College of Education
TEMPLE UNIVERSITY®

EQUITY IN NORWALK PUBLIC SCHOOLS:
REPORT ON COMMUNITY AND STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

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AGENDA



In-depth overview of findings



Brainstorm recommendations



Identify core equity principles

COMMUNITY, SCHOOL STAFF AND STUDENT INPUT ON SCHOOL PRACTICES:

WHAT DO STAKEHOLDERS PERCEIVE AS STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES?

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- **Surveys**
  - Staff, parents and community survey between October 1- December 15, 2020
  - Total responses: 1900 (community/parent) and 320 (school staff)
  - Student surveys less than 10 (not included in report)
- **Focus Groups**
  - Staff, parents and community participated between October 1-December 1, 2020
  - Total participants: 30 (school staff) and 65 (parents)

CONCEPTS EXPLORED IN SURVEYS AND FOCUS GROUPS

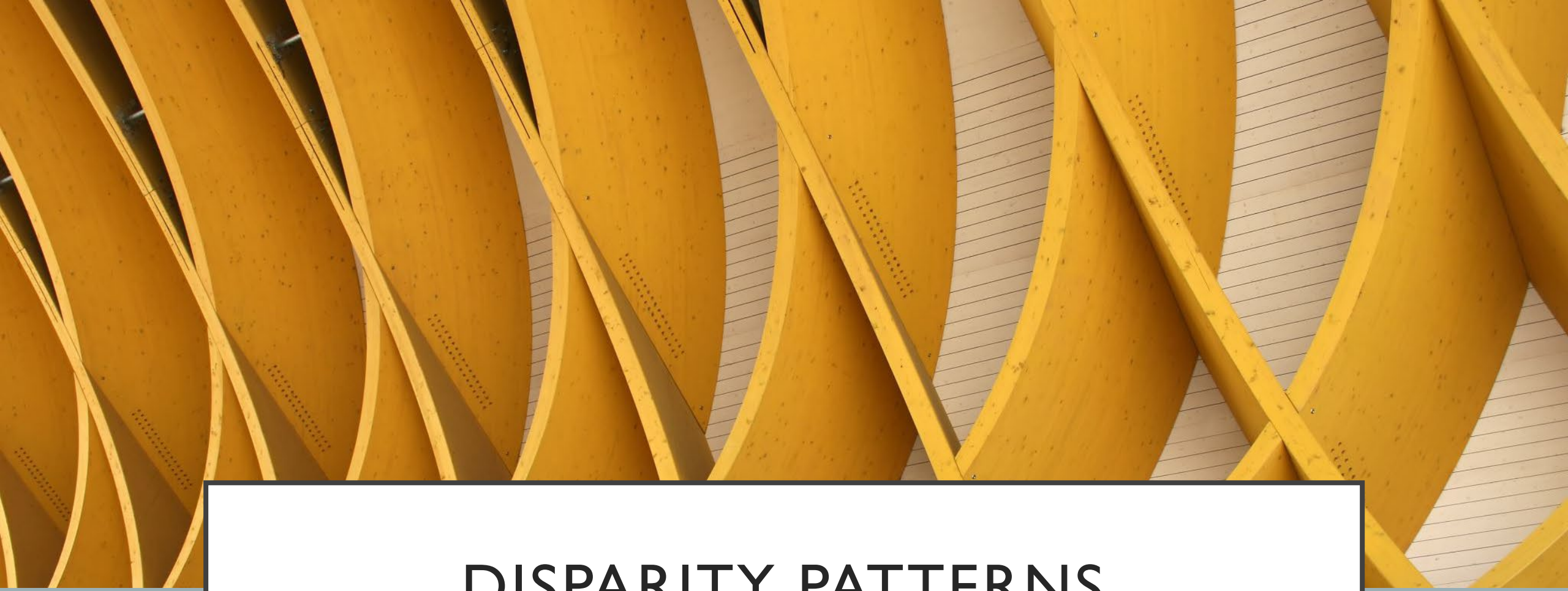
- School Staff
  - Perceptions of school quality, resources and efficiency specific to behavioral and academic supports
  - Perceptions of leadership
  - Teacher motivation, efficacy and confidence
  - Perspectives on culture and race (colorblindness, cultural knowledge and responsibility, racial discomfort, deficit thinking)
- Community/Parents
  - School satisfaction with resources, communication, and welcoming environment
  - Perceptions of parent involvement and engagement activities/opportunities
  - Perceptions of school and district response during pandemic
  - Perspectives on culture and race (colorblindness, cultural knowledge and responsibility, racial discomfort, deficit thinking)

EQUITY REPORT

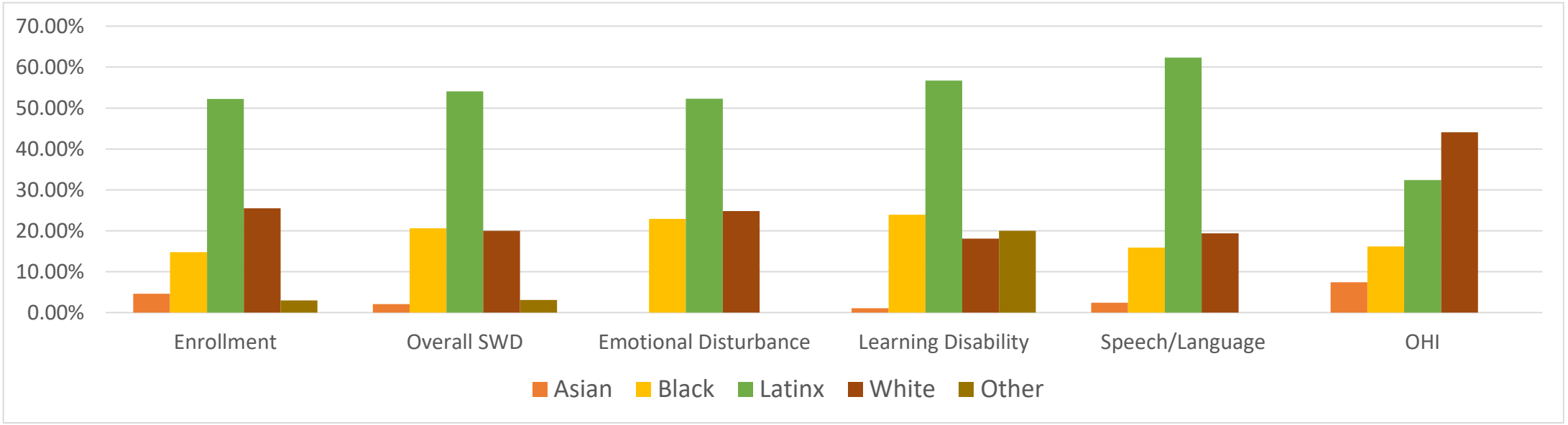
Final release on February 1, 2021

ORGANIZATION OF REPORT

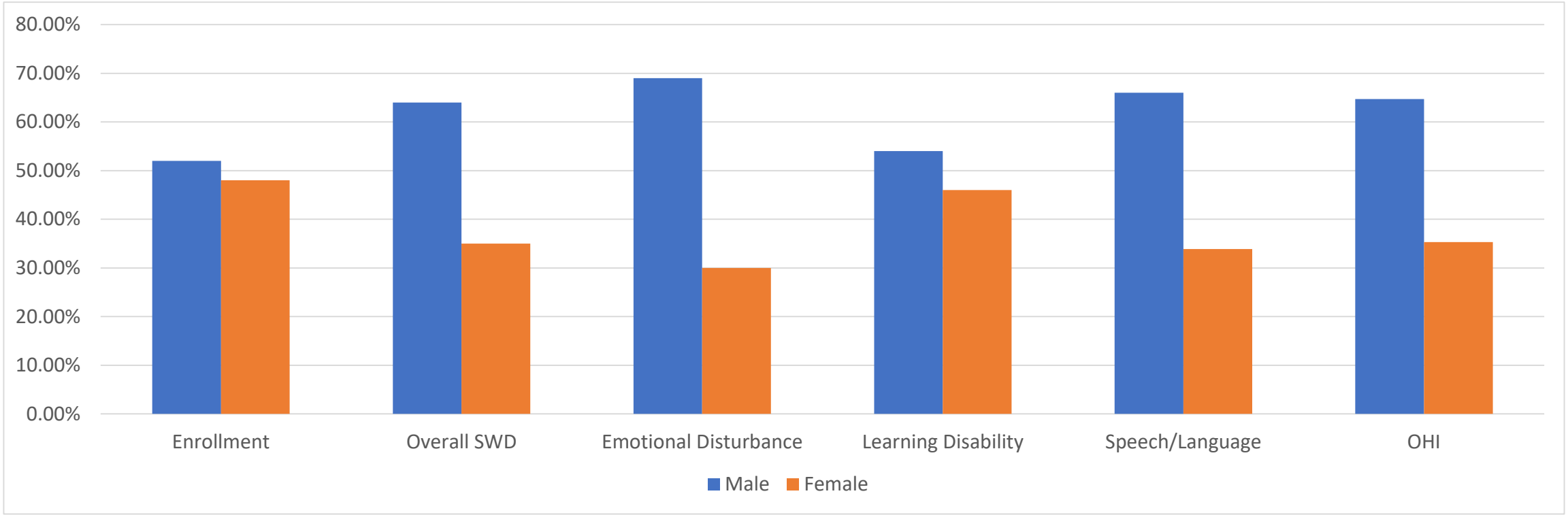
1. Disparity patterns in 2019-20
2. Parent survey analysis
3. Staff survey analysis
4. Focus group themes



