



Newark's Views on Key Education Issues

September 2019



New Jersey
Children's Foundation



Background and Methodology

The New Jersey Children's Foundation's mission is to promote a fact-based discussion about public education in Newark. In service of this goal, NJCF commissioned a survey to understand Newarkers opinions on a host of relevant issues facing our public schools.

Change Research conducted an online poll in Newark, New Jersey from September 6-9, 2019. Using its Bias Correct Engine to attain a sample reflective of the city's electorate, Change Research polled 516 registered voters. Post-stratification was performed on age, gender, ethnicity, and 2016 Presidential vote.

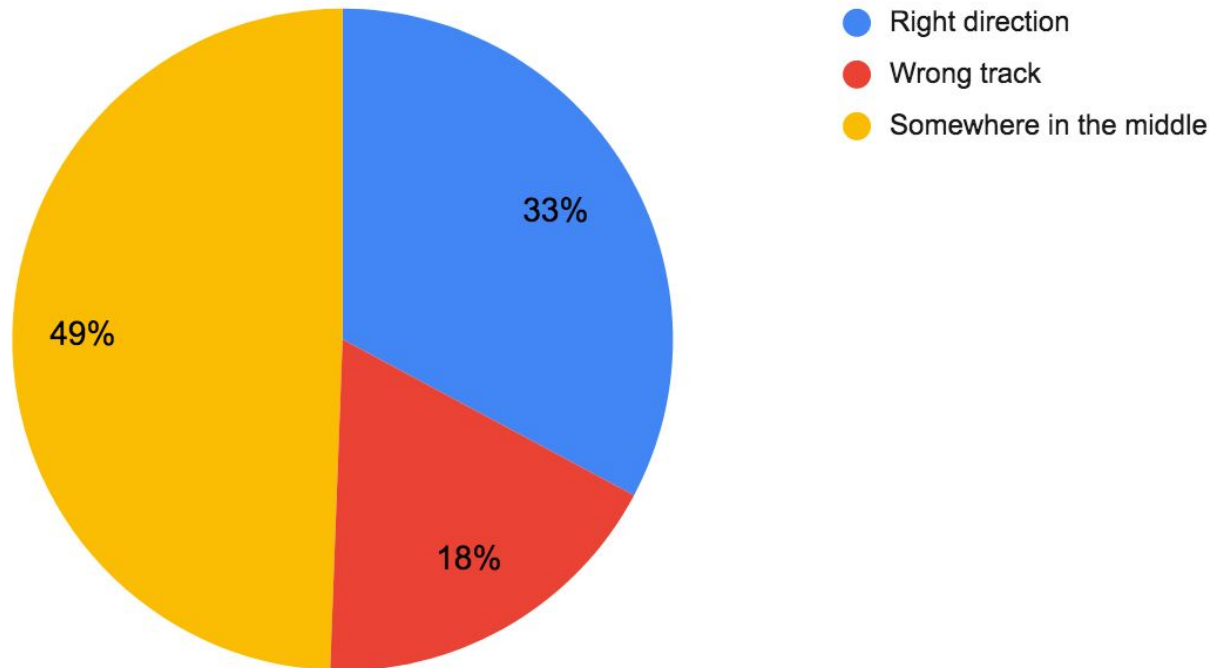


Key Findings



Newarkers Believe Their Public Schools Are Improving

In general, do you feel like education in Newark is going in the right direction or on the wrong track?

