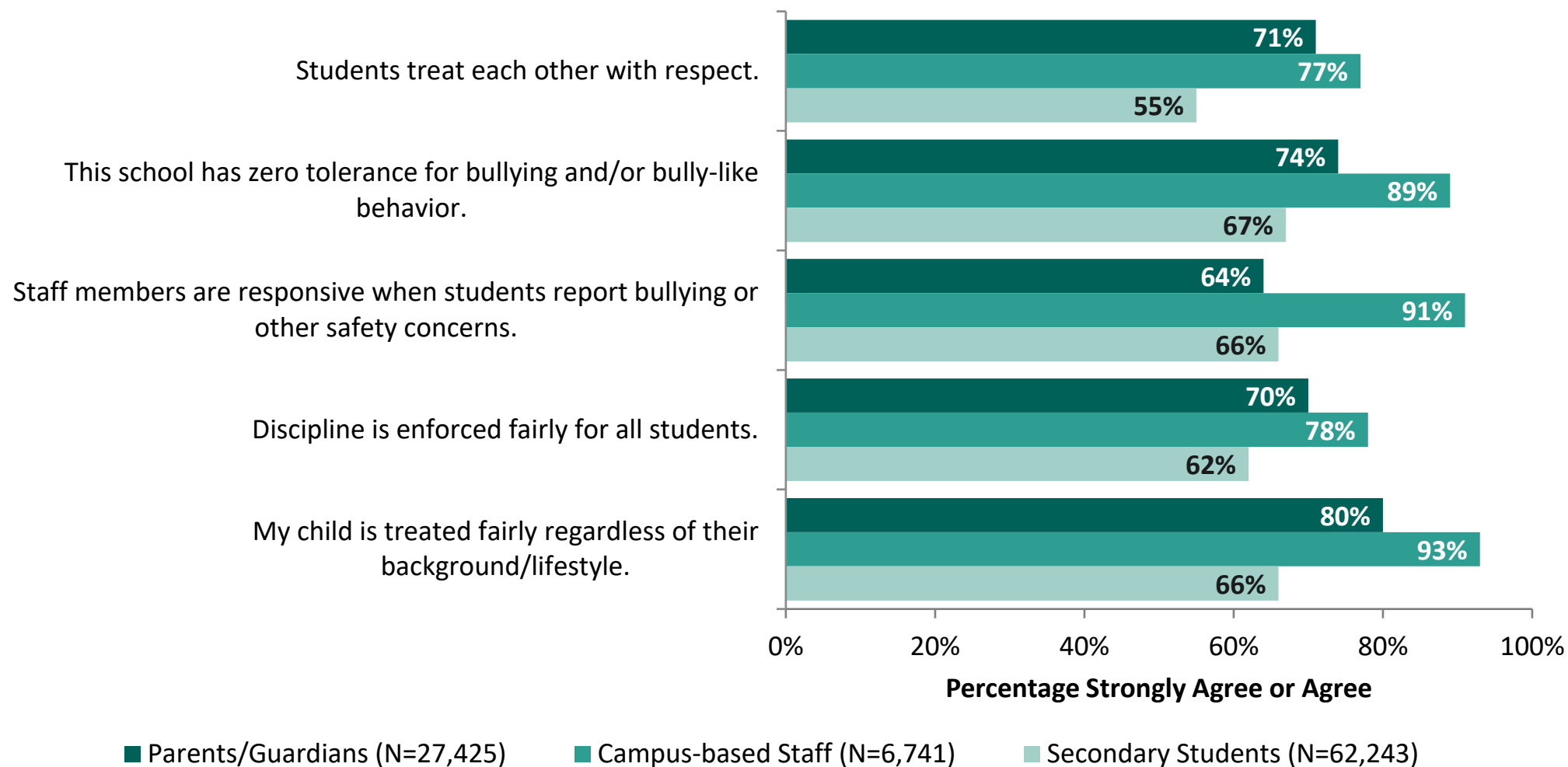
Safety, Security, and Student Behavior

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



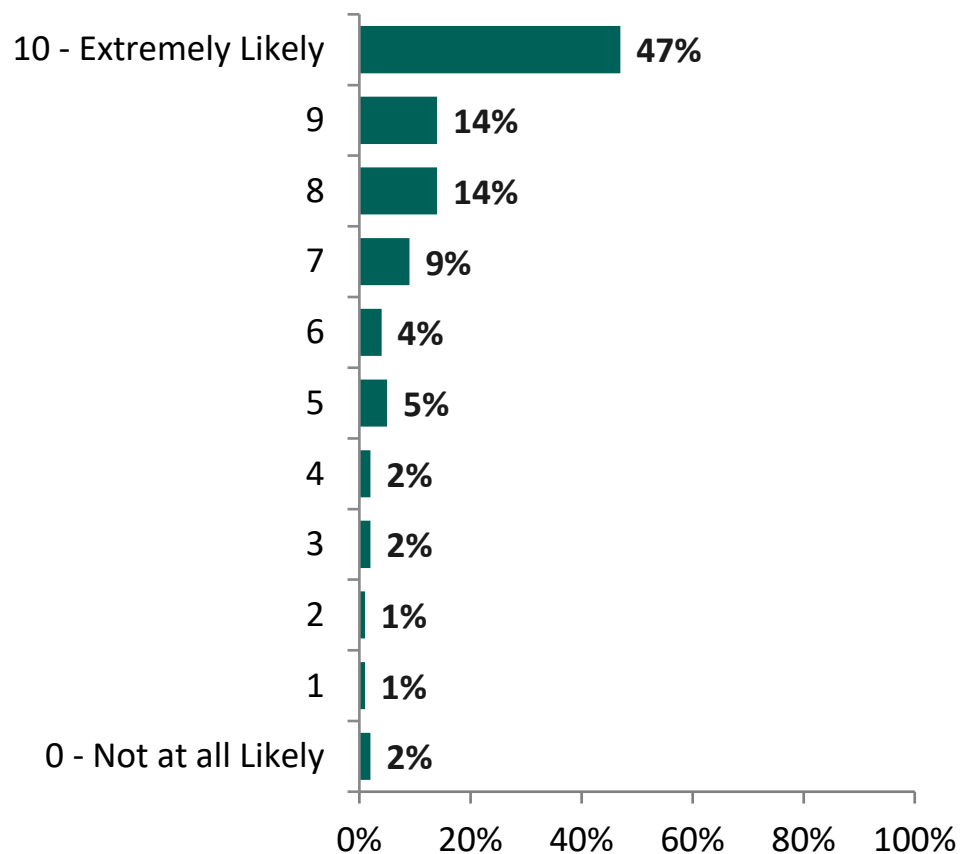
Safety, Security, and Student Behavior (Continued)