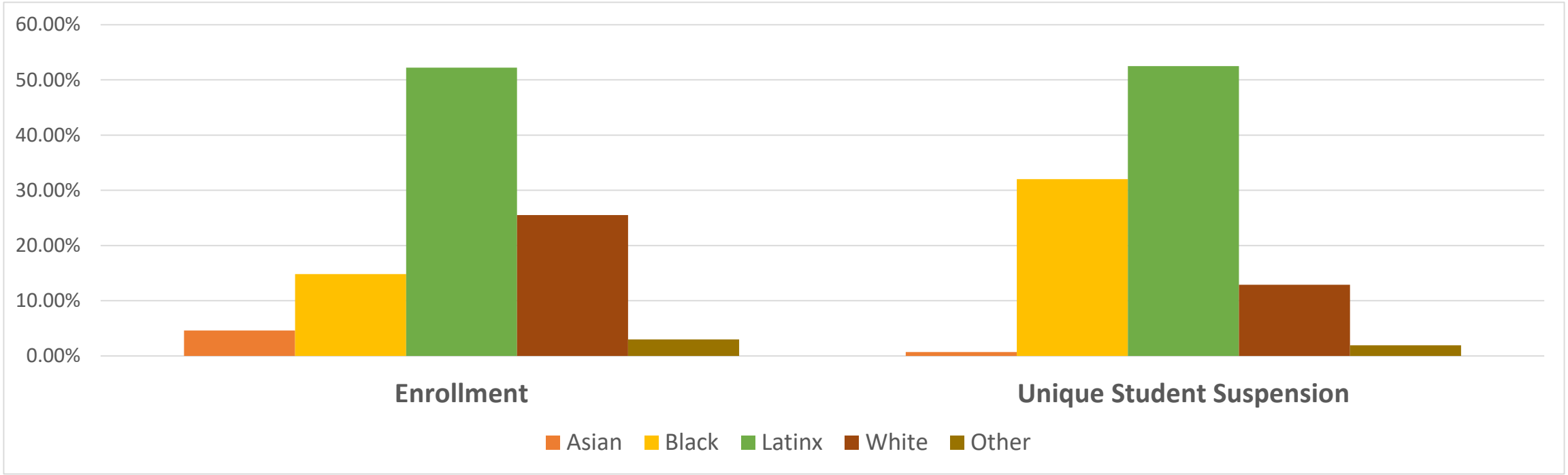
DISPARITY PATTERNS



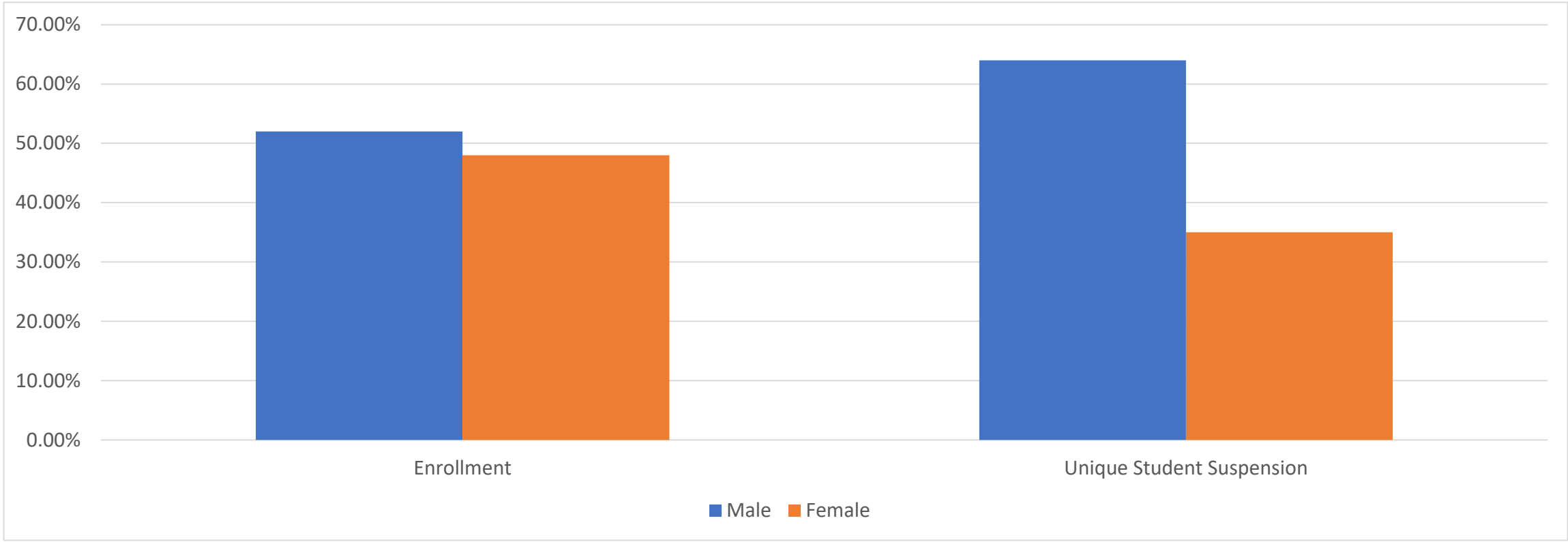
PERCENT ENROLLMENT AND SPECIAL EDUCATION IDENTIFICATION BY RACE/ETHNICITY



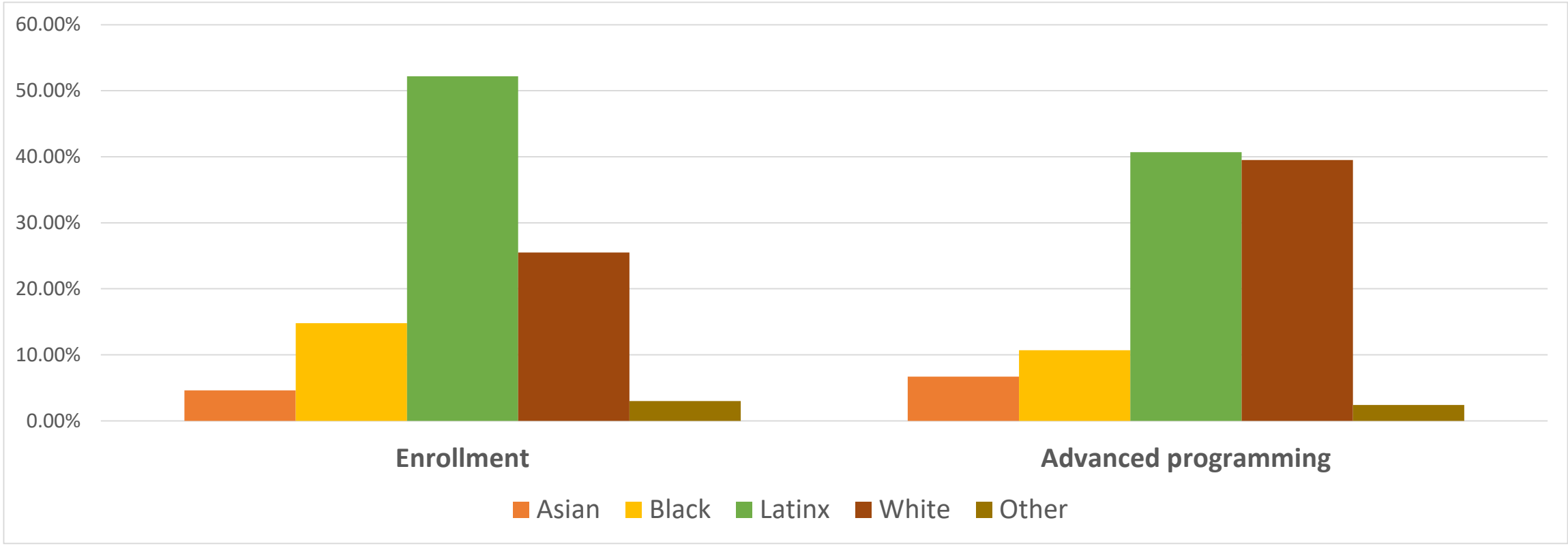
PERCENT ENROLLMENT AND SPECIAL EDUCATION IDENTIFICATION BY GENDER



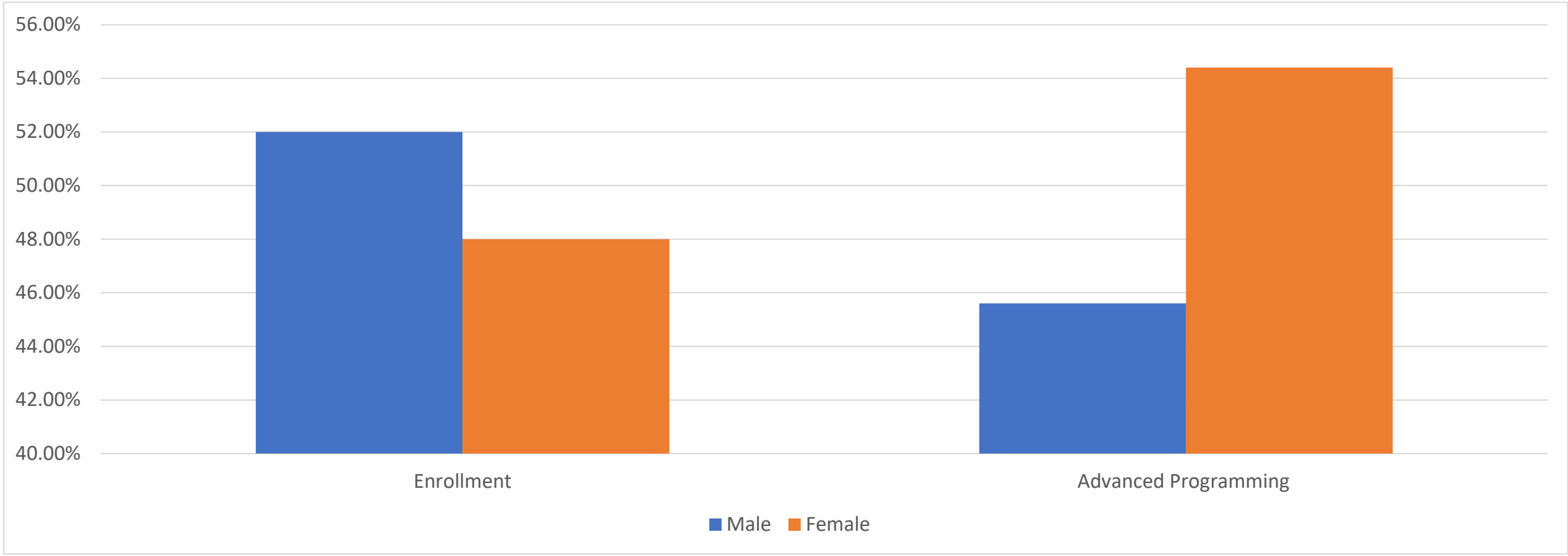
PERCENT ENROLLMENT AND SUSPENSION BY RACE/ETHNICITY



PERCENT ENROLLMENT AND SUSPENSION BY GENDER



PERCENT ENROLLMENT AND ADVANCED PROGRAMMING BY RACE/ETHNICITY



PERCENT ENROLLMENT AND ADVANCED PROGRAMMING BY GENDER

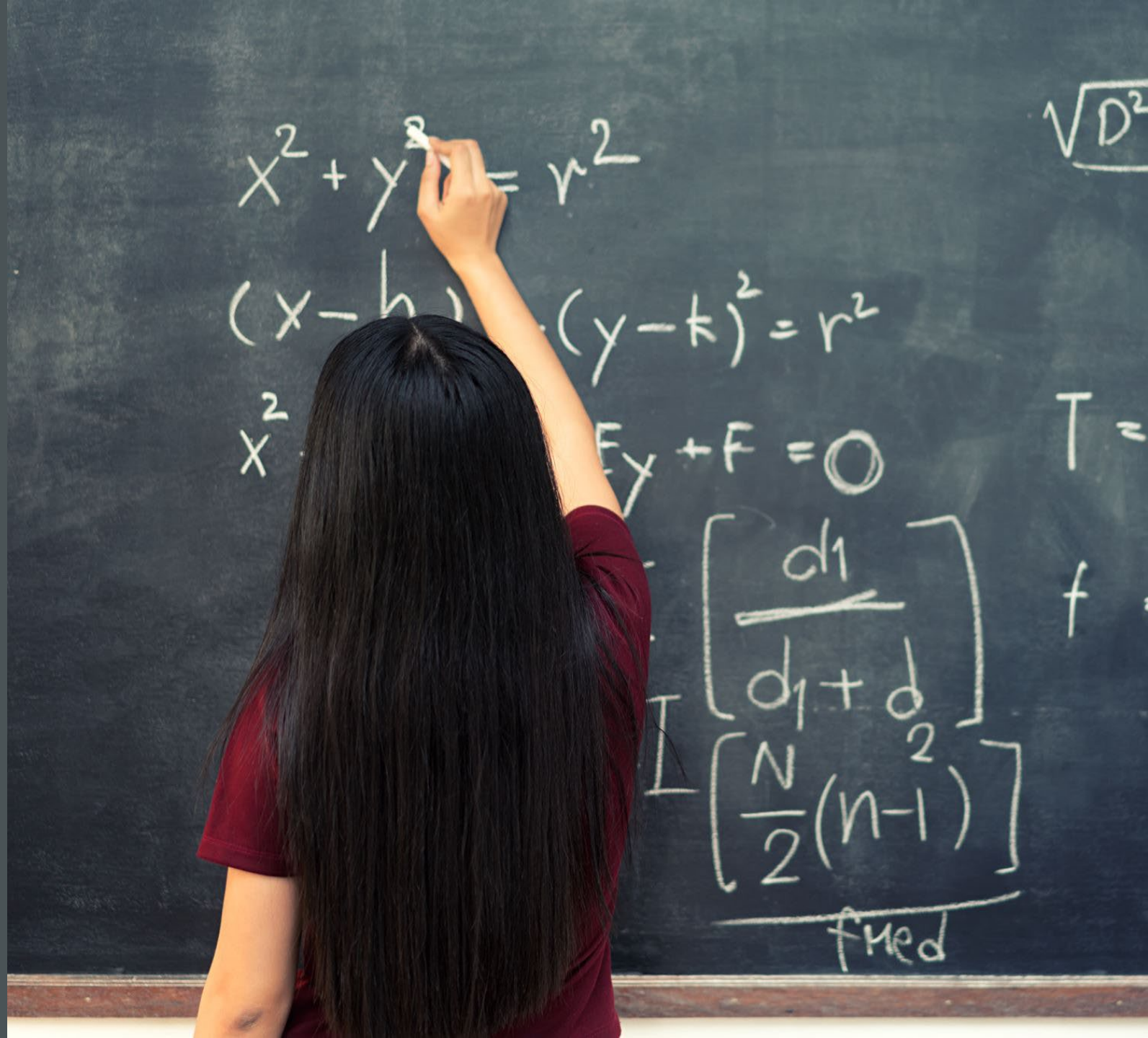
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



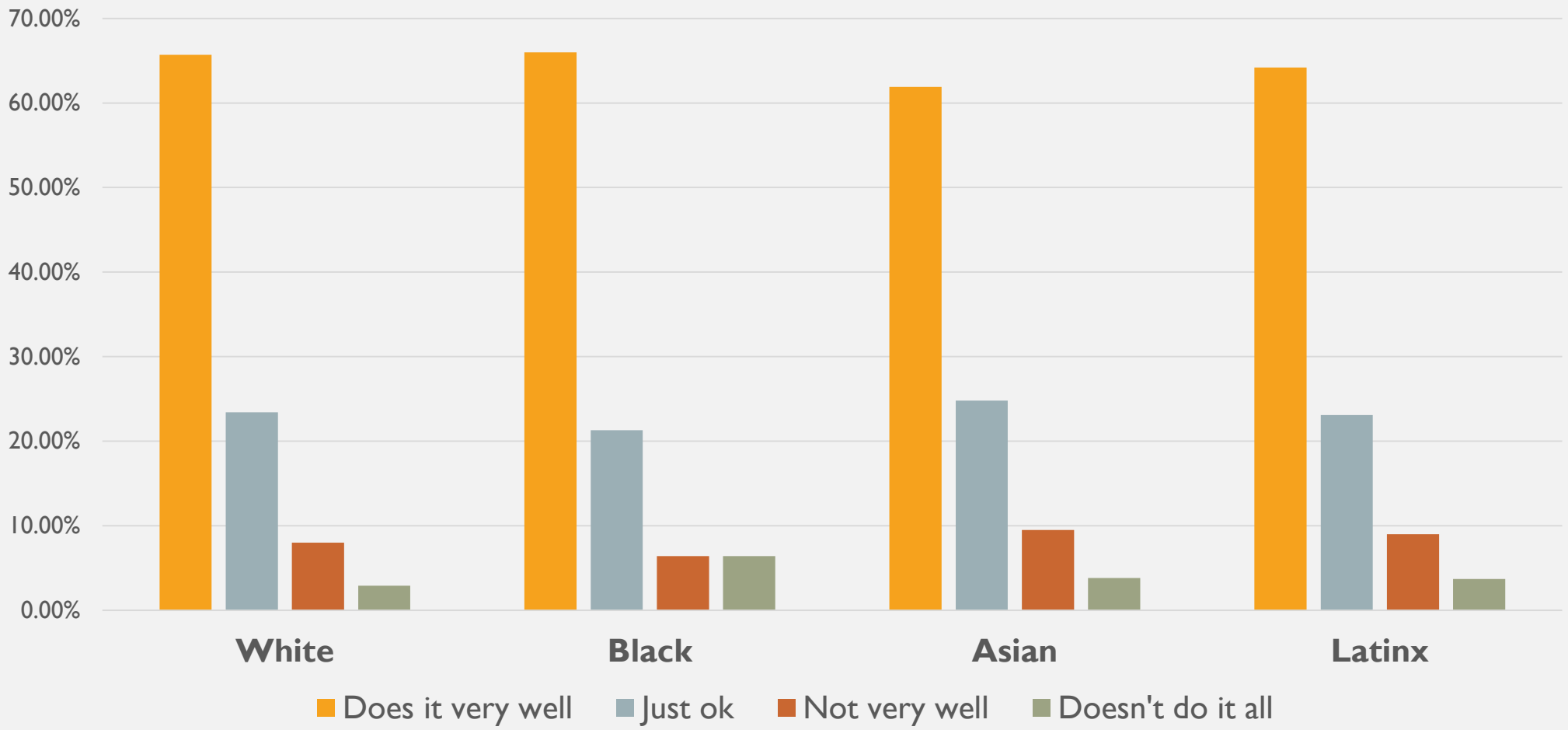


PARENT SURVEY FINDINGS: VARYING PERSPECTIVES ON ACCESS, RESOURCES, AND PERCEPTIONS OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