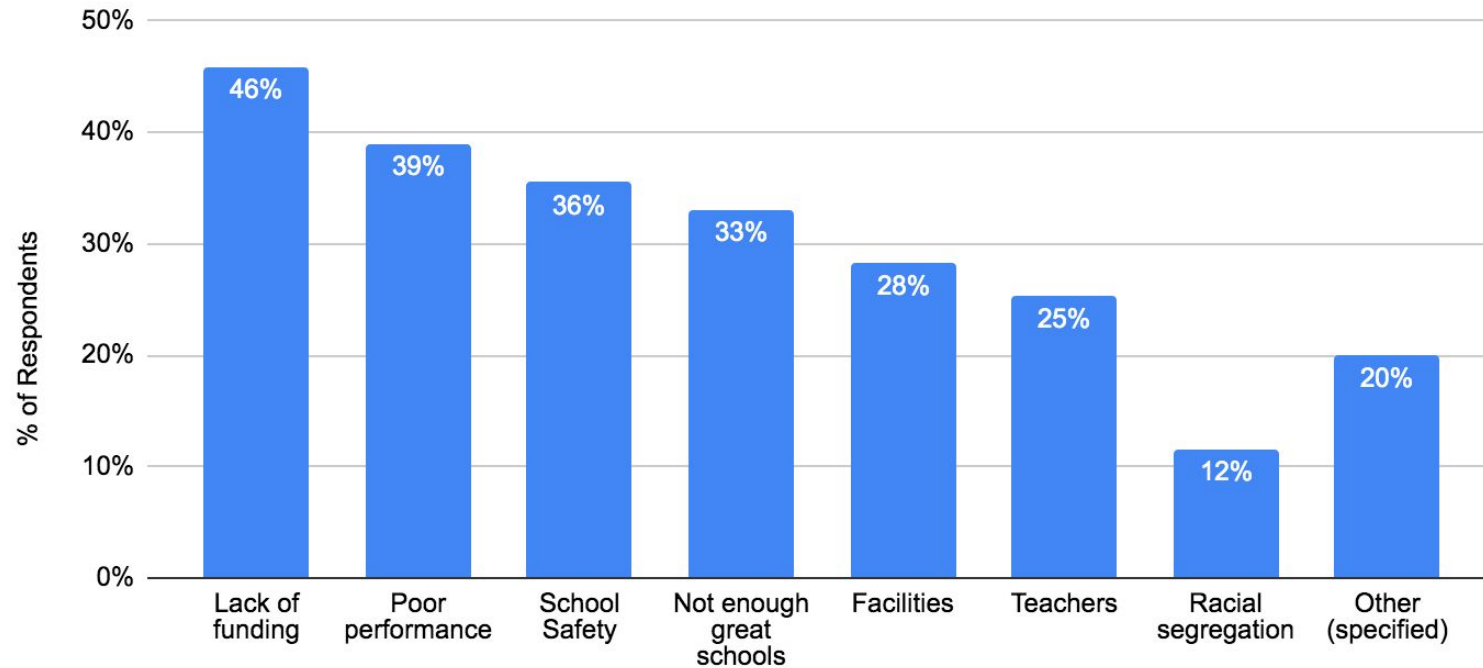


- By a margin of 33%-18%, **more Newarkers feel that education in Newark is on the right track.**
- 38% of Newarkers feel that **there are more quality schools available to families in 2019 than ten years ago**, compared with just 21% who believe there are fewer.
- **This support is felt most strongly among 18-34 year old voters (46%)**, who are most likely to have experienced Newark's school improvement firsthand, and African-American voters (44%).



Newarkers See These Challenges Facing Their School System

What are the two most important problems facing Newark schools today?