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

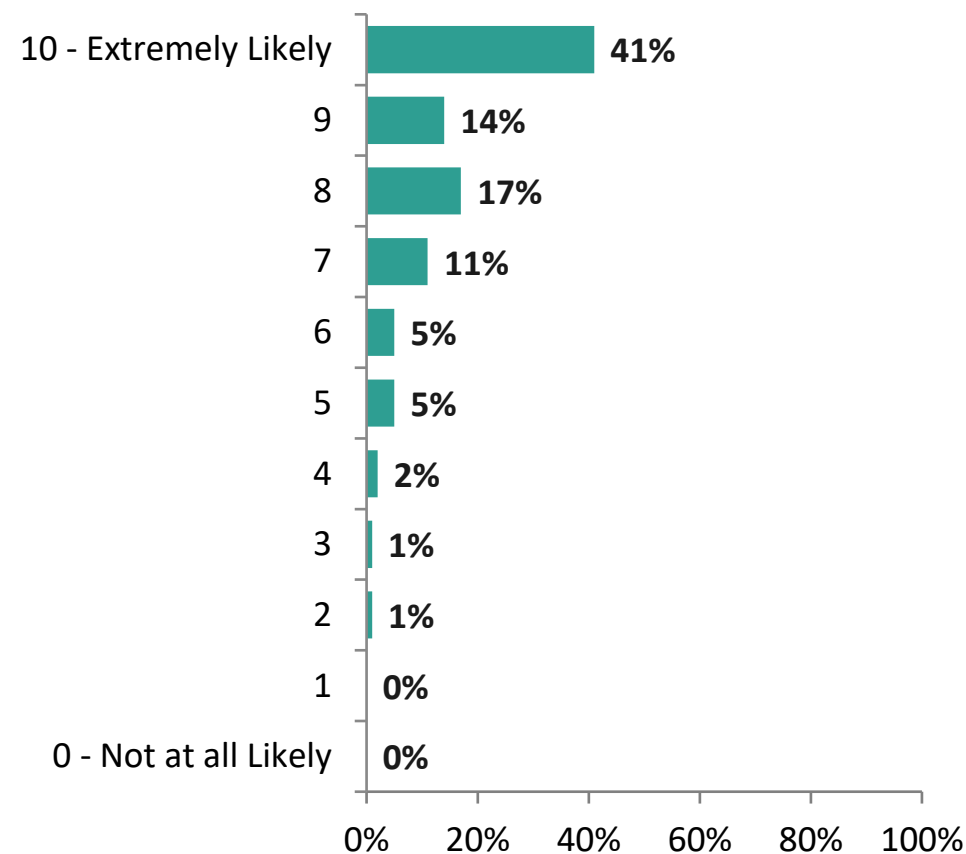


School Recommendation

If you knew someone moving to the area with a school-aged child, how likely would you be to recommend your child's/your school to them?



■ Parents/Guardians (N=31,978)

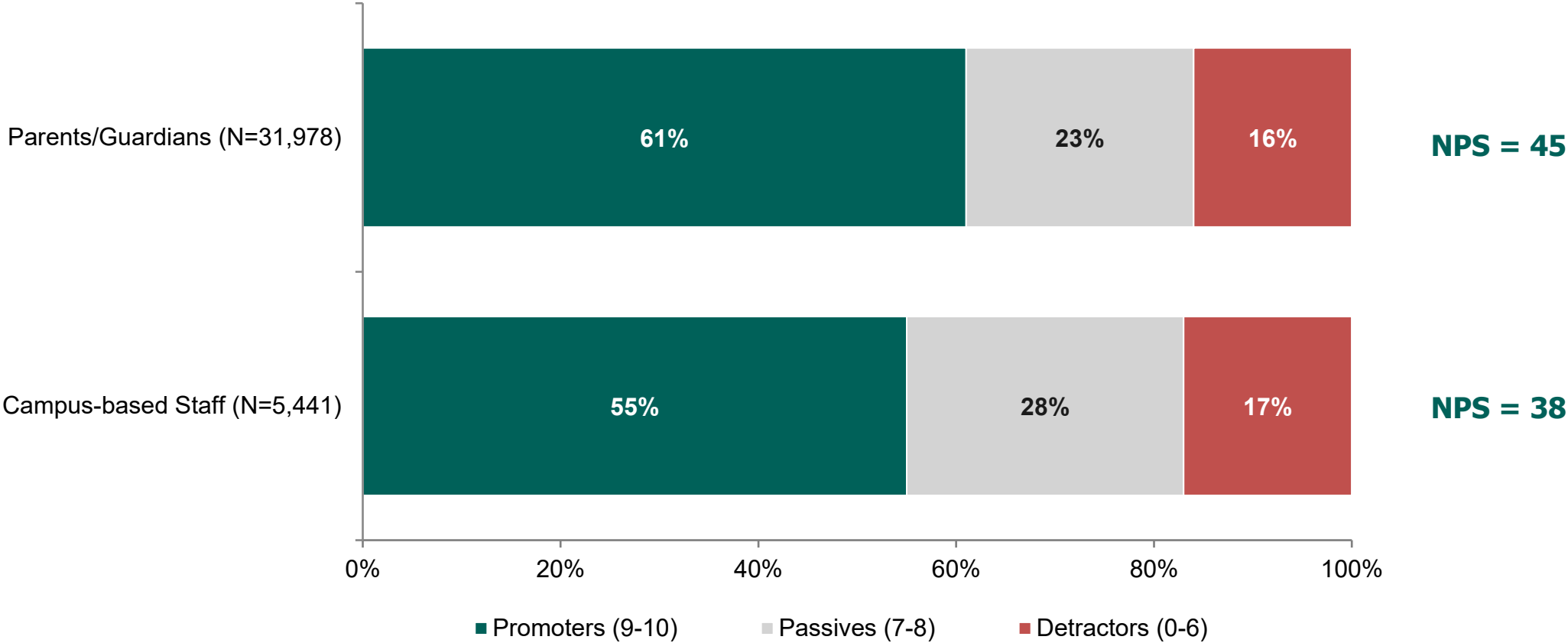


■ Campus-based Staff (N=5,441)

School Net Promoter Score

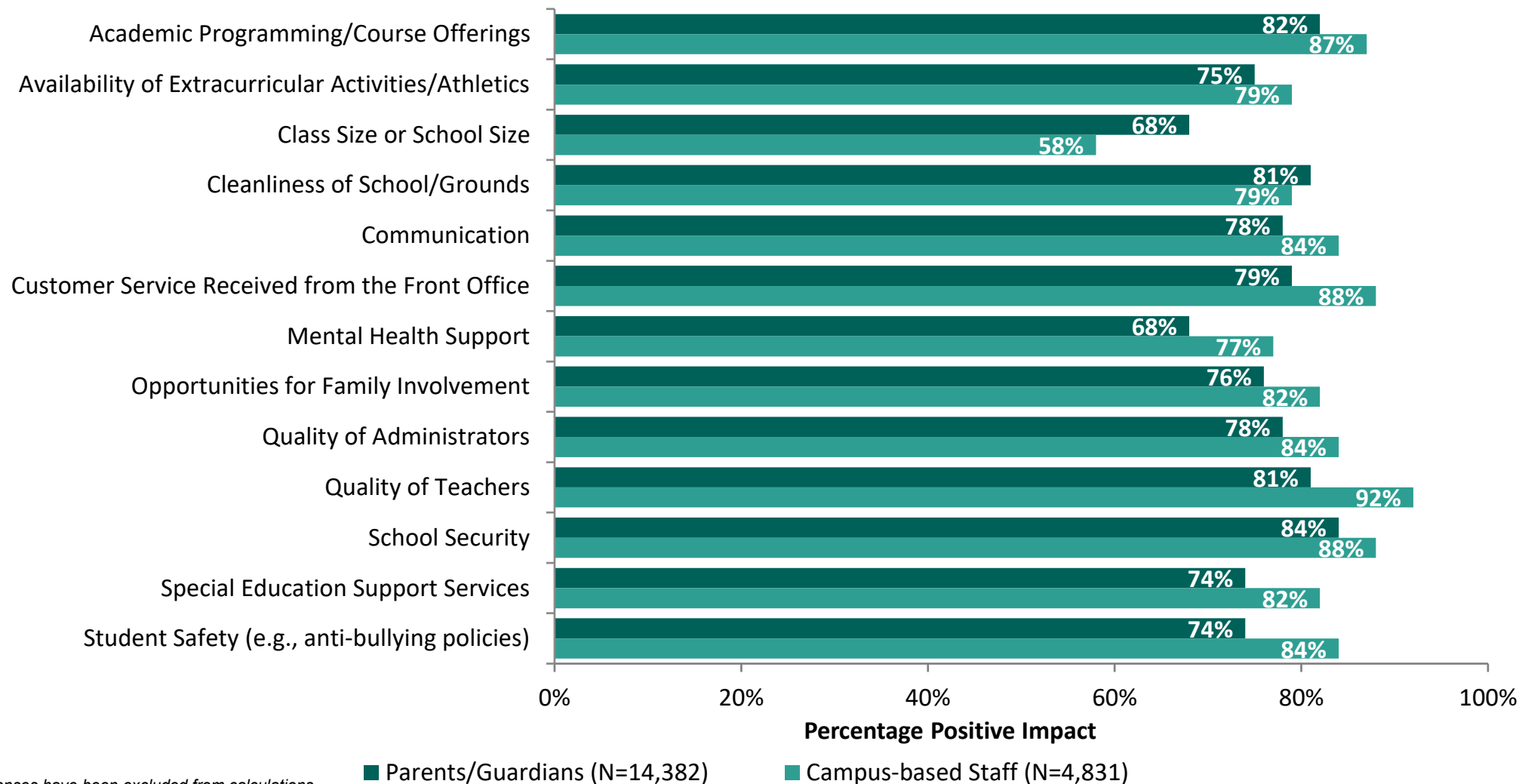
If you knew someone moving to the area with a school-aged child, how likely would you be to recommend your child's/your school to them?

The Net Promoter Score® (NPS) is calculated by subtracting the percentage of detractors from the percentage of promoters, giving a value between -100 and +100.



Impact on School Recommendation

What type of impact do the following aspects of this school have on your likelihood to recommend it?



Not Applicable responses have been excluded from calculations.



Participating Districts



District Size Classifications

For the participation slides that follow, districts are classified by estimated enrollment for the 2025-2026 school year.

SMALL

Less than 10,000 students

9 districts

participating

MEDIUM

10,001 – 30,000 students

4 districts

participating

LARGE

30,001 – 80,000 students

3 districts

participating

VERY LARGE

More than 80,000 students

1 district

participating

Participation by Respondent Group



Parents/
Guardians

District Size	Number of Districts Included	Count (N)	Percentage % of Total Responses
All Districts	17	40,610	100%
Small	9	4,840	12%
Medium	4	8,014	20%
Large	3	13,377	33%
Very Large	1	14,379	35%



Campus-based
Staff

District Size	Number of Districts Included	Count (N)	Percentage % of Total Responses
All Districts	12	9,803	100%
Small	7	1,386	14%
Medium	3	3,050	31%
Large	2	5,367	55%



Secondary
Students

District Size	Number of Districts Included	Count (N)	Percentage % of Total Responses
All Districts	13	85,600	100%
Small	7	6,539	8%
Medium	3	36,783	43%
Large	3	42,278	49%