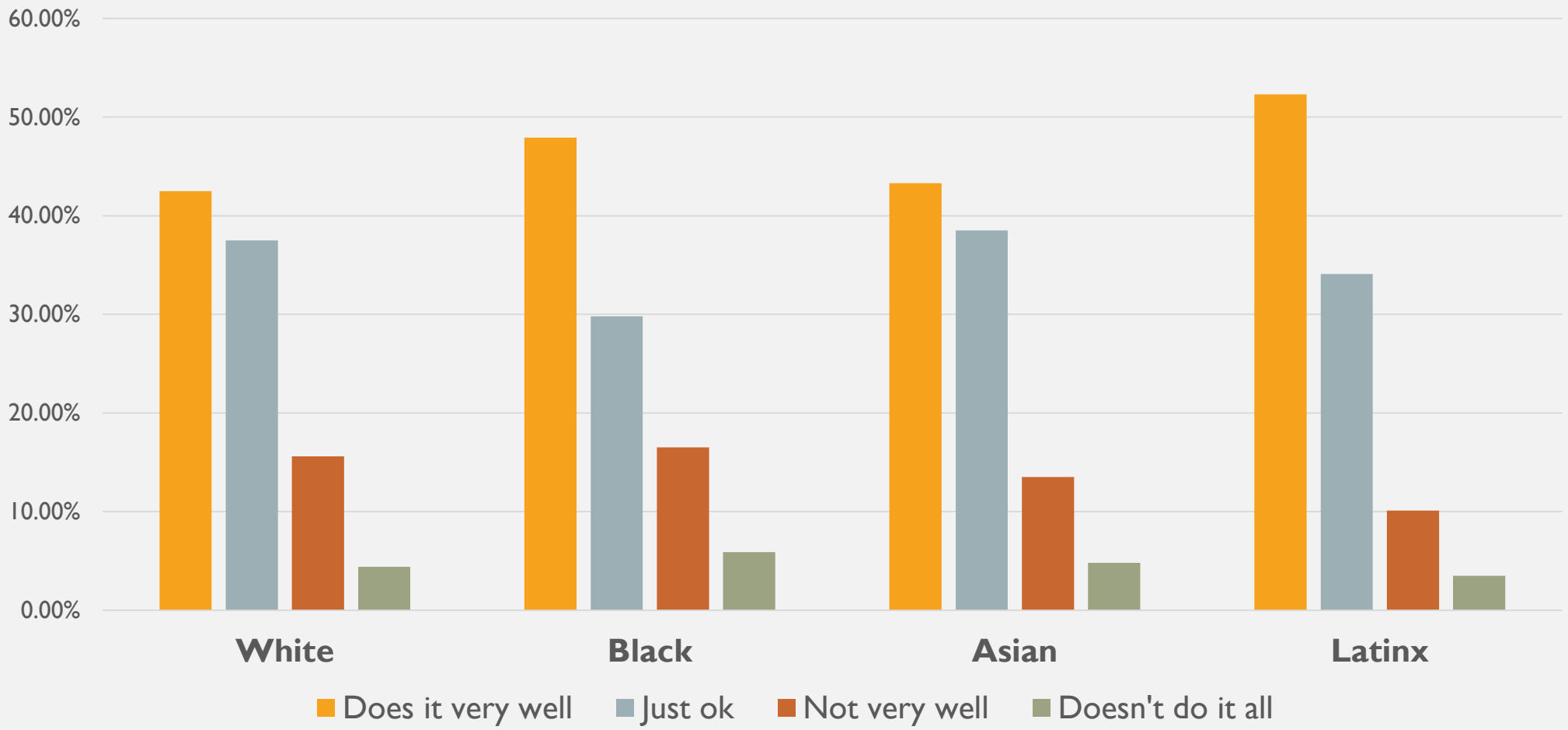
SATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES



MAKES YOU AWARE OF CHANCES TO VOLUNTEER AT THE SCHOOL.



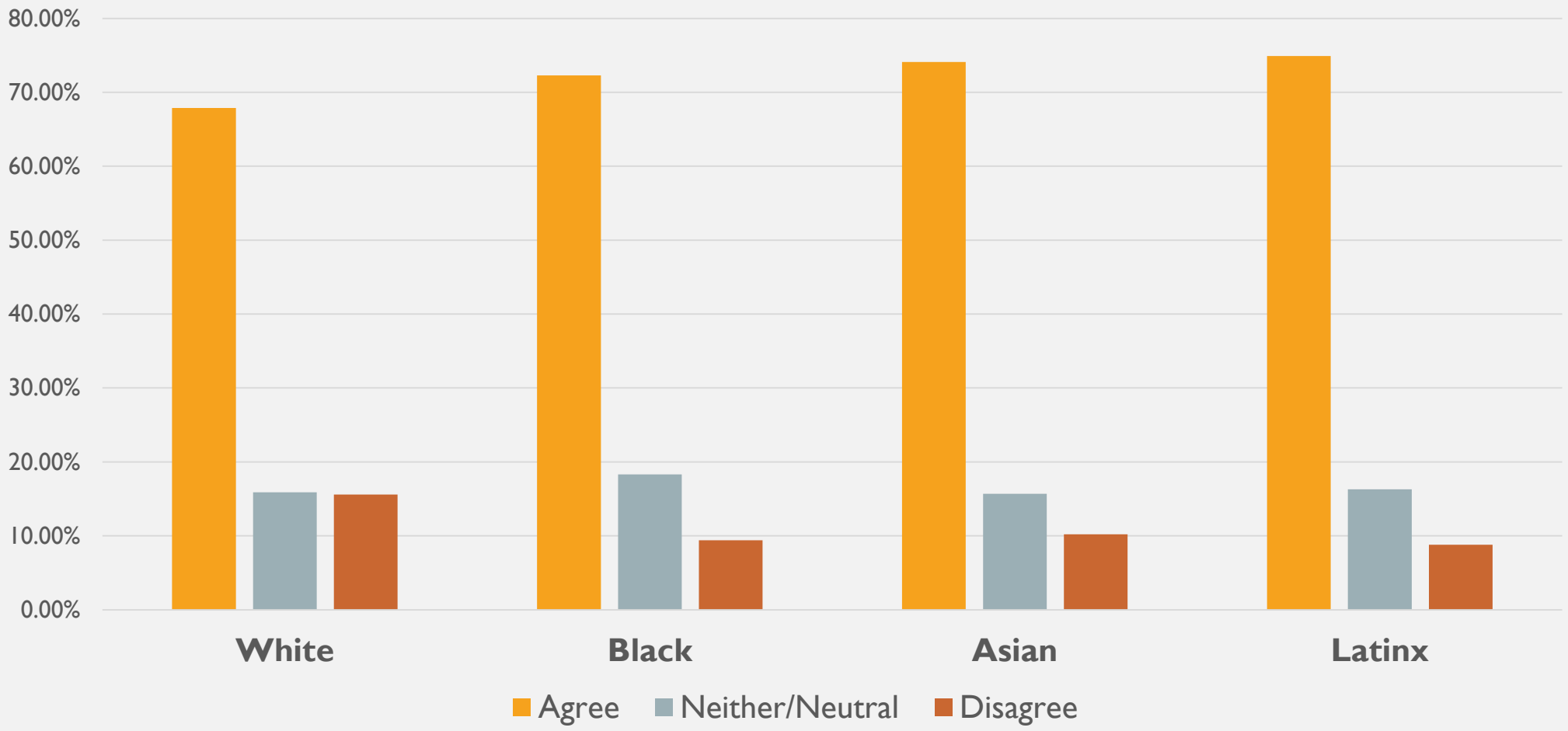
PROVIDES WORKSHOPS, MATERIALS, OR ADVICE ABOUT HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN AT HOME.



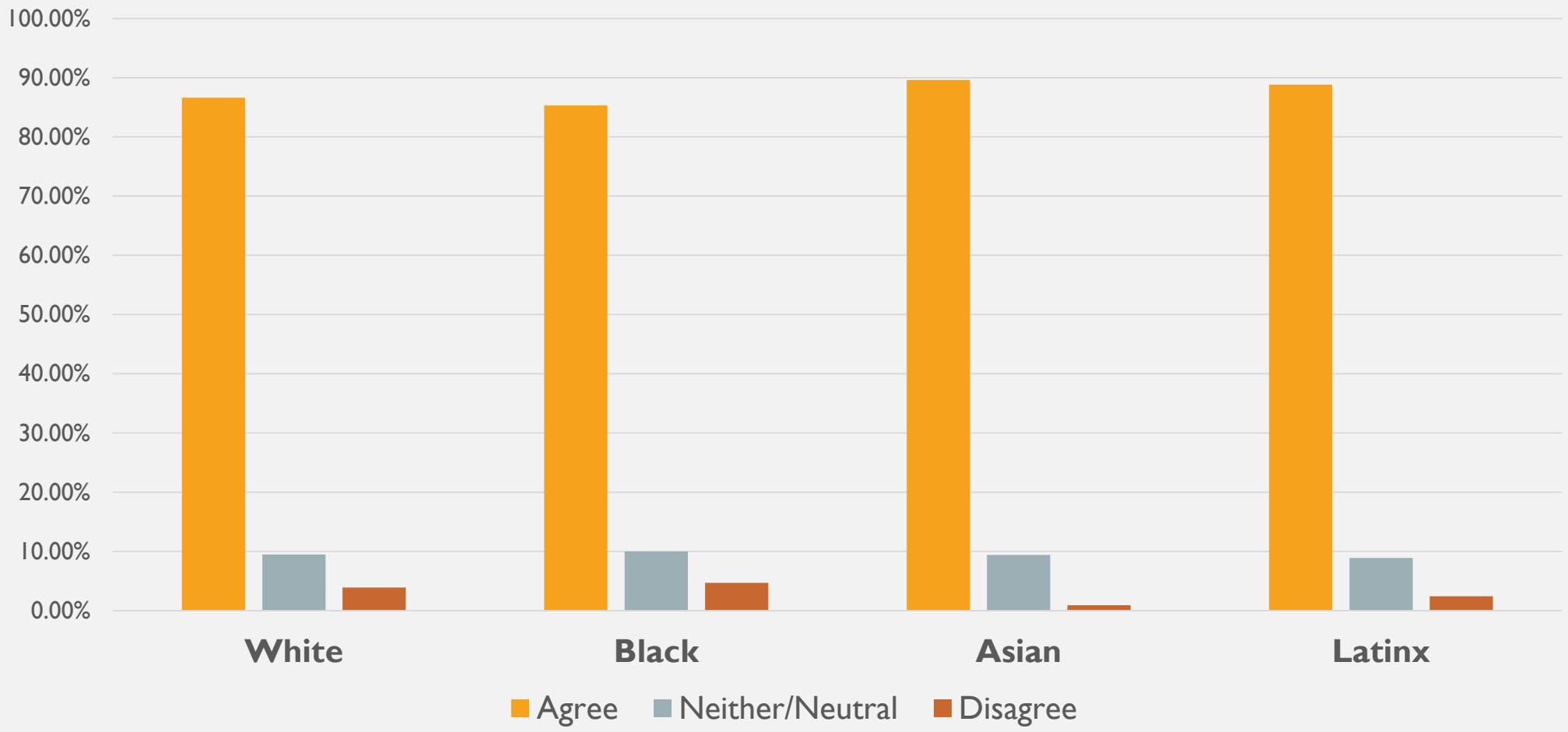
SATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL QUALITY



MY CHILD IS CHALLENGED AT SCHOOL ACADEMICALLY.

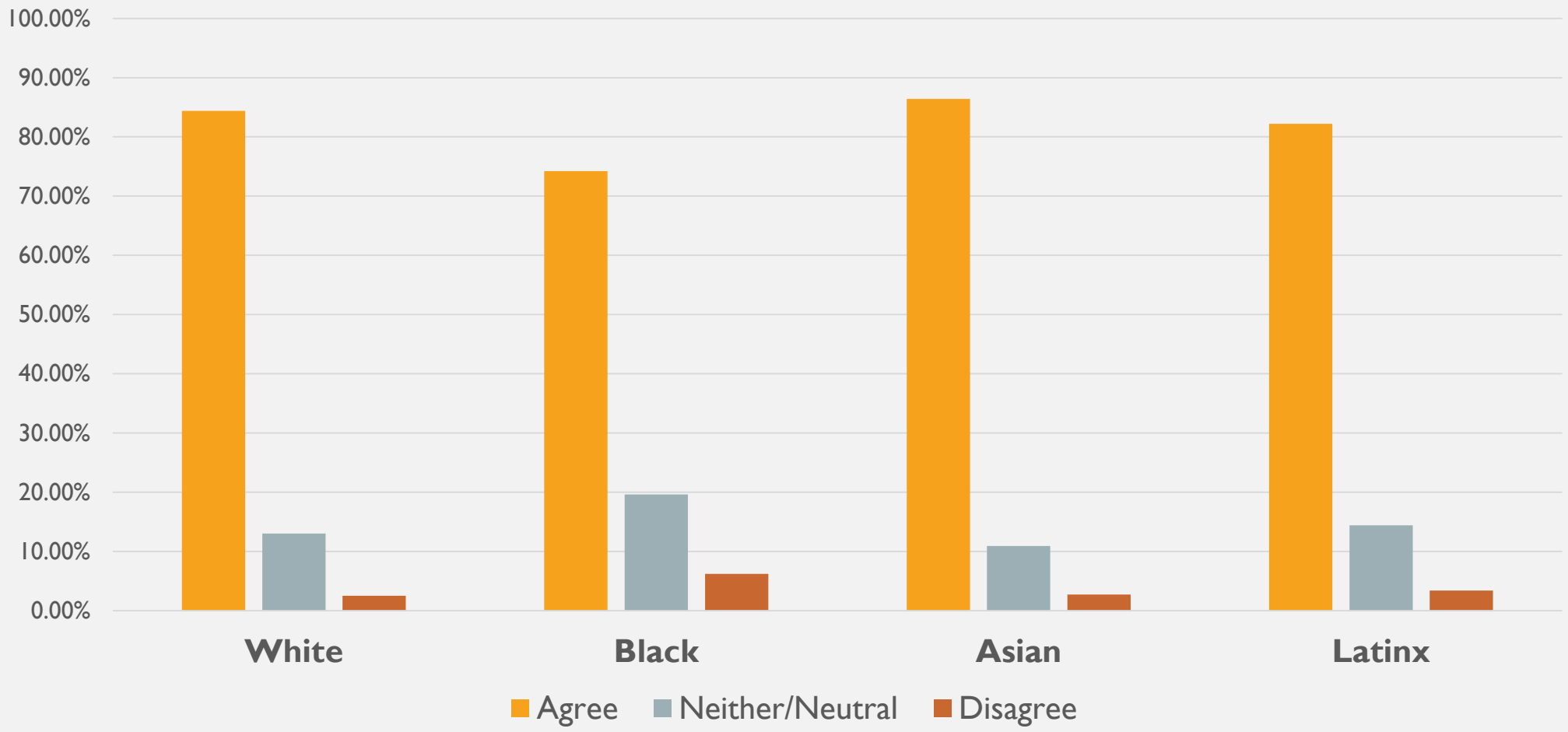


THE PRINCIPAL AND ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL MAINTAIN GOOD DISCIPLINE AT MY CHILD'S SCHOOL.