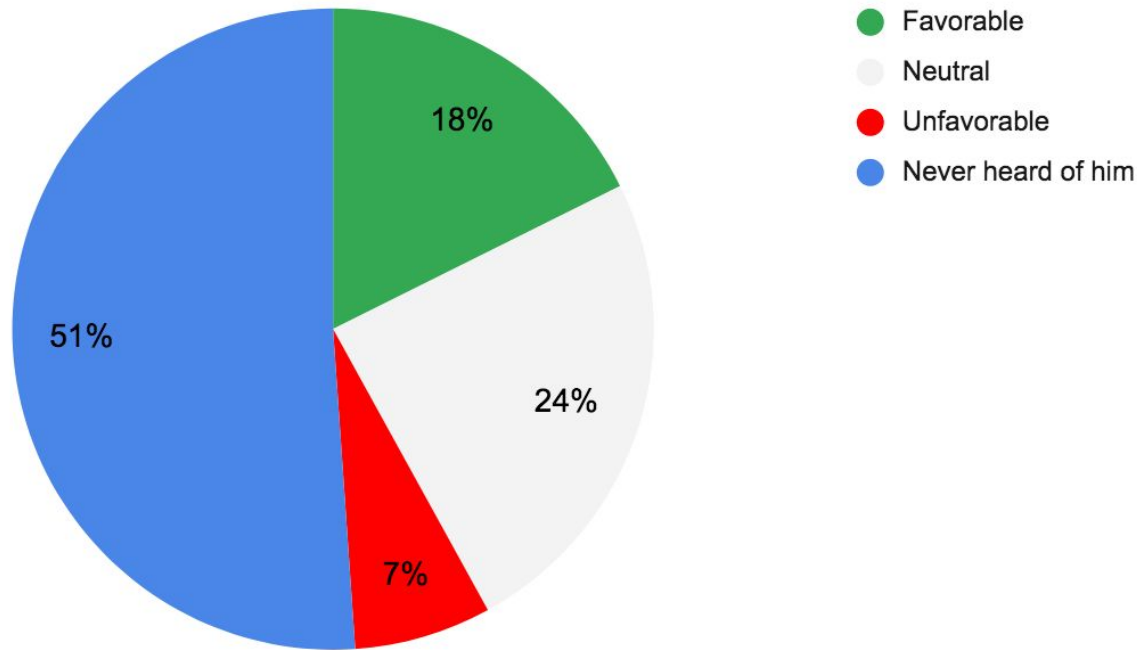
Three issues stand out as Tier 1 issues in the minds of Newark voters:

- **Lack of funding (46%)**
- **School performance** - including:
 - Poor performance (39%)
 - Not enough great schools (33%)
- **School safety (36%)**



Most Newarkers Have Not Yet Formed Opinion of New Sup't

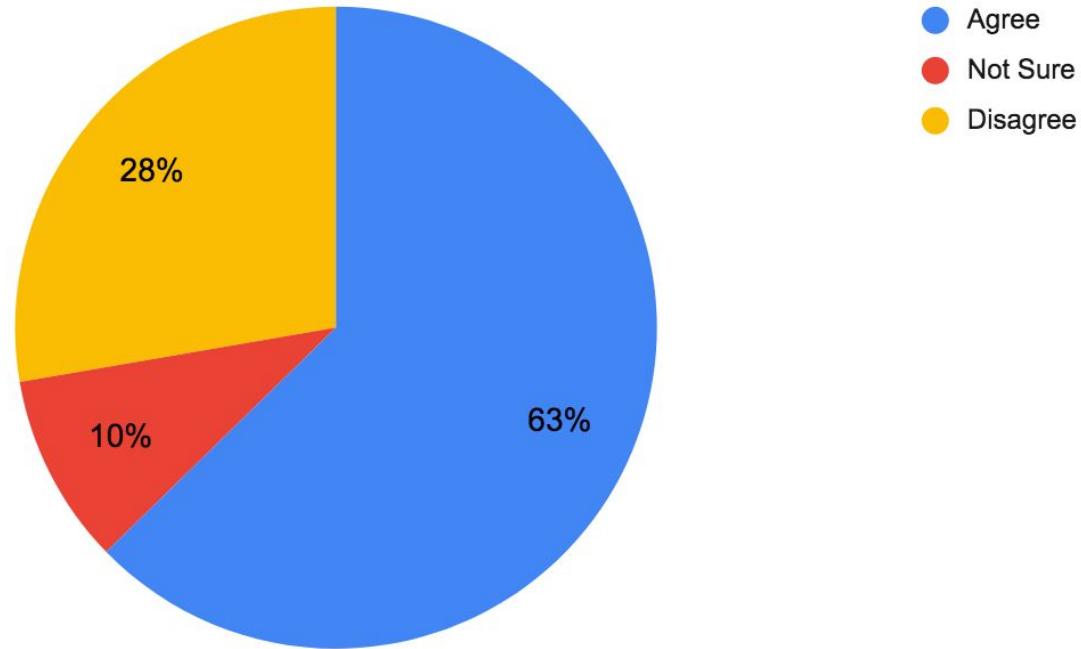
How Favorable Are Your Feelings About Superintendent Roger Leon?