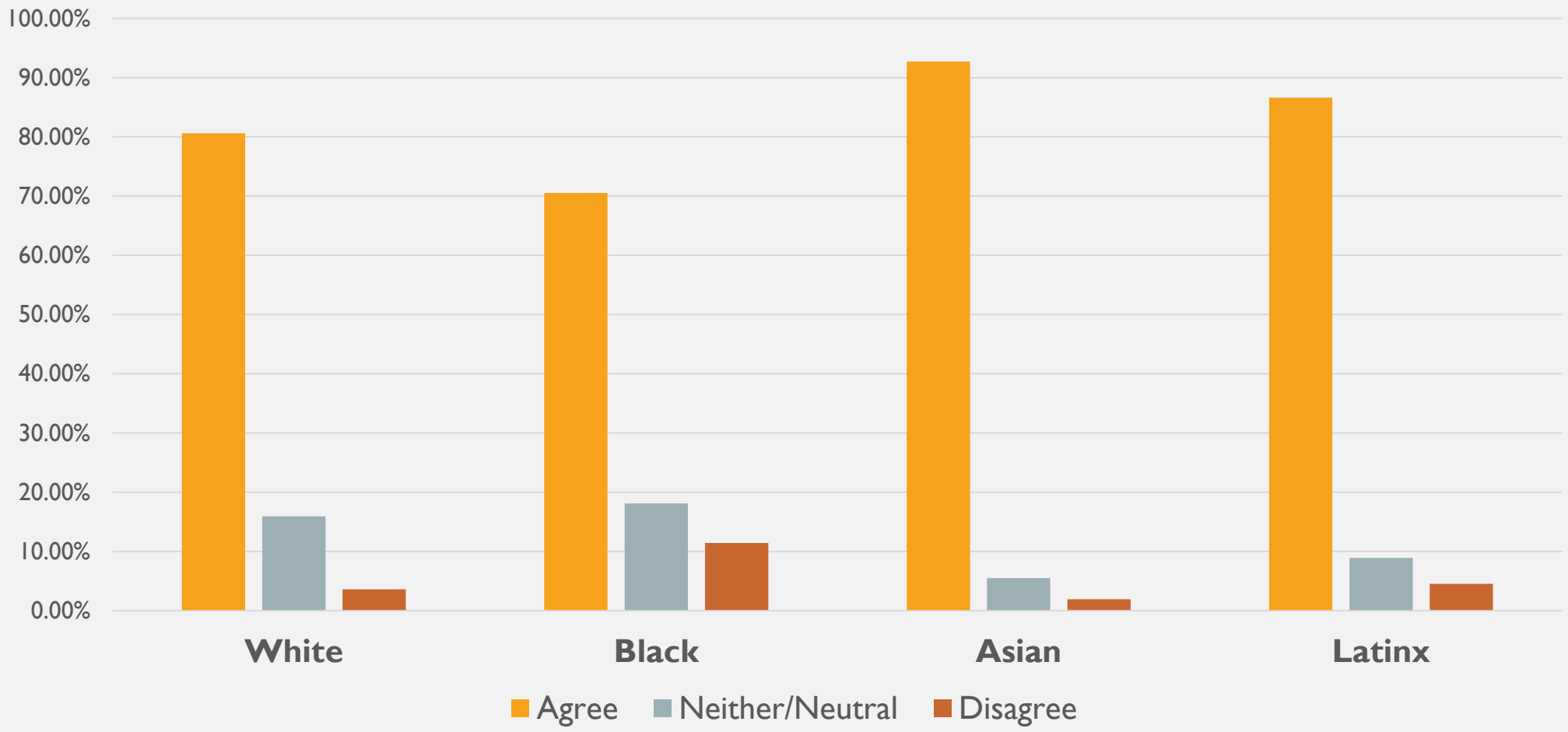


PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL CULTURE AND CLIMATE

STUDENTS FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS TREAT EACH OTHER WITH RESPECT.



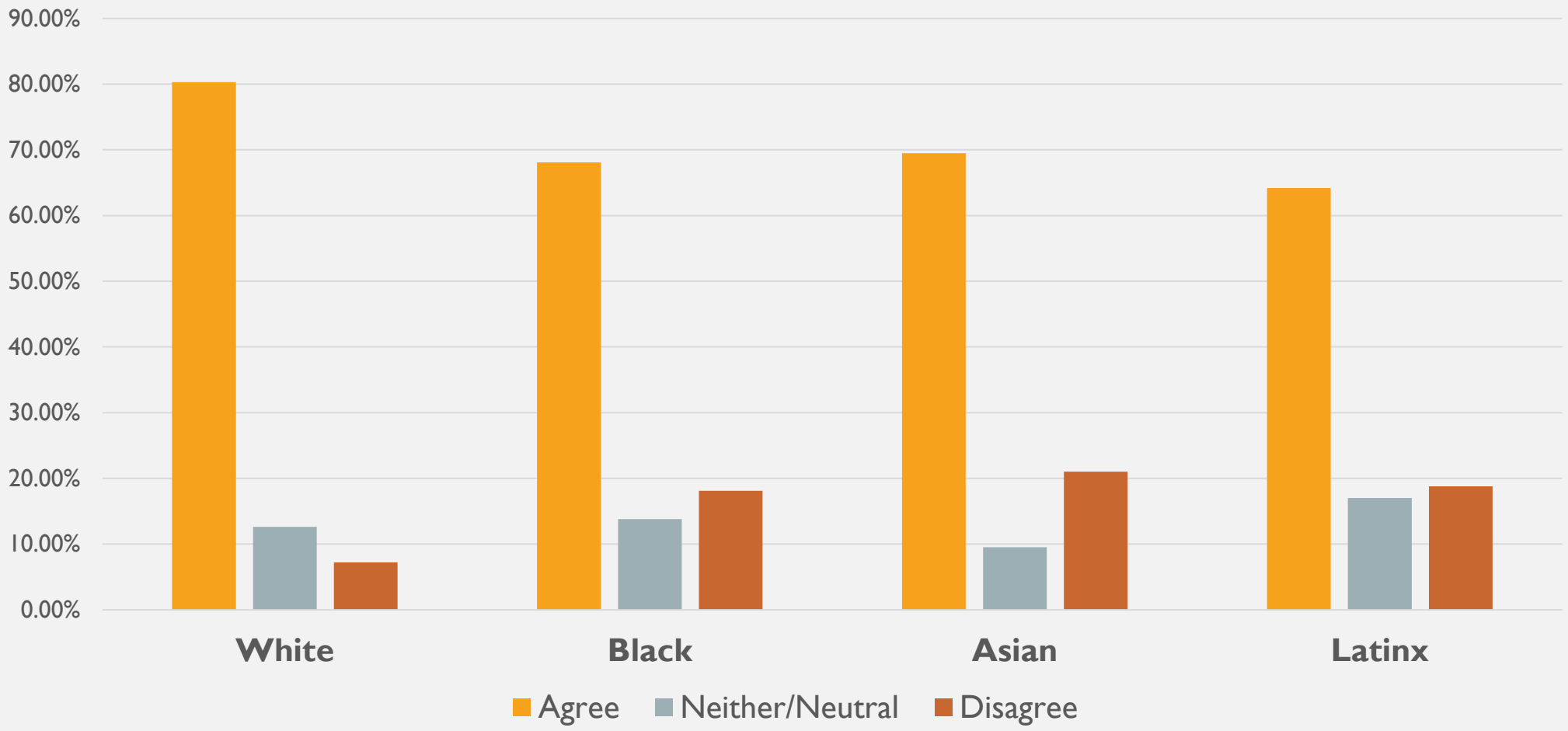
TEACHERS TREAT STUDENTS FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS IN THE SAME WAY.



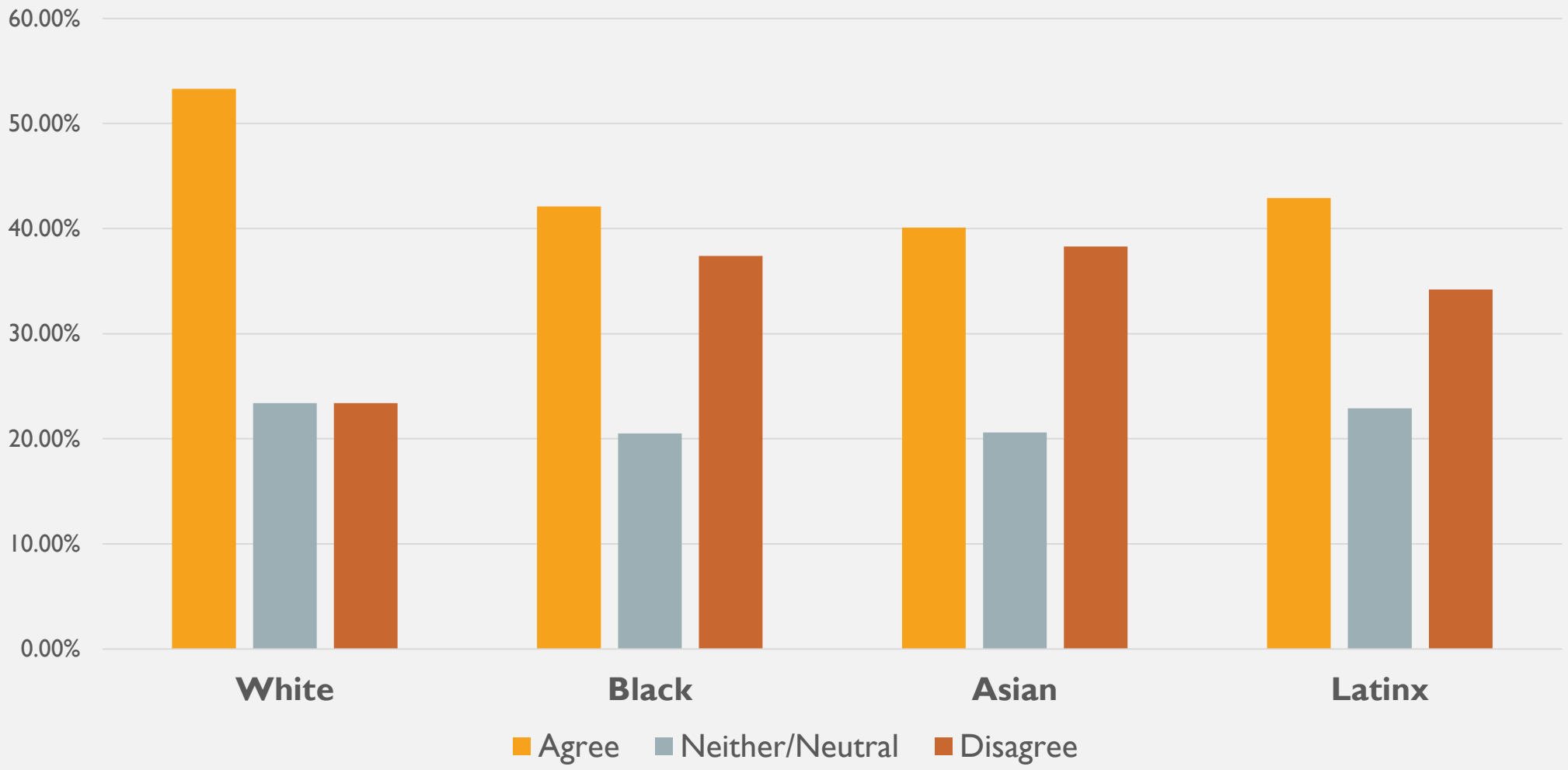
PERCEPTIONS OF CROSS-CULTURAL EXPERIENCES



I WANT TO UNDERSTAND HOW PEOPLE FROM OTHER RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS SEE THE WORLD



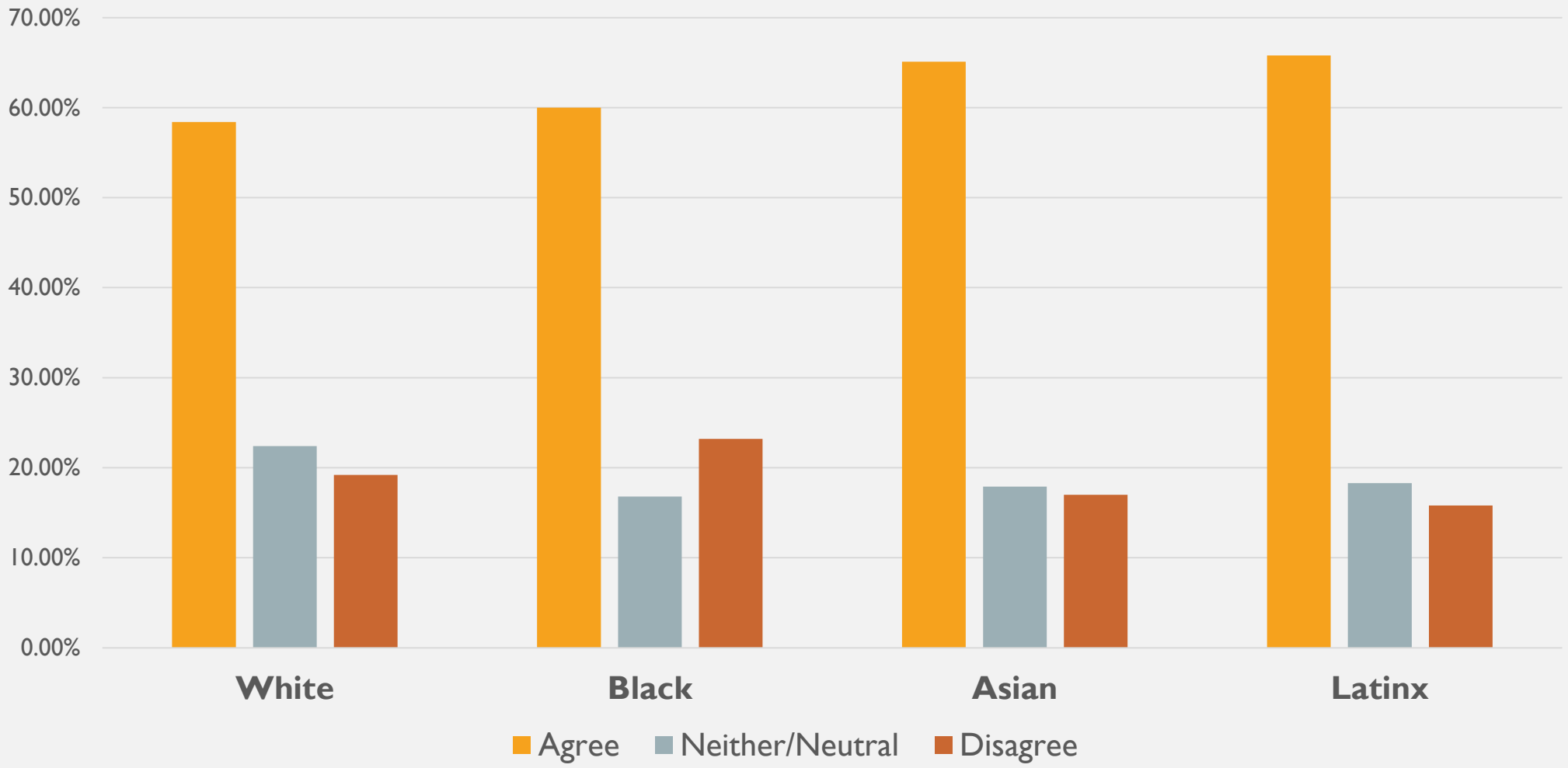
MY CLOSEST FRIENDS TEND TO BE OF THE SAME RACIAL/ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION AS MYSELF.



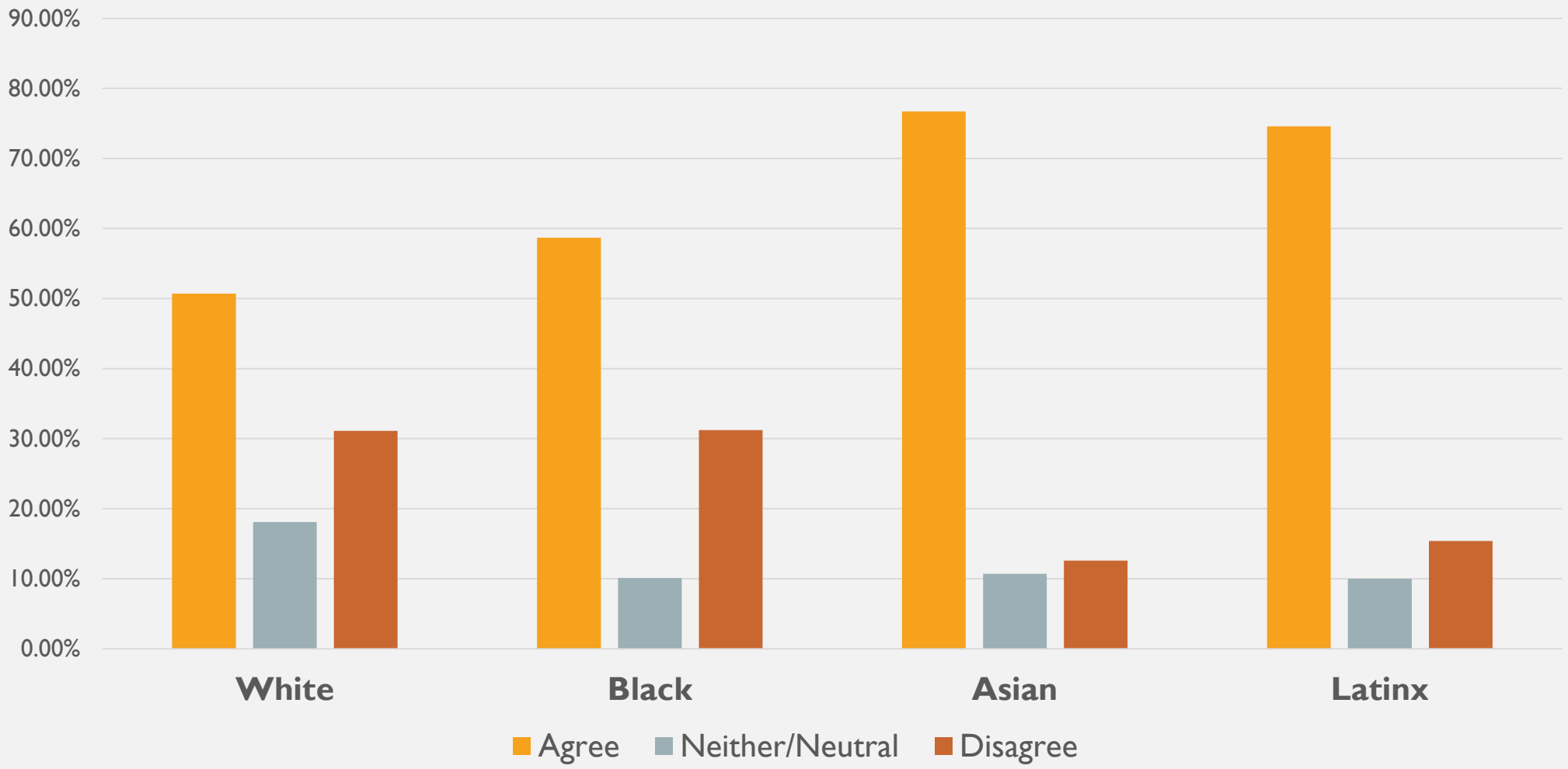


COLORBLINDNESS AND DEFICIT THINKING BELIEFS

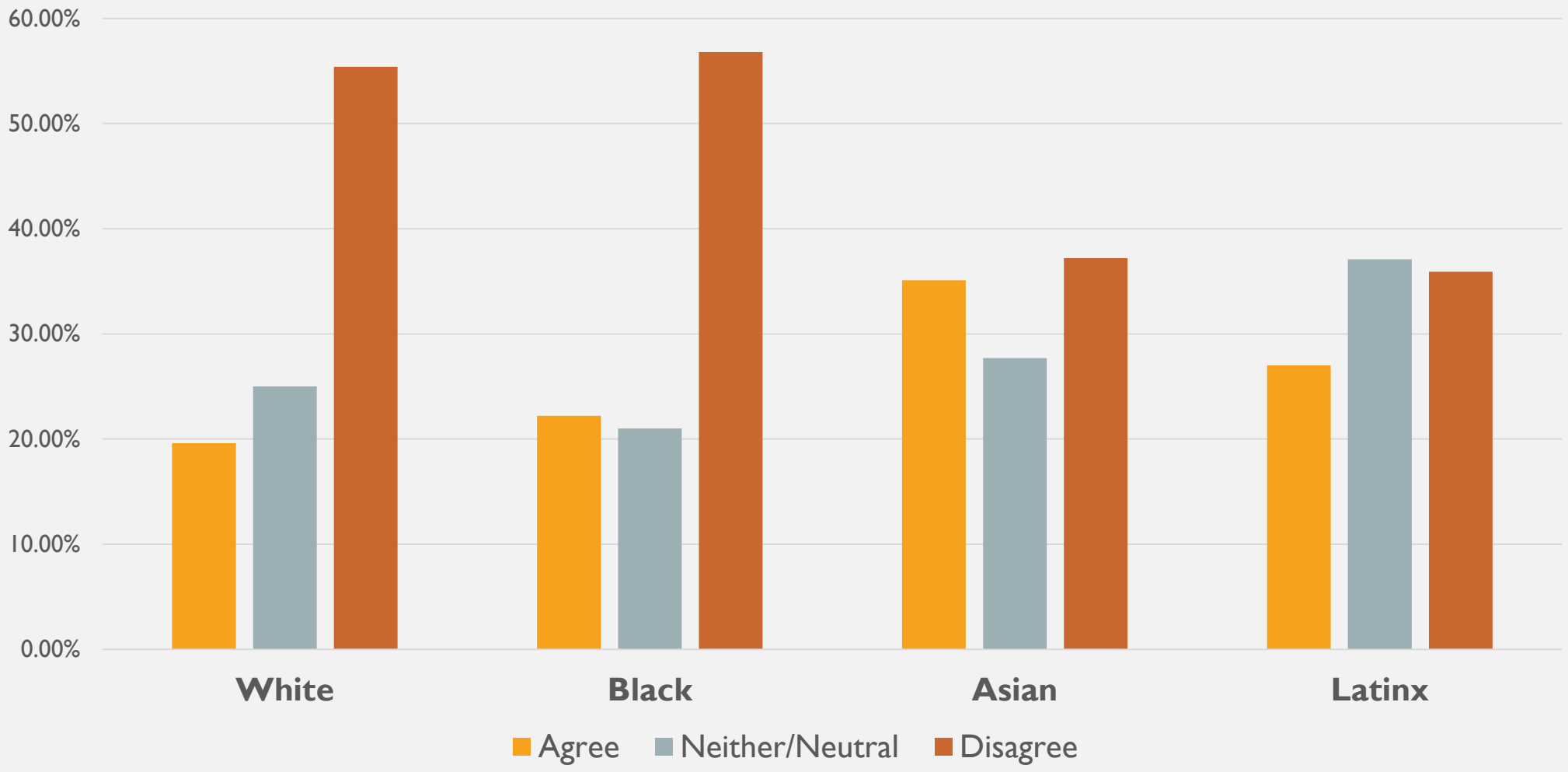
SOMETIMES I WONDER WHY WE CAN'T SEE EACH OTHER AS INDIVIDUALS INSTEAD OF RACE AND ETHNICITY ALWAYS BEING AN ISSUE.



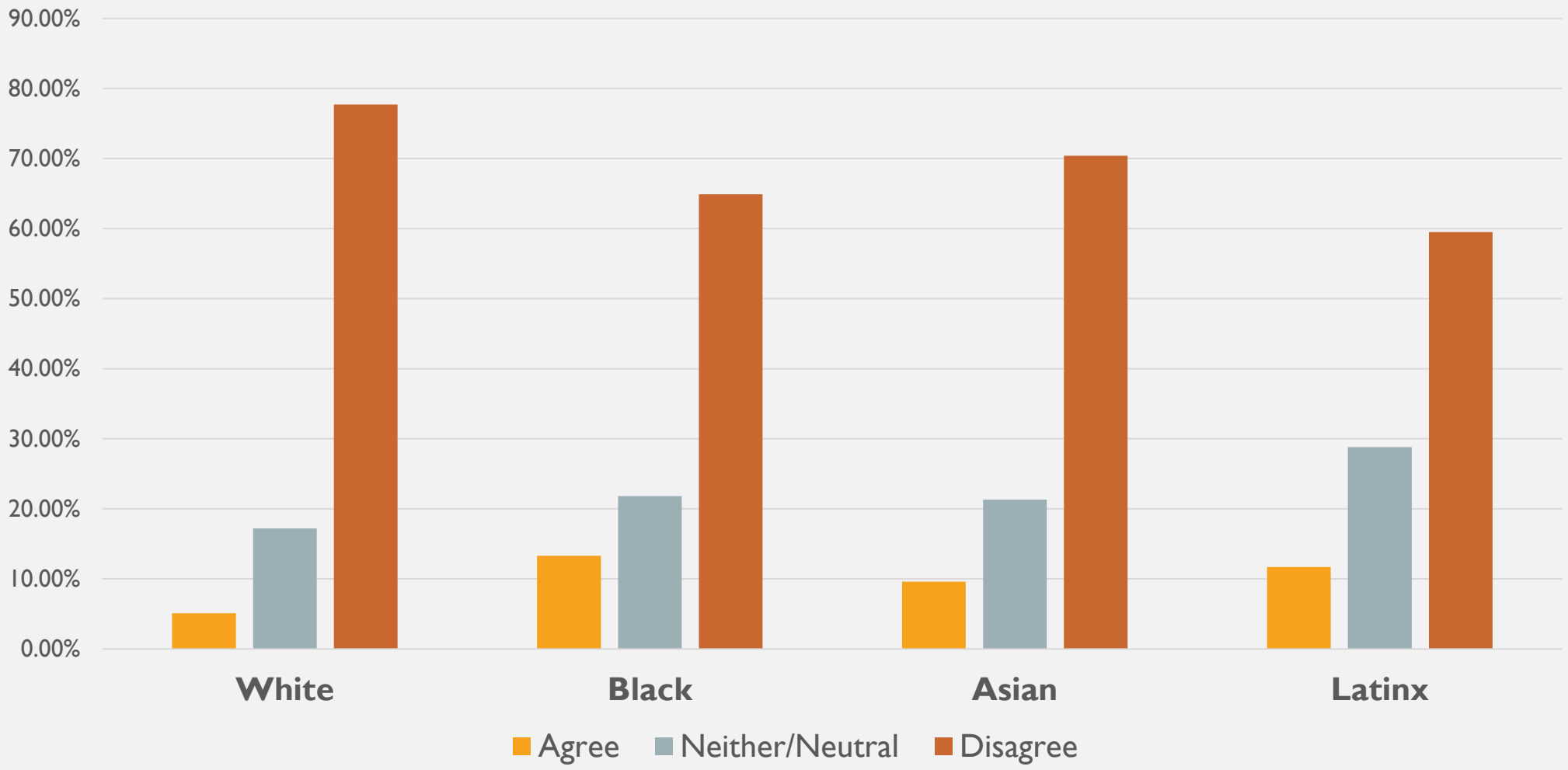
RACISM WOULD CEASE TO EXIST IF EVERYONE WOULD JUST FORGET ABOUT RACE AND SEE EACH OTHER AS HUMAN BEINGS.