- **A majority of Newarkers are still acquainting themselves with new Superintendent Roger Leon.** Newarkers are three times as likely (51%) to have never heard of the new Superintendent as they are to have favorable views of him (17%).
- However, of those Newarkers who are aware of Superintendent Leon, more than 2:1 support him (18%/7%).

Newarkers Support Public Charter Schools

Do you believe public charter schools are an important part of the public school landscape in Newark?

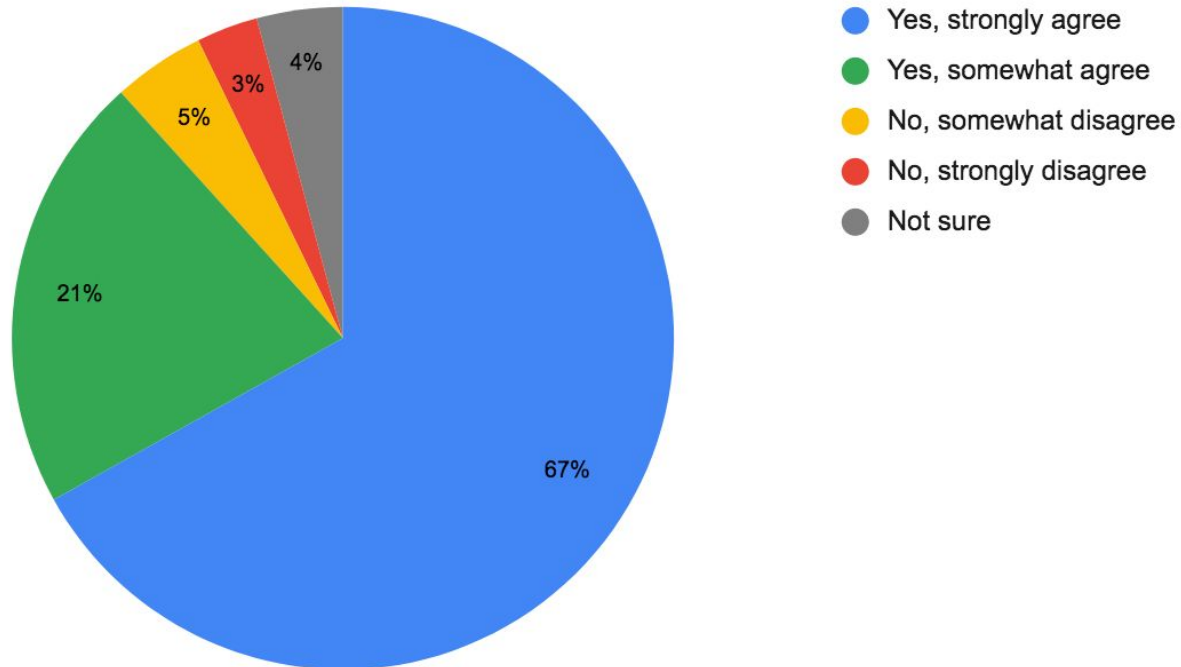


- **63% of Newarkers see public charter schools as an important part of the city's public school landscape.** Support for public charter schools is fueled by families, demonstrated by the positive responses of 68% of women, 68% of African American voters and 68% of voters with a child or children enrolled in grades K-12.