I BELIEVE RACIST INCIDENTS OCCUR, BUT I'M NOT CONVINCED THERE IS INSTITUTIONALIZED RACISM



ALTHOUGH I AM HESITANT TO SAY SO PUBLICLY, I BELIEVE THAT RACIAL DIFFERENCES IN INTELLIGENCE MAY HAVE A HEREDITARY OR GENETIC COMPONENT.



SUMMARY

1. General comfort with school services and quality
2. Different perceptions of school culture and climate related to experiences of treatment
3. Interest in experiences of racial/ethnic minority populations.
4. Limited personal experiences with racial/ethnic minority populations
5. Interest in erasing race and ambivalent about racial equity



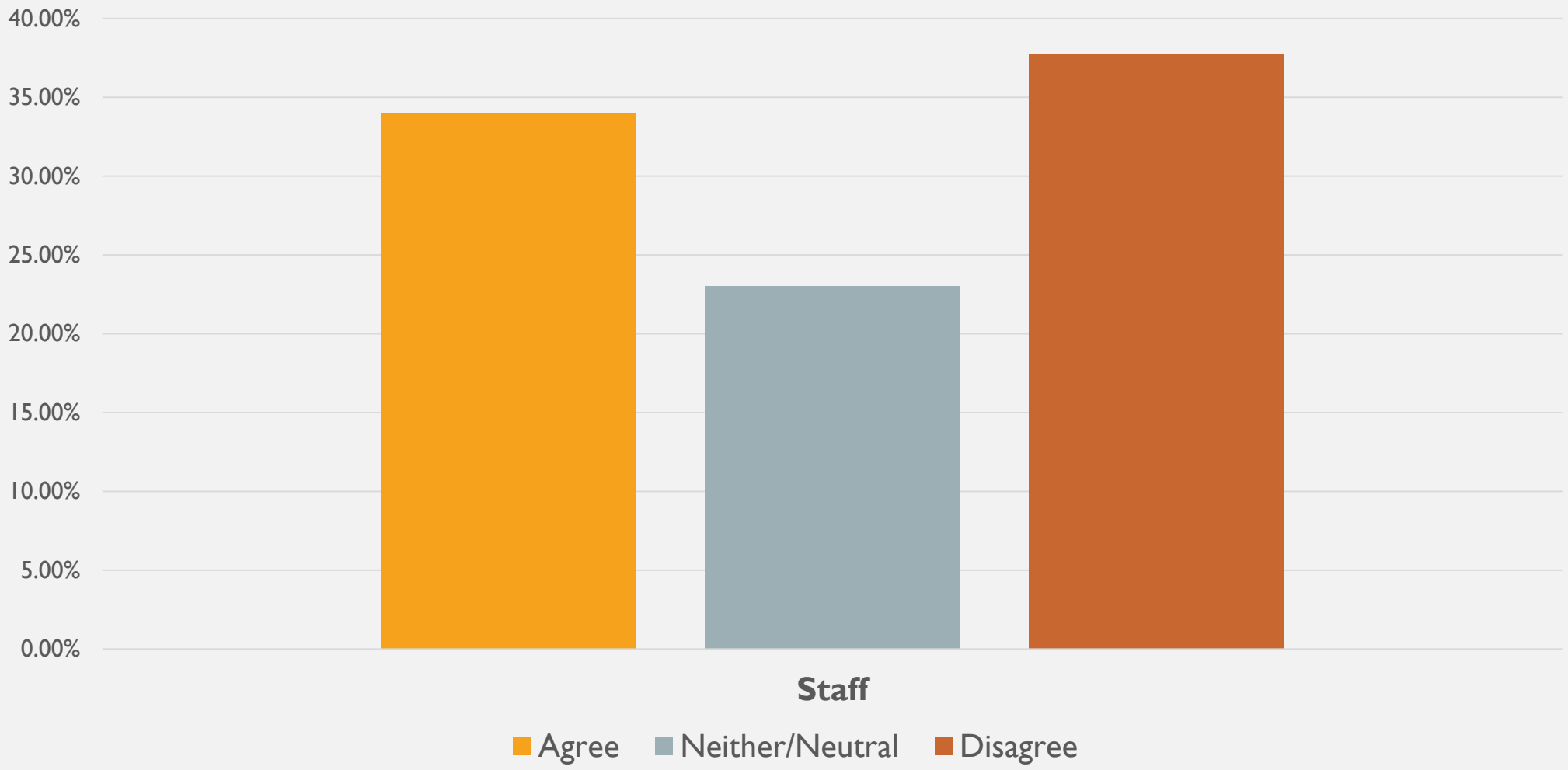
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

STAFF SURVEY FINDINGS: PERCEIVE SCHOOL PRACTICES AS LIMITED AND AMBIVALENT OF RACIAL EQUITY

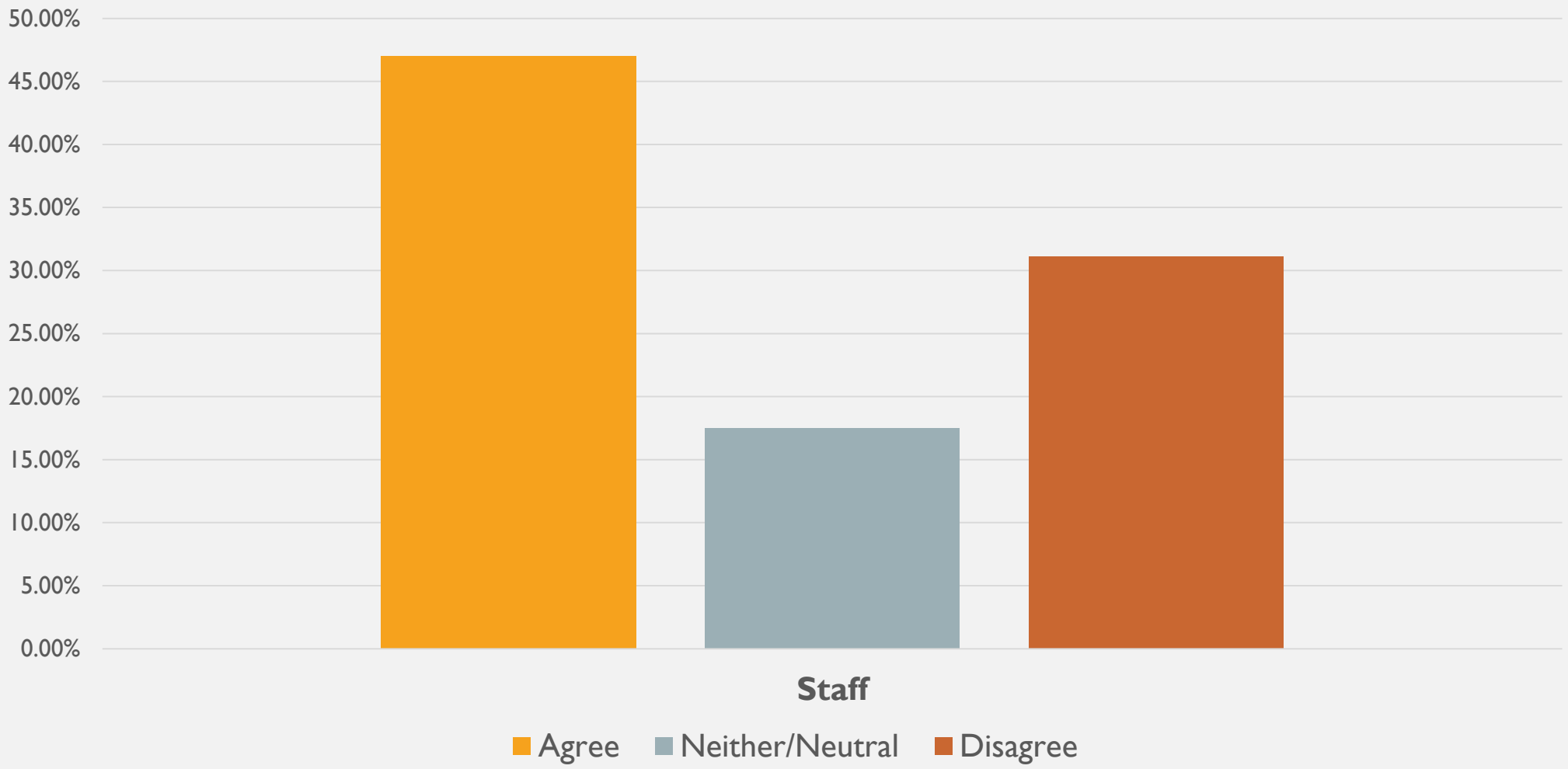


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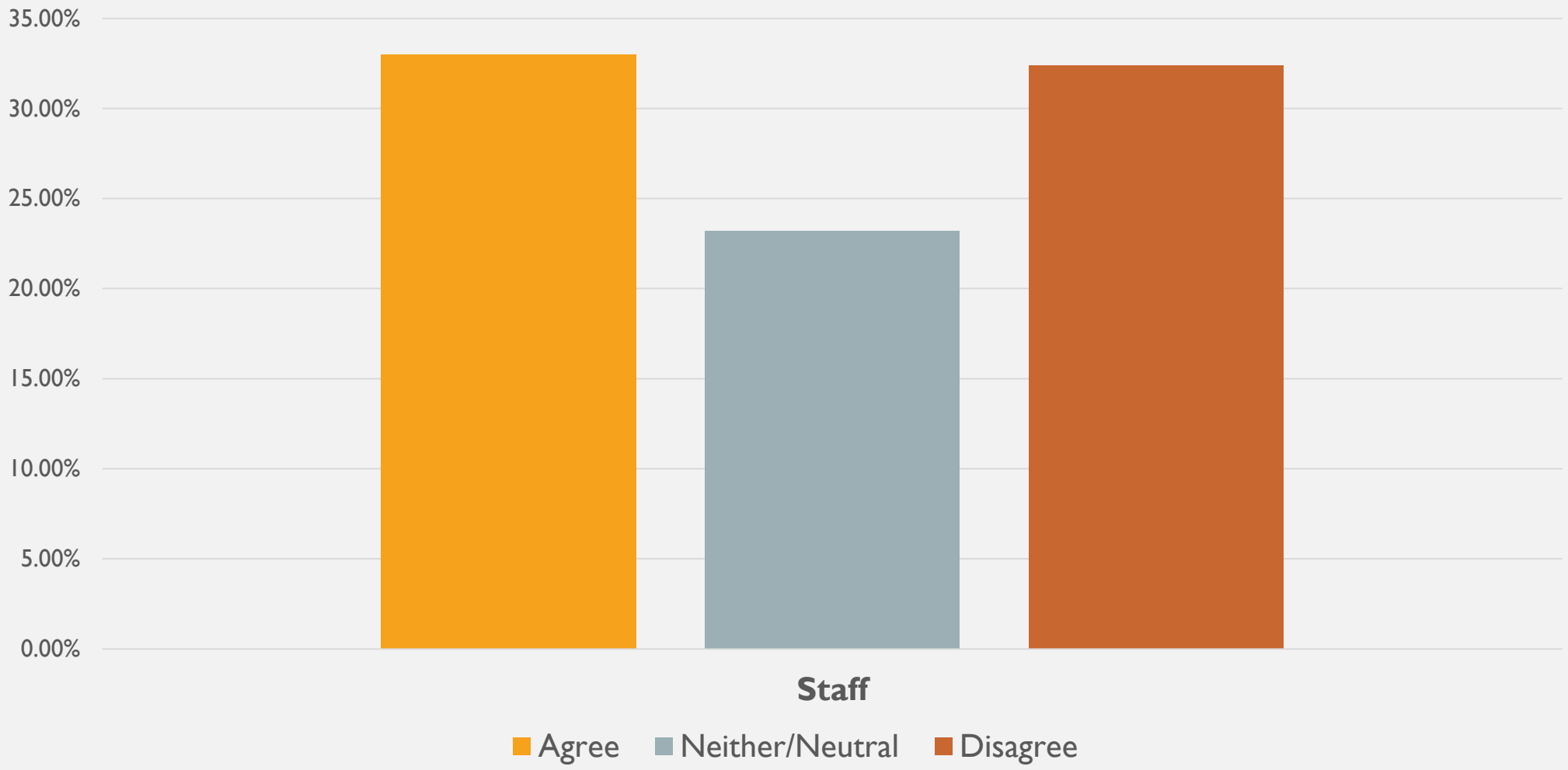
MY SCHOOL HAS AN EFFECTIVE EARLY INTERVENTION PROCESS TO MEET THE BEHAVIORAL NEEDS OF STRUGGLING LEARNERS.



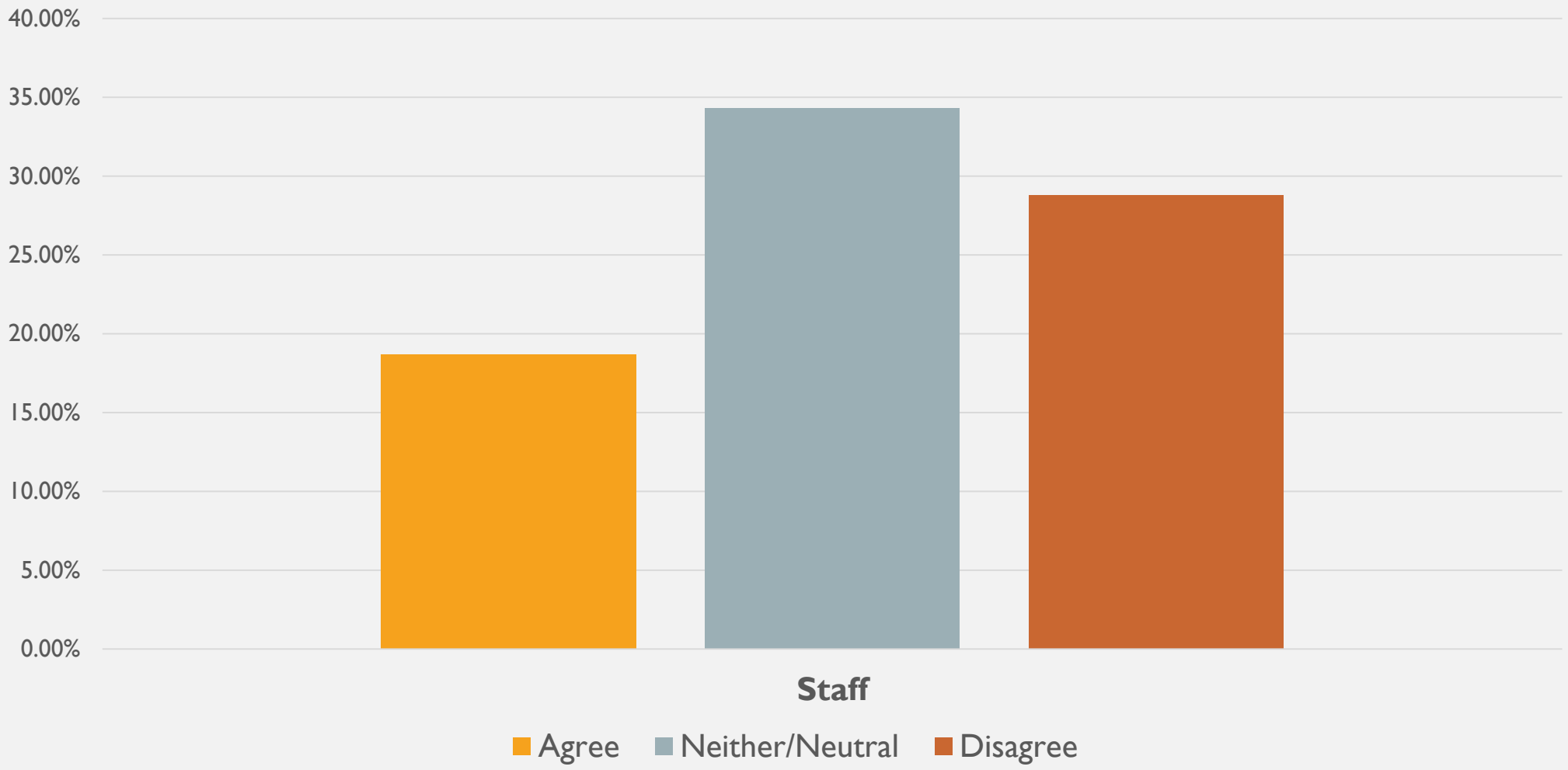
SCHOOL RULES ARE APPLIED EQUALLY FOR ALL STUDENTS.



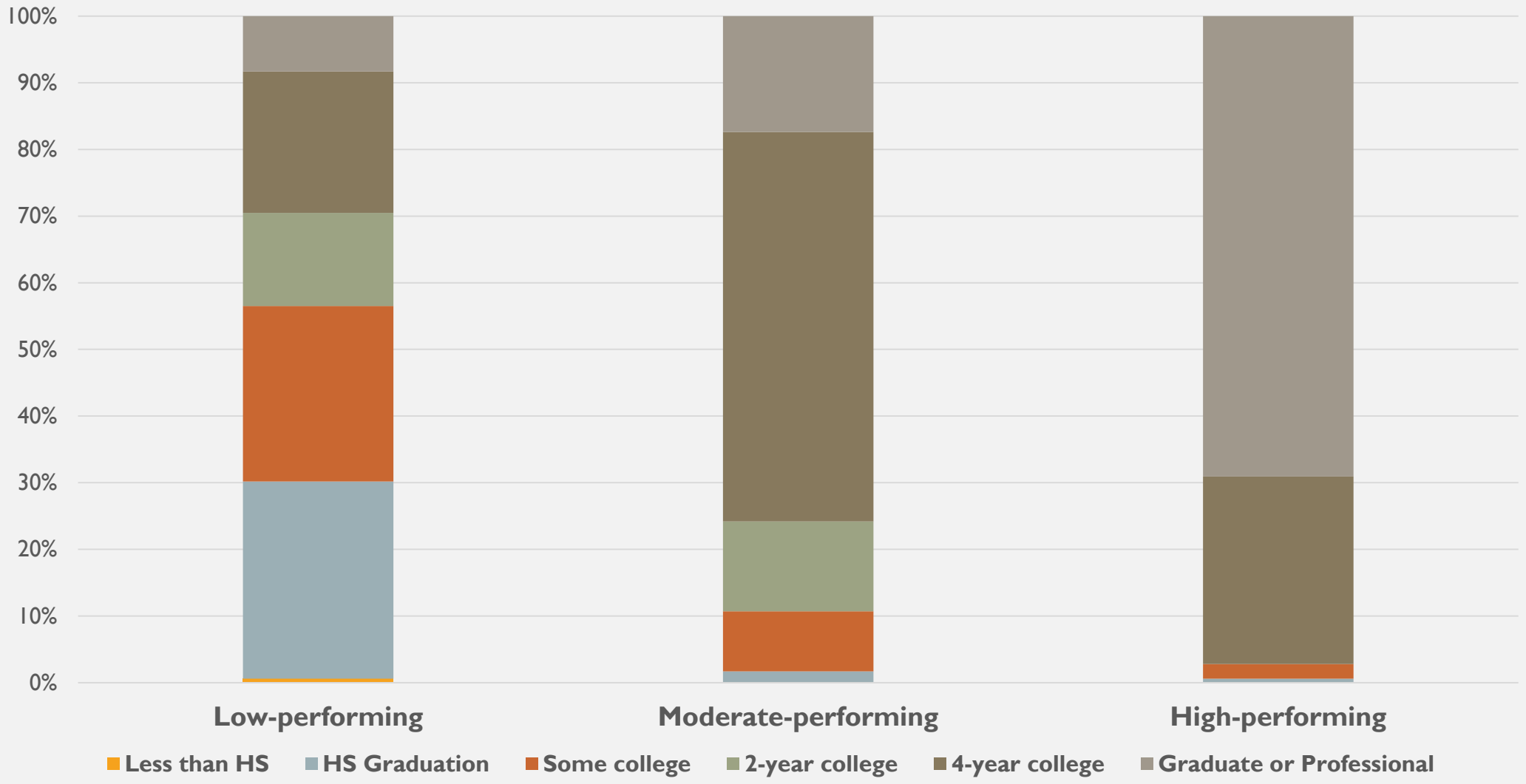
OUR SCHOOL HAS AN ACADEMIC INTERVENTION TEAM (E.G., MTSS, PRE-REFERRAL INTERVENTION TEAM).



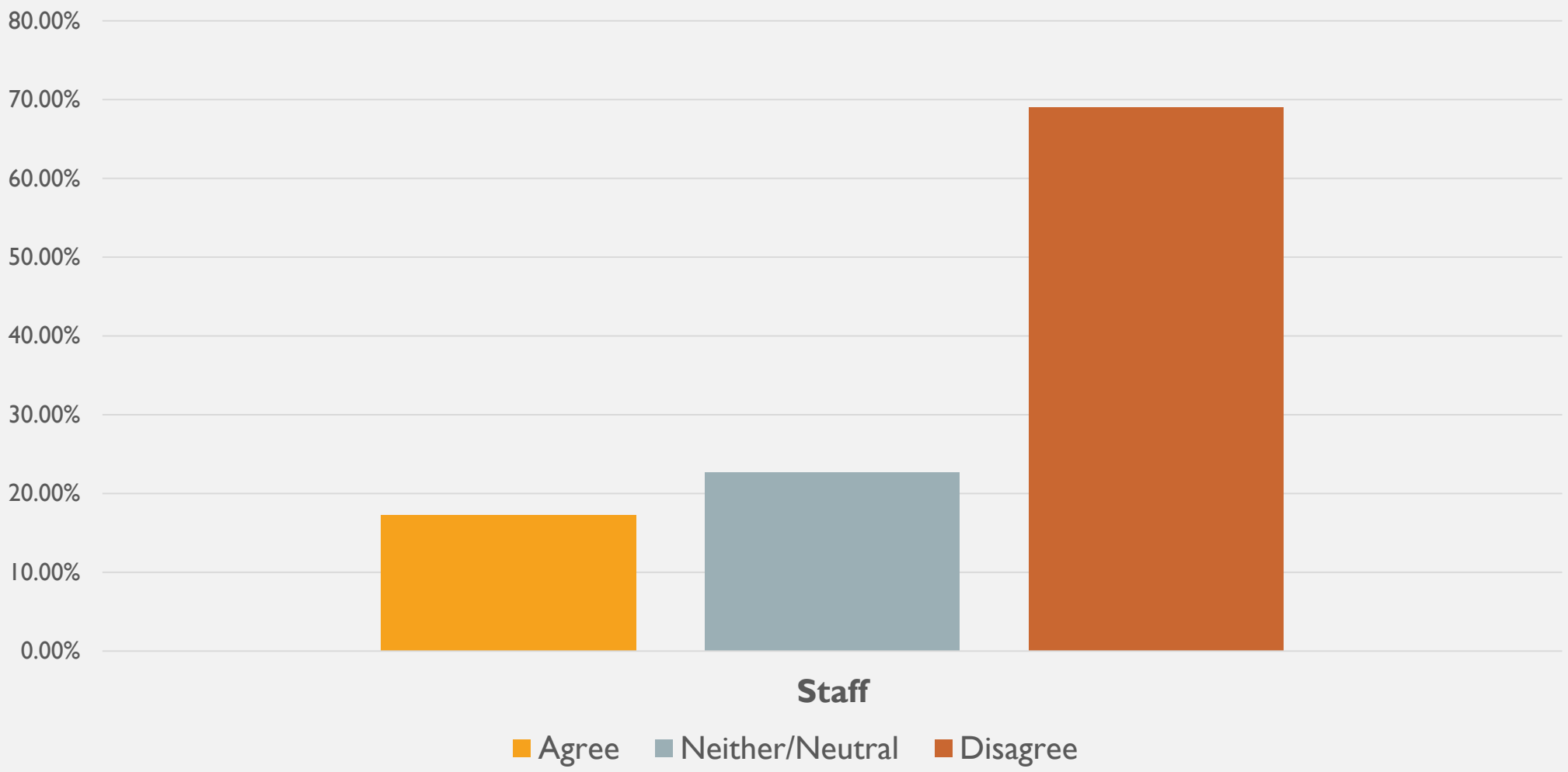
MY SCHOOL'S INTERVENTION TEAM FOLLOWS A FORMAL PROBLEM-SOLVING MODEL DURING MEETINGS.



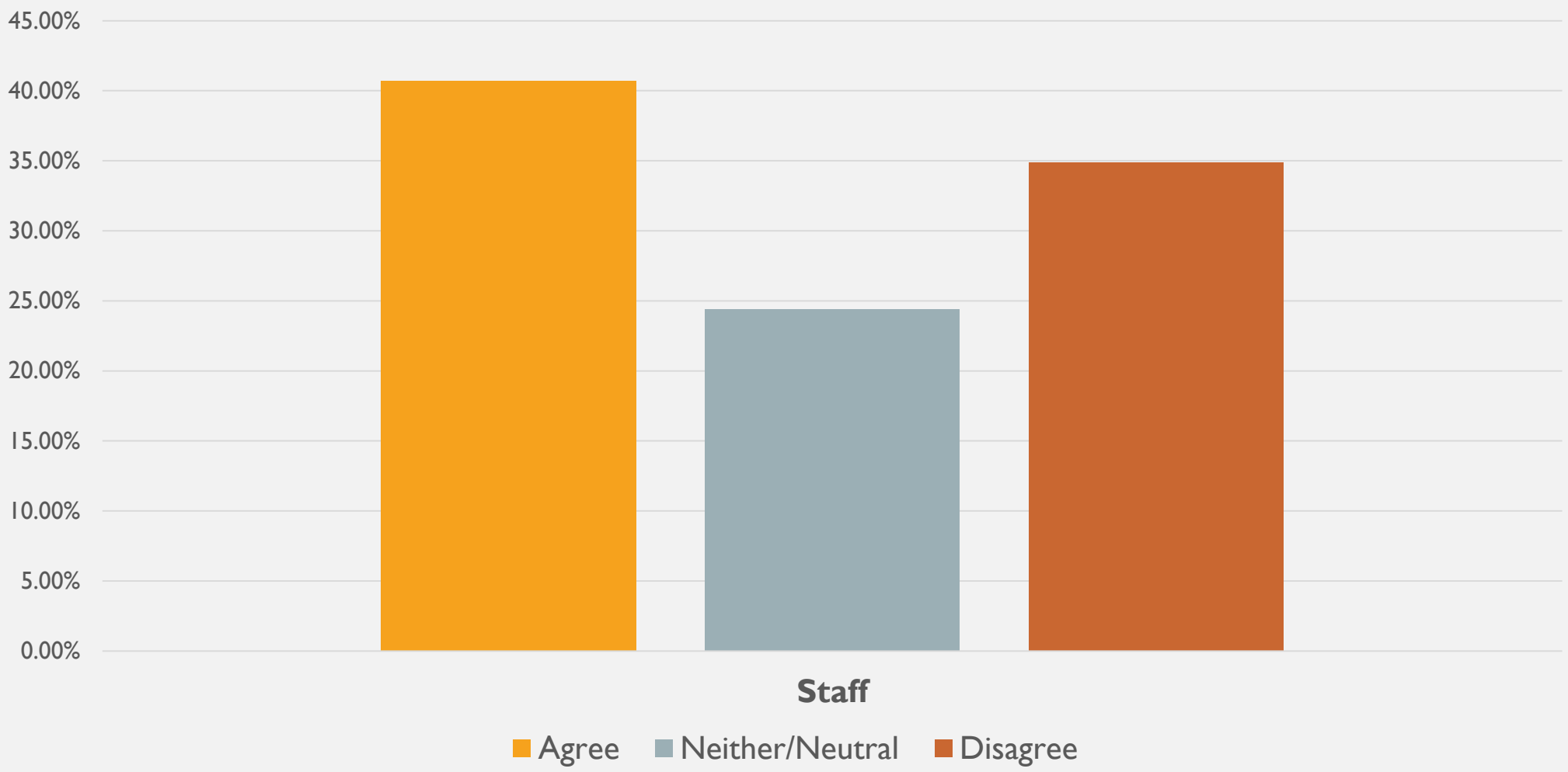
AS THINGS STAND NOW, HOW FAR IN SCHOOL DO YOU THINK YOUR STUDENTS WILL GET?