Newarkers Want More High Quality School Options

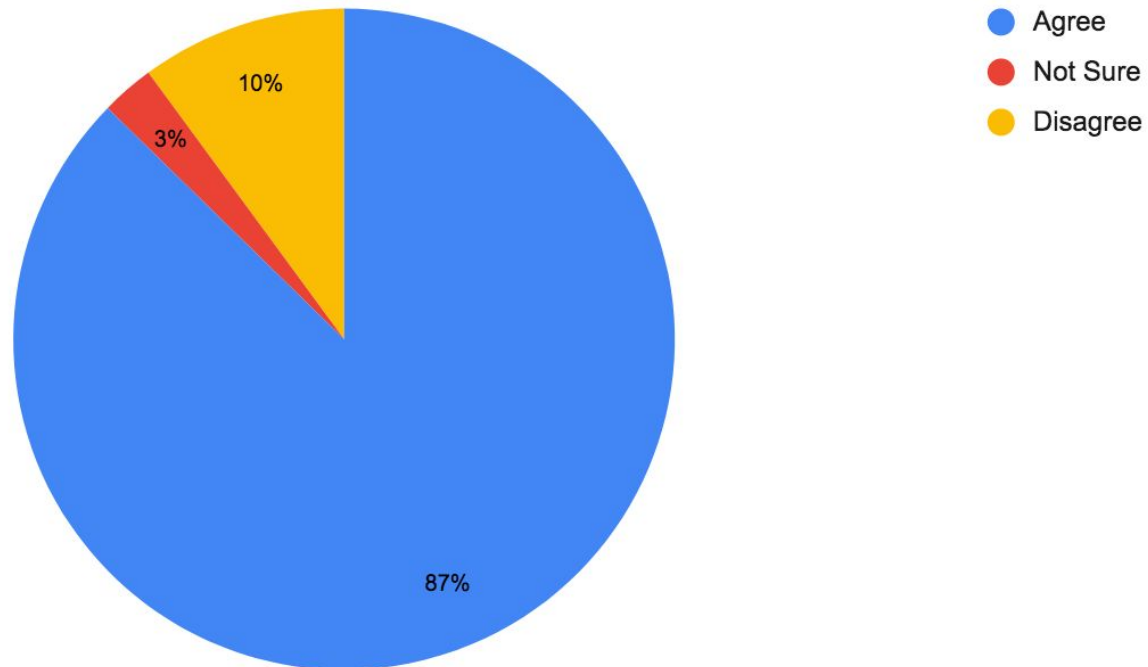
Do you believe parents in Newark should have more quality school options than they have right now, including public charter schools?



- **88% of Newarkers want more high quality school options, including public charter schools.**
- **67% of Newarkers said they *strongly agreed* that Newark should have more high quality school options, including public charter schools.**

Newarkers Want Choice and Equity in Their Enrollment System

Should parents be able to choose the best public school for their children in the same enrollment system, including public charter schools?

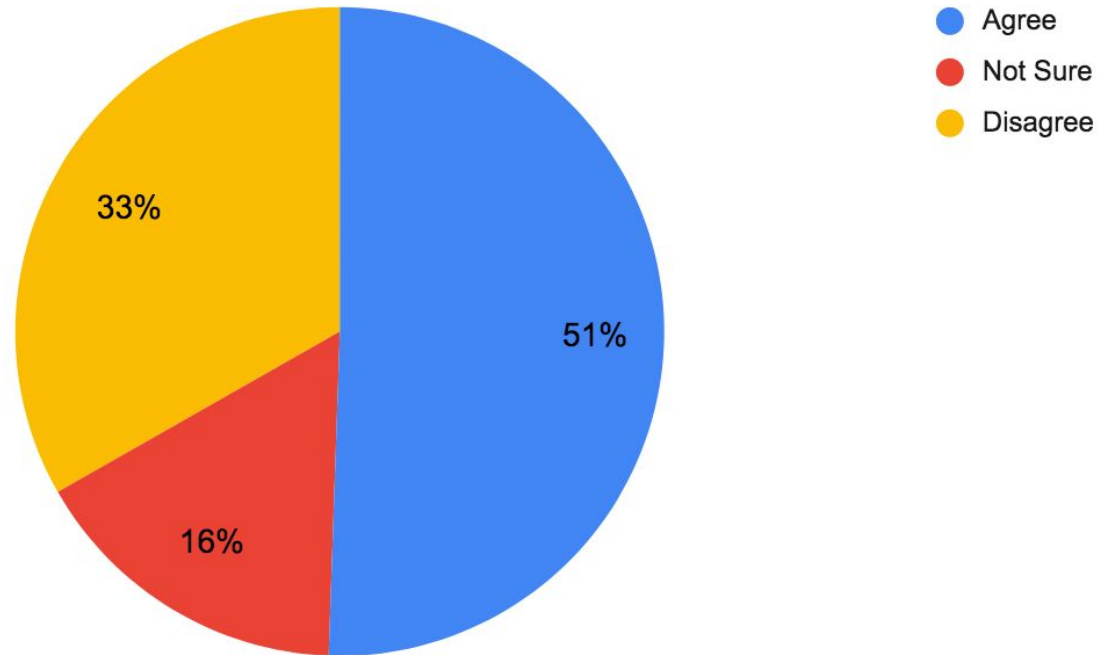


- **87% of Newarkers support a universal enrollment system**, where Newark families have access to all of their public school choices in one enrollment system.
- **79% of Newarkers believe the website that parents use to enroll their students should be available year-round**, not just during the application phase from December-April.
- **70% of Newarkers agree that magnet schools that under-enroll African American students should be forced to enroll a student body that better represents the city of Newark.** The groups with the highest support for this issue include women (77% agree) and African Americans (80% agree).



Newarkers Narrowly Support New Teacher Pay Changes

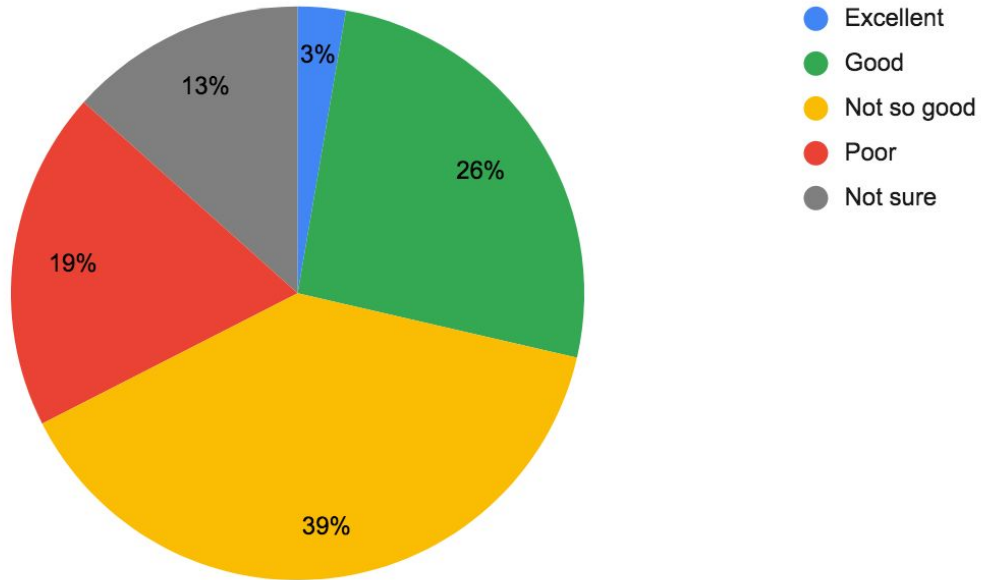
Newark recently approved a new teacher's contract which increases teacher salaries, but eliminates bonuses for the city's highest rated teachers. Do you believe this contract will be good for Newark students?



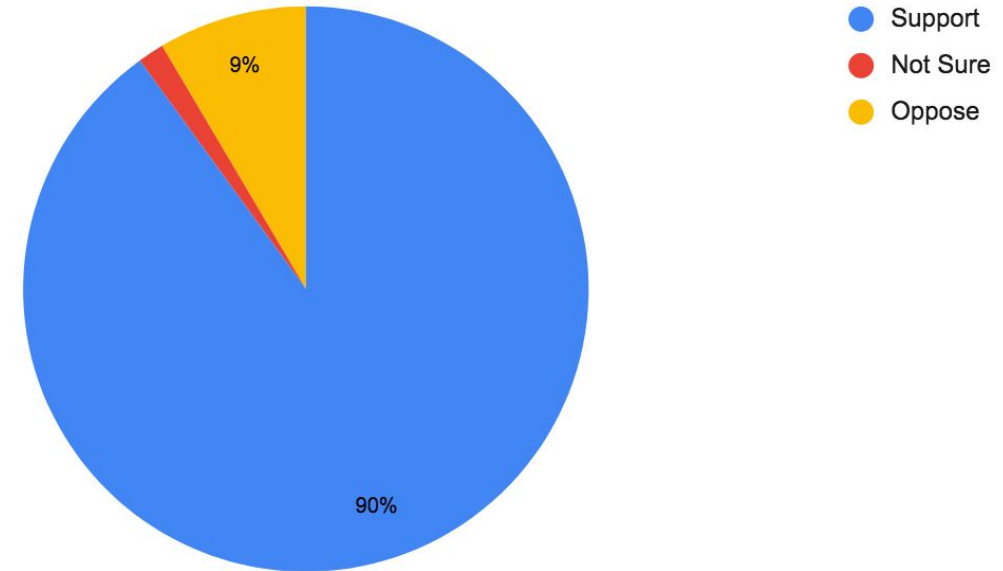
- Newark recently approved a new teachers' contract, which increases teacher salaries, but eliminates bonuses for the city's highest rated teachers.
- Asked whether they believe the new contract will be beneficial for Newark's students, **a narrow majority of Newarkers indicate their agreement that the new contract will benefit students** while one-third disagree.

Newarkers Want Investments to Improve School Facilities

How would you rate the physical condition of school buildings and facilities in Newark?



Newark's leaders recently called for more than \$300 million to repair Newark's school buildings. Do you support or oppose that public investment?

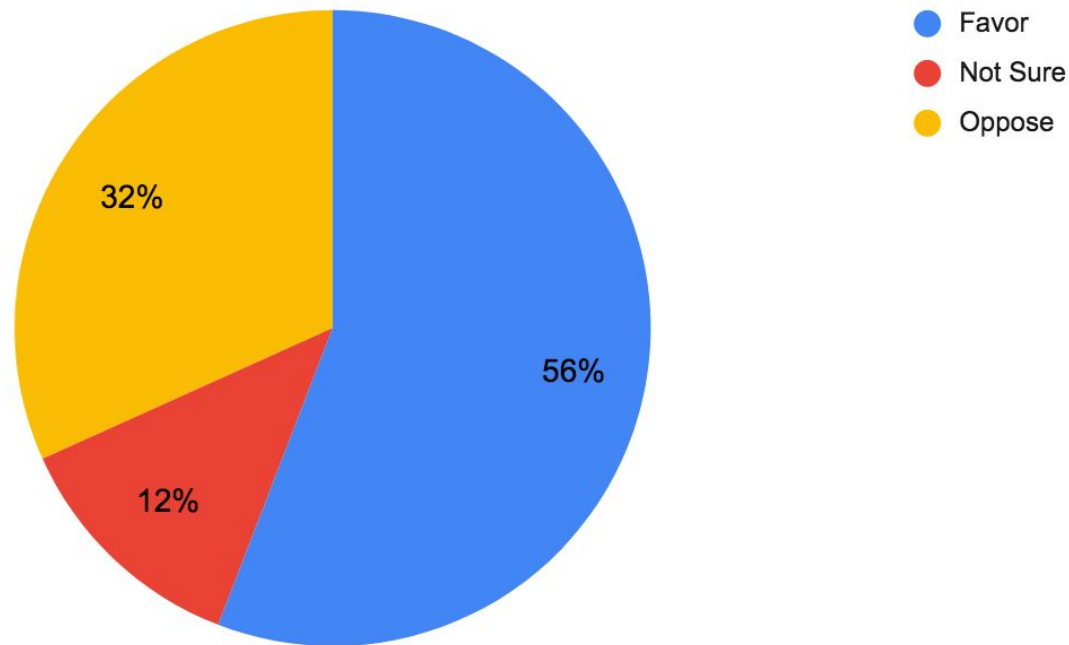


- **Nearly 60% of Newarkers say school buildings are in “not so good” or “poor” condition.**
- Newark's leaders recently called for more than \$300 million to repair Newark's school buildings and **90% of voters support that initiative.**



Newarkers Believe Public Charter Schools Should Have Access To Under-Used School Buildings

Do you favor or oppose public charter schools having access to existing school buildings that are under-used?

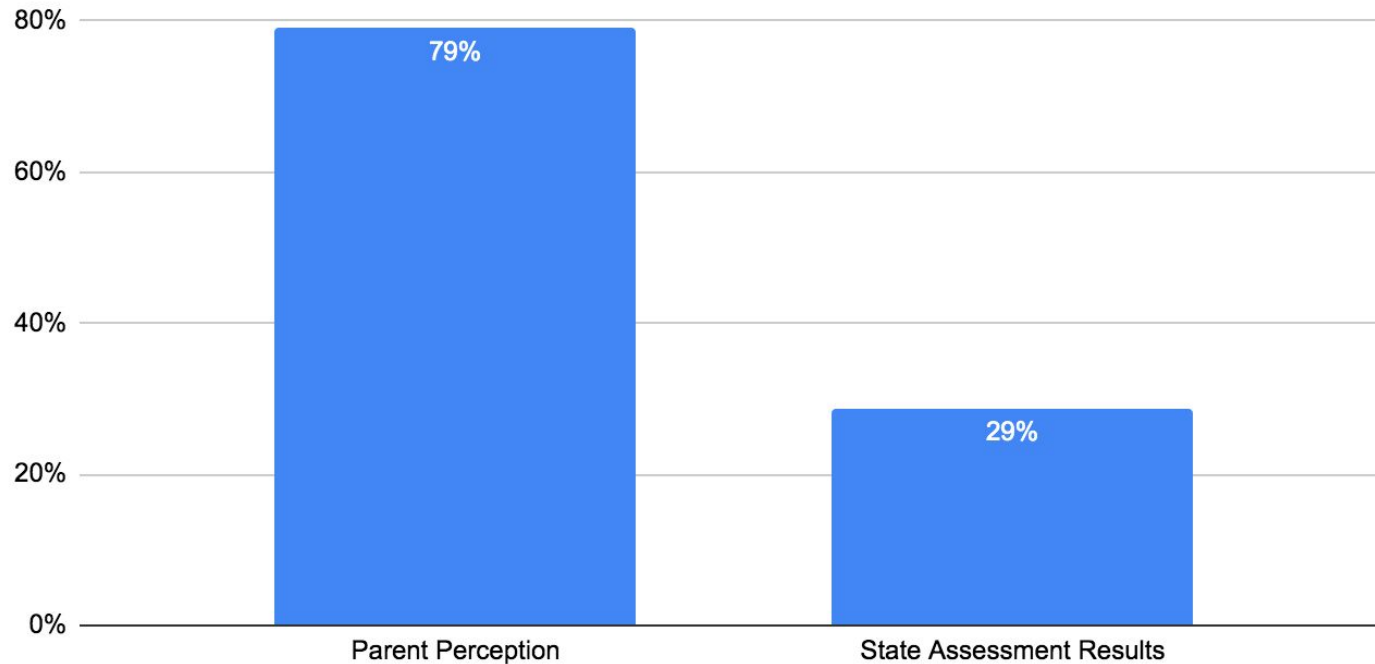


- **A strong majority (56%) of voters support allowing public charter schools to access school buildings across Newark that are currently underused, compared with 32% that oppose this idea.**

Newarkers Have A More Optimistic Vision of Student Performance Than Academic Data Shows

Do you believe your child is performing at grade level in math and reading at their school?

Percentage of Students At Grade Level In Reading & Math



- **79% of Newark parents believe their child is performing at or above grade level.** Yet state test score data shows that, on average, just 29% of Newark students are on grade level in reading and math.
- This “perception gap” between self-reported proficiency and actual proficiency raises interesting questions about whether families and policymakers are on the same page when it comes to school performance.





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