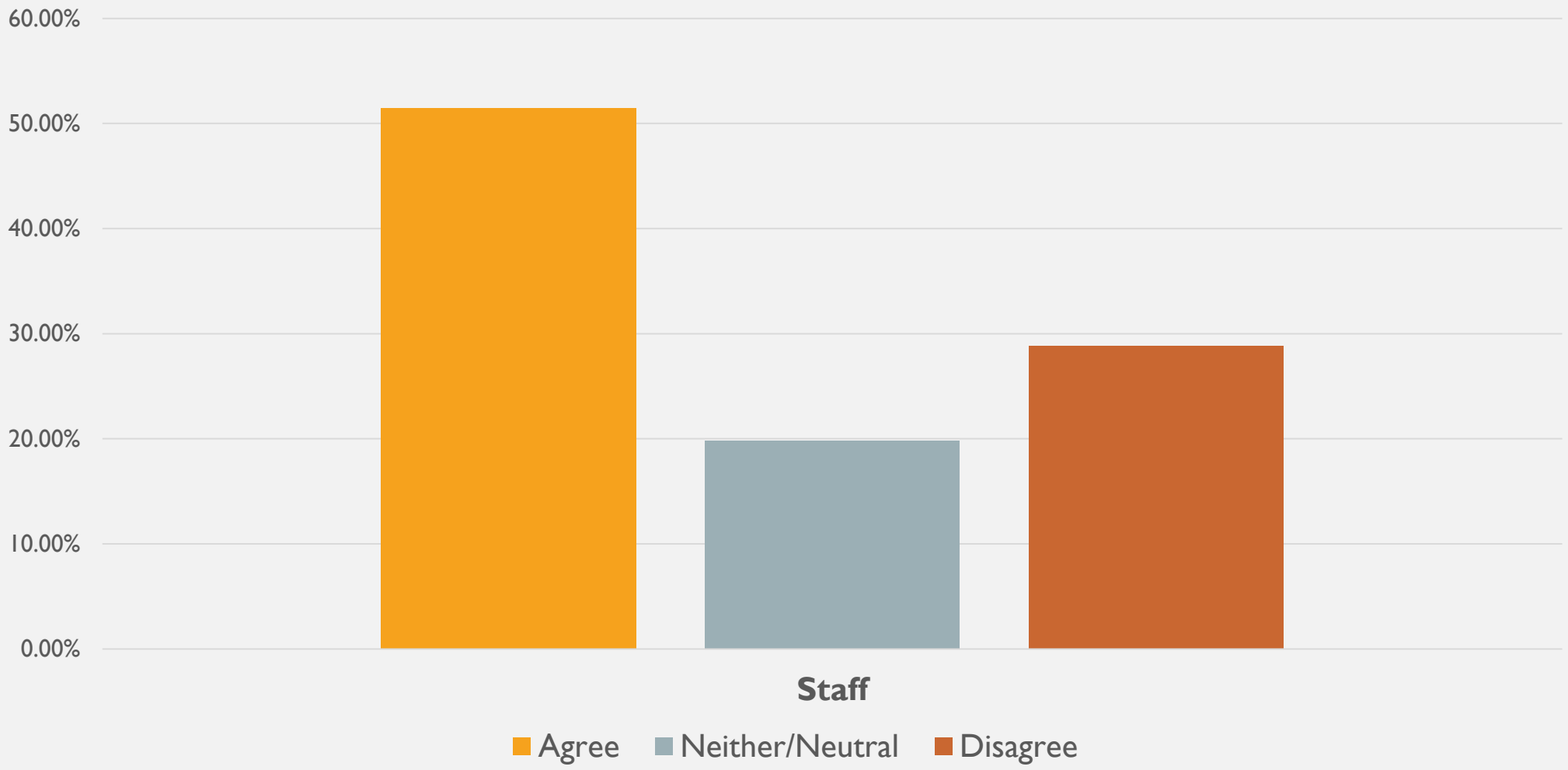
TRYING TO BE CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE ALL THE TIME IS NICE IN THEORY, BUT THE REALITY IS THAT A TEACHER DOES NOT HAVE TIME TO BE ALL THINGS TO ALL STUDENTS.



MY CLOSEST FRIENDS TEND TO BE OF THE SAME RACIAL OR ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION AS MYSELF.



SOMETIMES I WONDER WHY WE CAN'T SEE EACH OTHER AS INDIVIDUALS INSTEAD OF RACE ALWAYS BEING AN ISSUE.



SUMMARY

1. Staff are split on their perception of academic and behavioral supports availability and effectiveness
2. Staff maintain varied expectations of students dependent on academic performance
3. Staff maintain ambivalence about race and limited cross-cultural experiences.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS:
ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITIES ORGANIZED FOR A FEW

THEME 1: GATEKEEPERS OF RESOURCES AND SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

- Members of the Norwalk School District community agree that there is a power dynamic that exists within the district that is maintained by a core group of parents. The display of power is played out through the way things are talked about (or not), who has access to information, and how resources are utilized.
- Challenges:
  - Black and Latinx parents feeling uncomfortable with gatekeeping
  - SGC and PTA organizations primarily lead by White parents

- "The schools that I'm involved in [there are] gatekeepers and they're actively involved in maintaining control... I know some of these people are like- have more money so they're, like, probably donating things, that can be involved."
- "... it's always the same folks taking the lead, even if you want to volunteer. . . . They have their own little circle, and it's always the same country club mentality moms, that [say] 'You know what, oh, no, we don't do that, that way.'"

THEME 2: COMMUNICATION GAPS CREATE LIMITED ACCESS AND INFORMATION HOARDING

- Communication varies in NPS and impacts the access the school community has to information and in the quality of the information that is shared. Most parents reported difficult accessing information about school processes and resources. Even when parents do know, they suggest that others probably don't have the same information.
- Challenges:
  - Information differences across schools
  - Knowledge stays within some schools and not others

- "A lot of people don't know you can transfer schools. Well, I feel like a lot of people don't know they can transfer schools. But—I don't feel like Norwalk publicizes or lets parents know, hey, if you're unhappy at your neighborhood school or wherever, you can choose to go somewhere else provided there's room. So most people don't know that."
- "I was talking to another woman who's White and I said wait a minute. She said 'I'm going to get my daughter into [redacted]'. I said I didn't even know that [redacted] considered themselves a Norwalk Public School, because . . . it is South Norwalk. . . .I want my daughter to go to the best school. How do I get into [redacted]? "

ACCESSING RESOURCES: SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVIDED BASED ON ADVOCATES

- This disparity is especially notable in the ways that parents access special educational services for their children. According to some school staff, White parents come to IEP meetings with additional resources.
- Challenge:
  - Some parents utilize advocates to ensure services for child
  - Special education services provided take away from other students

- "I think White parents have the wherewithal to come with an advocate."
- "... it's very daunting for a parent who one) doesn't speak the language, two) doesn't feel like they have the education to even be there, and three) if you're sitting at a table with the principal, the SPED teacher, the nurse I mean it's pretty daunting to sit at a table and then hear those reports that are so filled with jargon that you don't quite know what it is they're saying and you may just say -- and you might just hear, oh, services but you don't really know what the services are and how do those services really translate to your student."

ACCESSING RESOURCES: GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAMS FOR SOME AND NOT ALL

- For some parents, schools act as an additional risk condition in learning about and being involved in gifted, talented and AP/honors programs**.** Enrollment in advanced courses is an observable disproportionality in NPS. White students are more likely than their racially diverse peers to be placed in gifted programs by the third grade and advanced courses in middle and high school.

- "It's all economics. If you can pay for a tutor your child will do better. It's because you paid for a tutor. If you can't, you have to rely on peer tutoring. I think people's experiences are based on what their access is, and the access is based on economics, not about intention. There's a disparity between white students, Black students, Hispanic and Latino students. I think obviously, wealth is a factor in terms of what students have access to in terms of resources. A test like the SAT is frequently not just a test of aptitude but a test of how much tutoring you can afford."

THEME 3: DEFICIT THINKING AS A BARRIER TO EQUITY

- A common framing that emerged among school staff and some parents is a deficit thinking framing in explaining why less affluent and non-White students are experiencing disproportionate outcomes. There is an awareness of economic disparities in the community and a belief that those who have more get more, yet when asked to why some of the disparities exist in Norwalk, some school staff members suggested that parents were the problem or that gaps of inequity could be bridged with parent supports.

- "It's like two groups. Like the kids that are born and raised here with parents or maybe grandparents already here, that they know how the system works, how you have to do it, where you can go to ask for help. And there is this group that just came here. They just don't know anything at all. And then you need to help them more."

THEME 4: POSITIVE REGARD TOWARDS DISTRICT DURING PANDEMIC

- Despite many of the challenges, some educators and parents expressed hope that the district was doing to right thing, especially in relation to responses to the CoVid pandemic. Parents praised NPS in its efforts to provide these resources to support student learning during the pandemic. Physical resources had been distributed to students across all schools.

- "I'd have to say the school is doing an excellent job providing resources to some, to try to create parity. And I think it's really important. I mean, we're reaping the benefits of not having to make school lunches because everyone in the school system."

SUMMARY: EMERGING FINDINGS

- Among school staff participants, there is a varied perception as to whether research-based strategies of behavioral and academic supports are consistently available.
- Among school staff participants, there is a varied perspective on racial diversity comfort and colorblindness:
  - Majority participants share a comfort with people of different race or ethnicity than themselves as well as talking or thinking about racial diversity.
  - Participants varied in perspectives on racial differences in intelligence and comfort with "political correctness."
  - Participants varied greatly in colorblindness perspectives
    - Staff varied in whether racism would cease to exist if we ignored it



RECOMMENDATIONS OVERVIEW

RECOMMENDATIONS: TWO STRANDS

Improved Adequacy and Efficiency of Supports

- Intervention Supports
- Communication

Improved Access and Perspectives of DEI

- Perspectives on DEI
- Parent Access and Opportunities



IMPROVED ADEQUACY AND EFFICIENCY OF SUPPORTS

INTERVENTION SUPPORTS

1. Development of a district-wide tiered system of support that includes defining academic and behavioral tiers available and processes for utilization. The following are tools for considering the implementation timeline of response to intervention (RTI):
    - School Level implementation guide: http://www.rtinetwork.org/images/Colorado_School_RtI_Fidelity_Rubrics_2.pdf
2. Extensive review of SBRI implementation processes in order to address inconsistencies and redundancies.
3. Development within each school a formal list of tiered interventions for academic and behavioral supports that match continuous student needs. The following are sample resources:
    - Academic Interventions list: https://charts.intensiveintervention.org/aintervention
    - Behavior Interventions list: https://charts.intensiveintervention.org/bintervention
4. Develop tools and protocols for the operation of intervention team meetings. The following are sample resources:
    - Implementation checklist: https://intensiveintervention.org/sites/default/files/Student-Level_DBI_Checklist_508.pdf

COMMUNICATION FOR ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY

1. Schools improve the manner of communicating with parents regarding critical services.
   - Regularly provide accessible information on enrollment in magnet, gifted, honors, and AP courses.
   - Ensure equitable processes occur within special education evaluation with a particular attention in how parents without advocates are able to experience an informed process.
     - Create a process to regularly gather feedback from parents regarding the evaluation process.



STRAND2 *IMPROVE ACCESS AND PERSPECTIVES OF DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND EQUITY*

PERSPECTIVES ON PRACTICE AND DIVERSITY

1. Develop and implement a professional learning series that focuses on developing pedagogical lens that includes an expansive cross-cultural competency in order to replace bias-based beliefs such as colorblindness, deficit thinking, and racial discomfort.
   - The principals with equity team can participate in a summer institute to practice professional learning activities for implementing during 2021-2 school year.
2. Continuous assessment of educator knowledge on intervention support systems, curriculum and instruction, and gifted and advanced courses enrollment improvements.
3. Develop parent engagement and support activities that encourage cross-cultural competency. Activities should include opportunities for intergroup contact, perspective taking, and individuation.
4. District leadership development of an equity policy/statement that reflects the ethical perspectives of diversity, inclusion and equity (DEI) important for guiding a multi-year operational plan.
   - Utilize the information from various recent audit reports to identify the key components diversity, inclusion and equity.
   - Generate a policy/statement that reflects the DEI components and gather feedback from parents, school staff, and students.

IMPROVEMENT OF PARENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL DECISION MAKING

1. Improve process of parent opportunities to participate in School Governance Council (SGC).
   - The improvement can include an interim process of selection that ensures the SGC is representative of racial/ethnic student enrollment of the school.
2. Improve communication with parents
   - Continued use of virtual platform to connect with families during the 2021-22 school year.
   - Improved utilization of translation services for families, in particular Haitian Creole and Spanish.
   - Create centralization of information regarding critical enrollment and services provisions. For example, the enrollment processes for magnet programs, gifted programming, etc.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS