

# COVID-19 STUDENT SURVEY



## School Experiences Topic Summary

---

## Washington State Middle School Students

Release Date: August 2021



Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**



Washington State Department of  
**Health**

Washington State  
**Health Care Authority**



UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

## Brief Overview of the COVID-19 Student Survey:

In March 2021, over 32,000 middle school students grades 6-8 completed an online survey to assess behaviors and attitudes across a number of health domains during the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information about the survey or to view other reports, please visit: <https://csswashington.org>.

The purpose of this document is to describe students' school experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic within subpopulations of our middle school sample to help assess whether certain populations have been affected differently than others. Specifically, this report will look at behaviors, feelings, and perceptions by racial and ethnic categories, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability status, and by migratory working family status.

## Background on School Experiences During COVID-19:

- On March 13, 2020, in response to the COVID-19 Emergency Proclamation, statewide closures of K-12 schools were enacted.
- School schedules and formats continued to be disrupted by Washington State's response to the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the 2020-21 school year.
- 87.8% of surveyed middle schoolers reported engaging in distance learning during past the school year.
- School and extracurricular activities associated with school represent a significant source of structure and support for adolescents, but the school disruptions represents a significant stressor (Scott et al., 2021).

## What Does the Middle School Sample Look Like?

Survey participation was voluntary at both the school and student level. Therefore, this is a convenience sample and is not intended to be generalized to the state population. It is important to be thoughtful in how you interpret and use these results. When framing the findings, you might consider using language such as "Among participating students..." or "Of students who took the COVID-19 Student Survey...".

The proportion of participating students within each demographic category are described in the table below.

**Note** that percentages may not equal 100% because students who reported "I do not know what this question is asking" or "I prefer not to answer" were not included in the analyses described in this document.

## Sample Size and Proportion of Middle School Participants by Demographic Group

Race and Ethnicity								Disability Status		Migratory Status	
AIAN	Asian	Black	Hispanic	NHOPI	White	Other	Multiple	Yes	No	Yes	No
1,161	1,896	1,369	7,507	407	13,053	2,288	3,868	1,919	24,918	3,160	26,393
(3.7%)	(6.0%)	(4.3%)	(23.8%)	(1.3%)	(41.4%)	(7.3%)	(12.3%)	(6.0%)	(77.2%)	(9.8%)	(81.6%)

Gender Identity					Sexual Orientation					
Male	Female	Transgender	Questioning	Other	Heterosexual	Gay	Lesbian	Bisexual	Questioning	Other
14,614	14,787	287	963	689	20,869	233	609	3,094	1,896	1,144
(45.1%)	(45.6%)	(0.9%)	(3.0%)	(2.1%)	(65.2%)	(0.7%)	(1.9%)	(9.7%)	(5.9%)	(3.6%)

**Key:** AIAN = American Indian and Alaska Native, NHOPI = Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. For Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation, "Other" refers to students who indicated that "Something else fits better".

## Survey Items to Identify Student Subgroups

### Race/Ethnicity

Students were asked, “How do you describe yourself?” They were shown a list of racial and ethnic categories and encouraged to select one or more responses. Students who selected more than one racial or ethnic group were included in the Multiple Race/Ethnicity category.

### Gender Identity & Sexual Orientation

For both gender identity and sexual orientation, students were asked to select a response that best described themselves. Students were asked, "how do you currently identify yourself?" and "which of the following best describes you?" They were shown a list of responses, and they were given the option of selecting "I do not know what this question is asking" and "I prefer not to answer." Students who did not know what the question was asking or who preferred not to answer were not included in the analyses for these respective subgroup comparisons.

- **LGBTQ+:** In this document, we use LGBTQ+ to describe a diverse and encompassing range of minority sexualities and gender-identities that include (L)esbian, (G)ay, (B)isexual, (T)ransgender, (Q)uestioning and (+) additional gender identities and sexual orientations.

### Students identifying as having a disability or long-term health condition

Disability status was defined by whether a student selected the item, “Are you limited in any activities because of a disability or long-term health problem including physical health, emotional, or learning problems expected to last 6 months or longer?”

### Students from a migratory working family

Migratory working family status was defined by whether a student selected the item, “Have you or your family moved in the past 3 years to another school district or city for **temporary or seasonal** work in agriculture, dairy or fishing?”

**Legal requirements:** Federal and Washington state regulations prohibit discrimination against LEP individuals who are Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, or visually impaired. Read HCA [Policy 01-27](#) "Language Access Services" and [Policy 01-30](#) "Equal Access to Services for Individuals with Disabilities" for more information. If you have a question about an accommodation, please contact the HCA Prevention Section at [prevention@hca.wa.gov](mailto:prevention@hca.wa.gov).

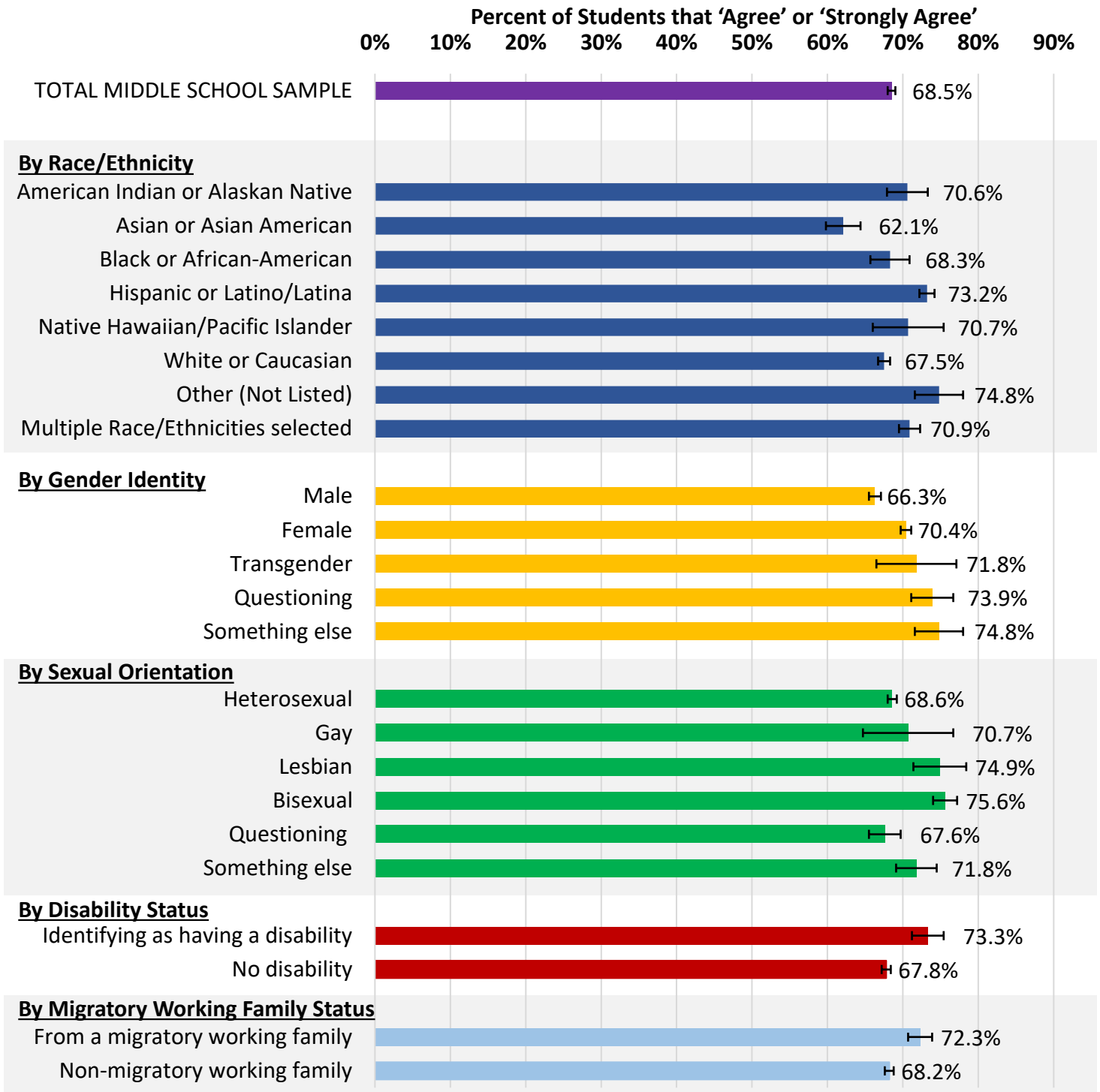
### Key Takeaways from Middle School Students Who Took the Survey

- More than two-thirds (68.5%) of middle school respondents said that schoolwork was harder to do than before the COVID-19 pandemic.
- More than half (52.4%) reported that they had learned less during the past year compared to the year prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but nearly a quarter of respondents (24.5%) reported that they had learned *more* than they had the year prior.
- More than half of the middle school students who completed the survey (56.5%) reported that they usually tried their best during the past year. Trying their best was generally less common amongst students identifying as LGBTQ+.
- More than a third (38.9%) of middle school students responding to this survey indicated that their schoolwork during the past year was meaningful and important. Students identifying as LGBTQ+ reported lower perceived importance of their schoolwork.
- 36.7% of middle school students responding to this survey indicated that their classes were interesting, and reported interest was lower amongst LGBTQ+ youth.
- 28.1% of middle school students that took this survey indicated that they felt frequently praised by their teachers.
- 37.7% reported that they felt safer from bullying when school was online, compared to when school was in-person. Notably, students identifying as Gay and Transgender were more likely to report feeling safer when school was online.

# School Experiences: Middle School Students

## School Challenges

**Question:** How much do you agree with the following statement? ‘It has been harder to do my schoolwork this year than it was last school year, before the COVID-19 pandemic.’



**NOTES:**

- Higher percentages indicate more students reported that school was more challenging than last year.
- Prevalence is displayed with 95% confidence intervals shown with black error bars.
- Response options included: ‘Strongly Disagree’, ‘Disagree’, ‘Not Sure’, ‘Agree’, and ‘Strongly Agree’. Percentages shown above indicate those who reported ‘Agree’ or ‘Strongly Agree’.
- For more information about the survey or to view other reports, please visit: <https://csswashington.org>.

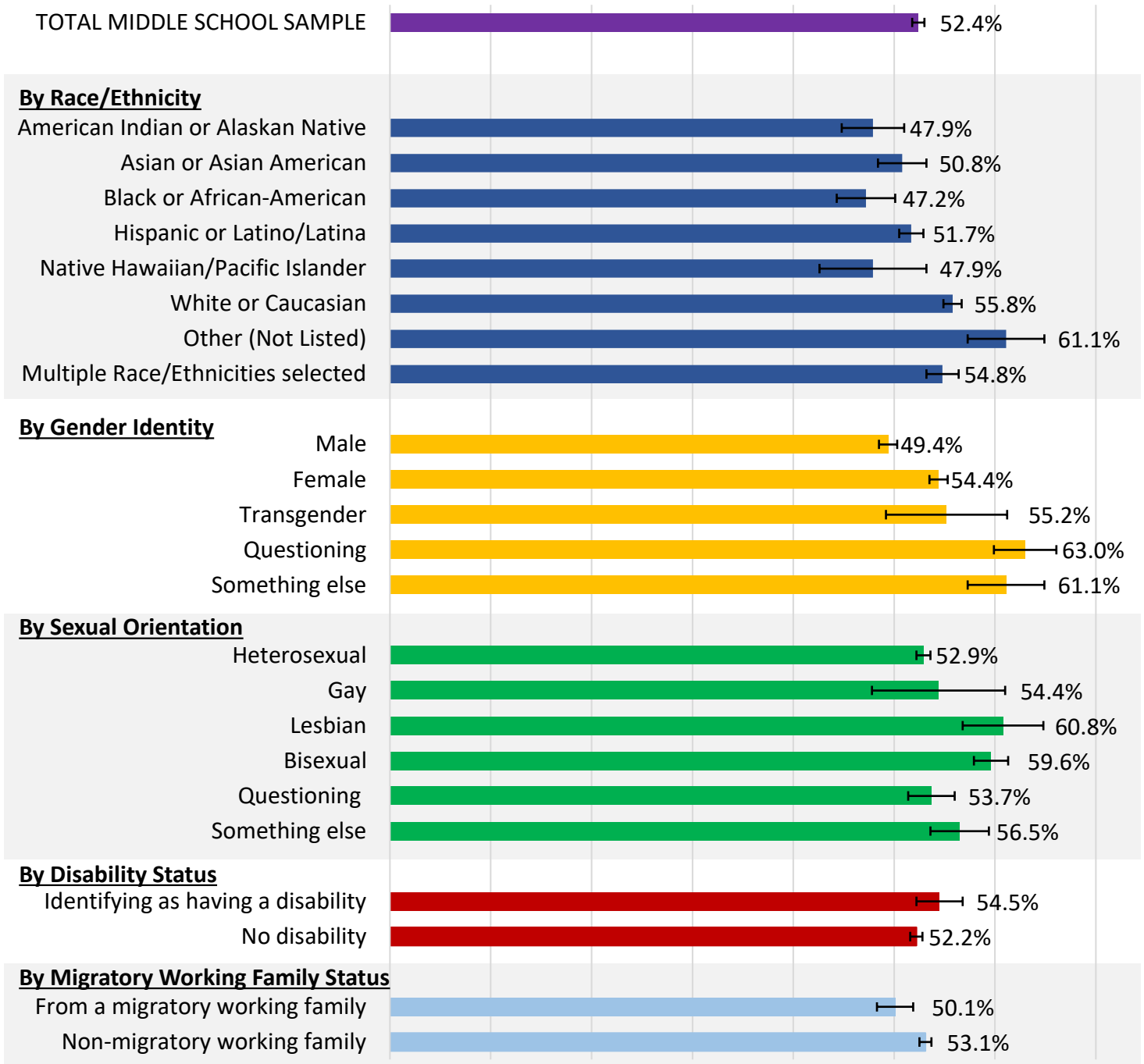
# School Experiences: Middle School Students

## Learning Less than Last Year

**Question:** How much do you feel you have learned across all of your classes this school year, compared to last school year before the COVID-19 pandemic?

Percent of Students Reporting 'A little less' or 'A lot less' than Last Year

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70%



**NOTES:**

- Higher percentages indicate more students reported learning less than last year.
- Prevalence is displayed with 95% confidence intervals shown with black error bars.
- Response options included: 'A lot more than last year', 'A little more than last year', 'About the same as last year', 'A little less than last year', and 'A lot less than last year'. Percentages shown above indicate those who reported 'A little less than last year' or 'A lot less than last year'.
- For more information about the survey or to view other reports, please visit: <https://csswashington.org>.

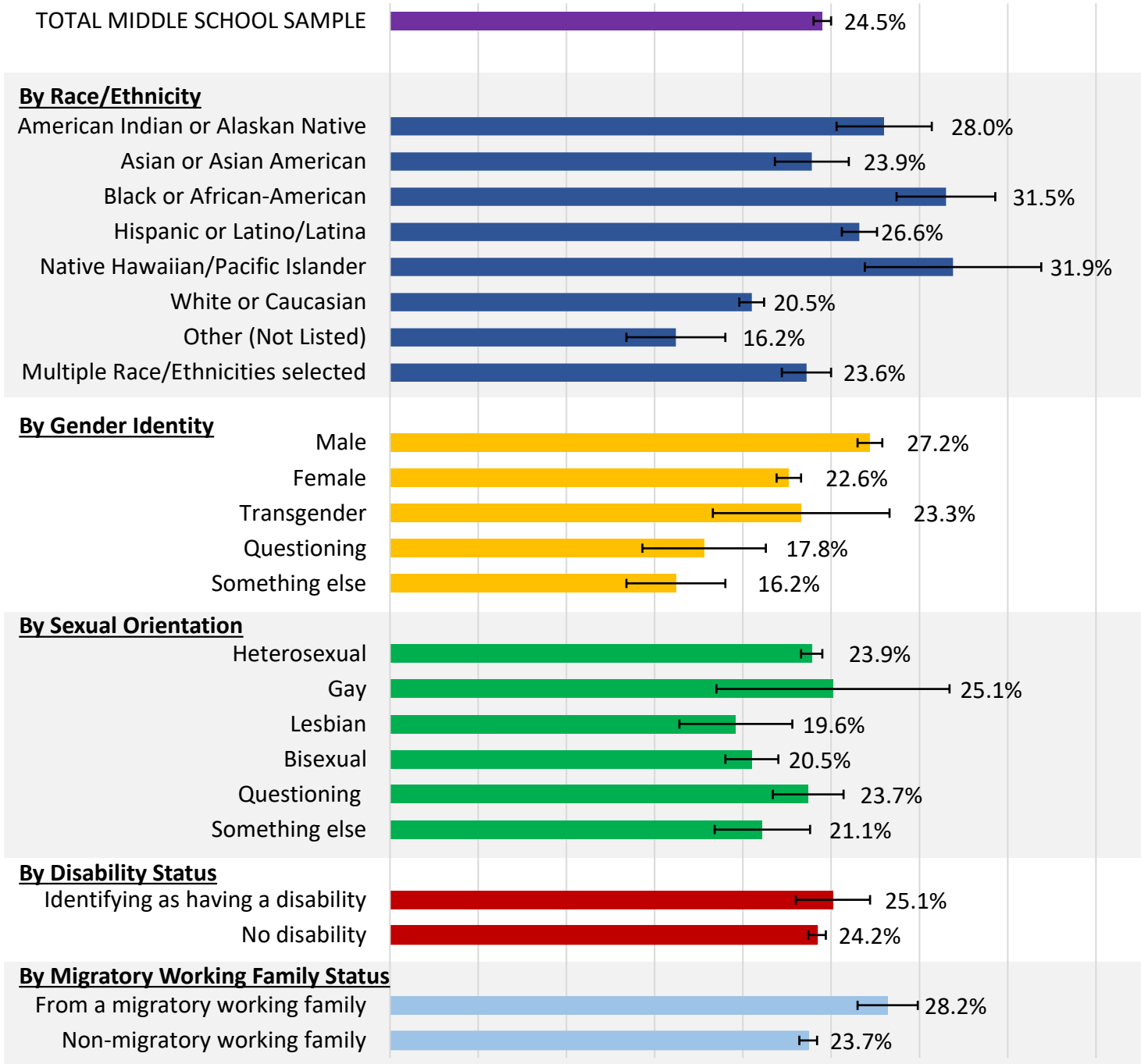
# School Experiences: Middle School Students

## Learning More than Last Year

**Question:** How much do you feel you have learned across all of your classes this school year, compared to last school year before the COVID-19 pandemic?

Percent of Students Reporting 'A little more' or 'A lot more' than Last Year

0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35% 40%



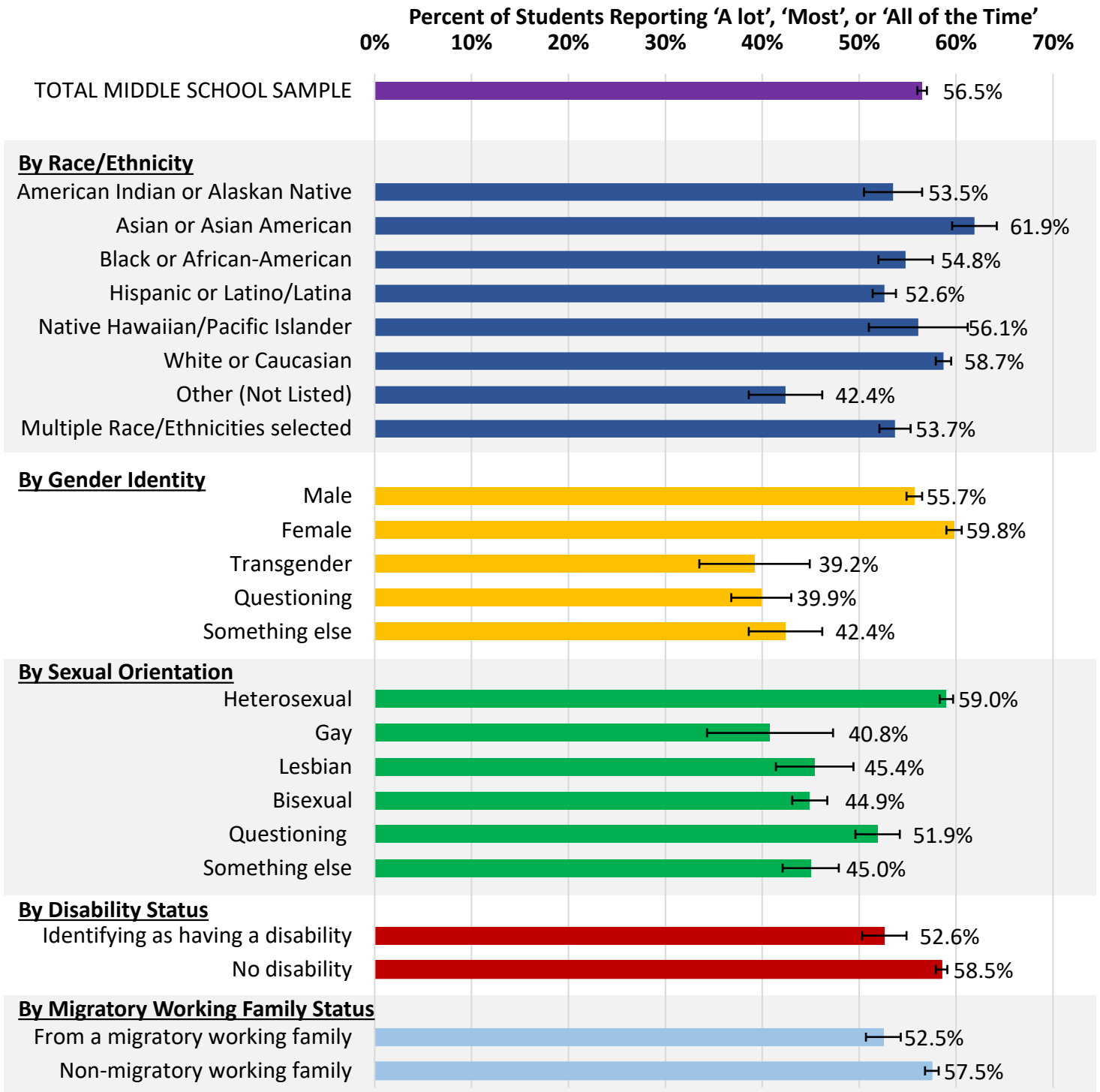
**NOTES:**

- Higher percentages indicate more students reported learning more than last year.
- Prevalence is displayed with 95% confidence intervals shown with black error bars.
- Response options included: 'A lot more than last year', 'A little more than last year', 'About the same as last year', 'A little less than last year', and 'A lot less than last year'. Percentages shown above indicate those who reported 'A little more than last year' or 'A lot more than last year'.
- For more information about the survey or to view other reports, please visit: <https://csswashington.org>.

# School Experiences: Middle School Students

## Best Effort in School

**Question:** How often did you try to do your very best work in school?



**NOTES:**

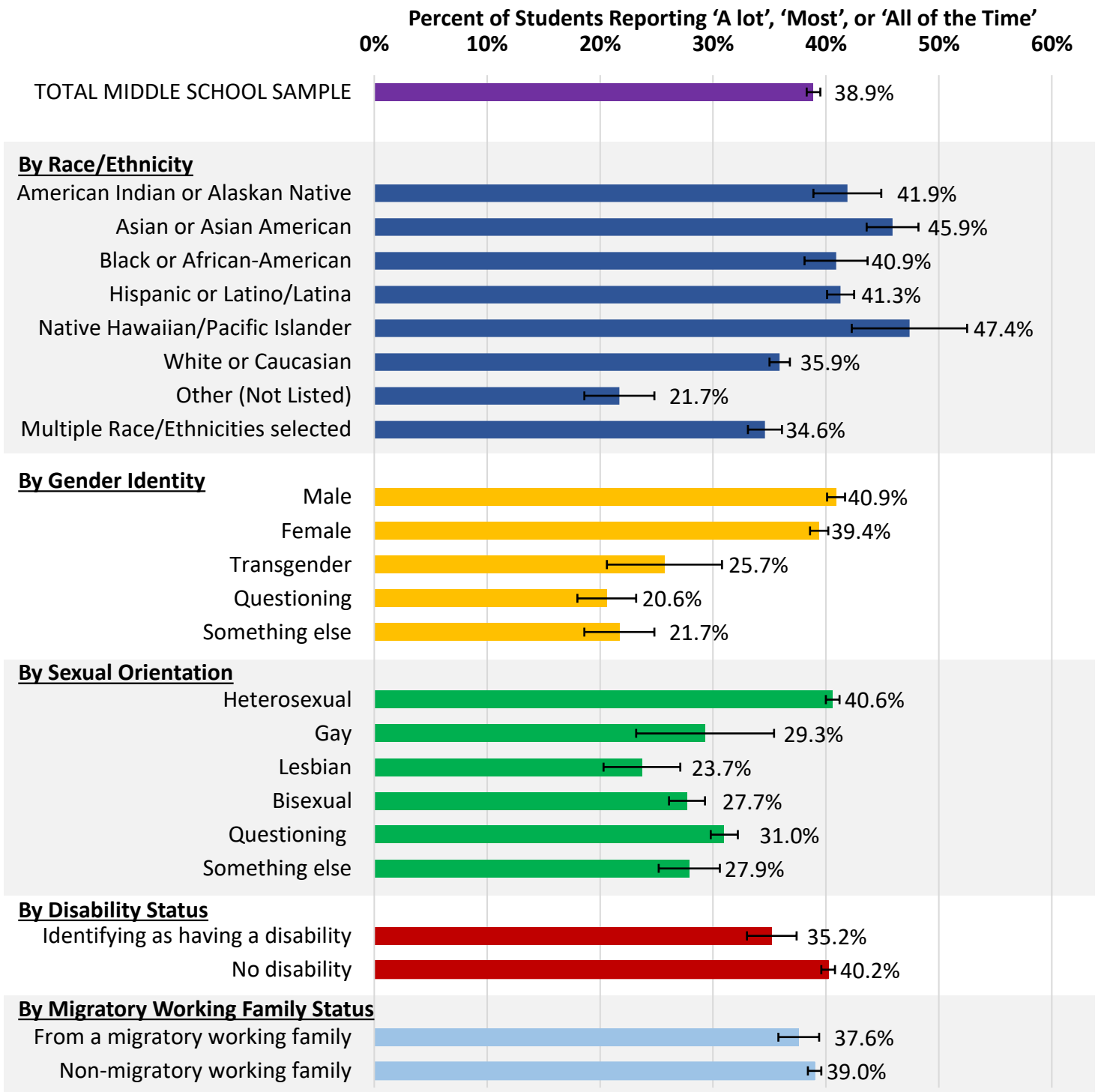
- Higher percentages indicate more students reported trying their best in school.
- Prevalence is displayed with 95% confidence intervals shown with black error bars.
- Response options included: 'None of the time', 'A little of the time', 'Some of the time', 'A lot of the time', 'Most of the time', and 'All of the time'. Percentages shown above indicate those who reported 'A lot of the time' or more.
- For more information about the survey or to view other reports, please visit: <https://csswashington.org>.



# School Experiences: Middle School Students

## Perceived Importance of Schoolwork

**Question:** How often did you feel the schoolwork you were assigned was meaningful and important?



**NOTES:**

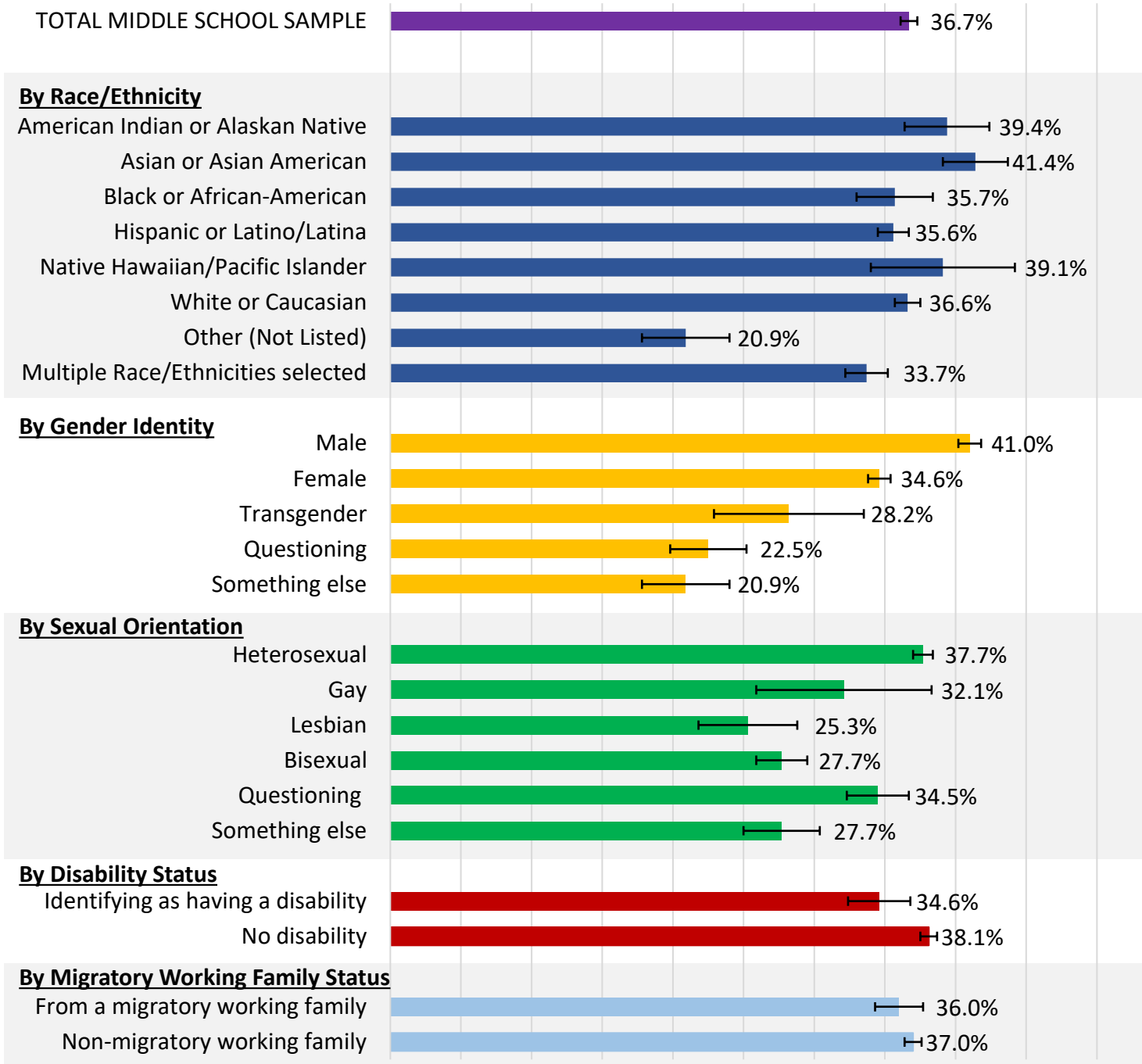
- Higher percentages indicate more students reported feeling their schoolwork was meaningful/important.
- Prevalence is displayed with 95% confidence intervals shown with black error bars.
- Response options included: 'None of the time', 'A little of the time', 'Some of the time', 'A lot of the time', 'Most of the time', and 'All of the time'. Percentages shown above indicate those who reported 'A lot of the time' or more.
- For more information about the survey or to view other reports, please visit: <https://csswashington.org>.

# School Experiences: Middle School Students

## Interest in Schoolwork

**Question:** How often did you think that your classes were interesting?

Percent of Students Reporting 'A lot', 'Most', or 'All of the Time'  
0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35% 40% 45% 50%



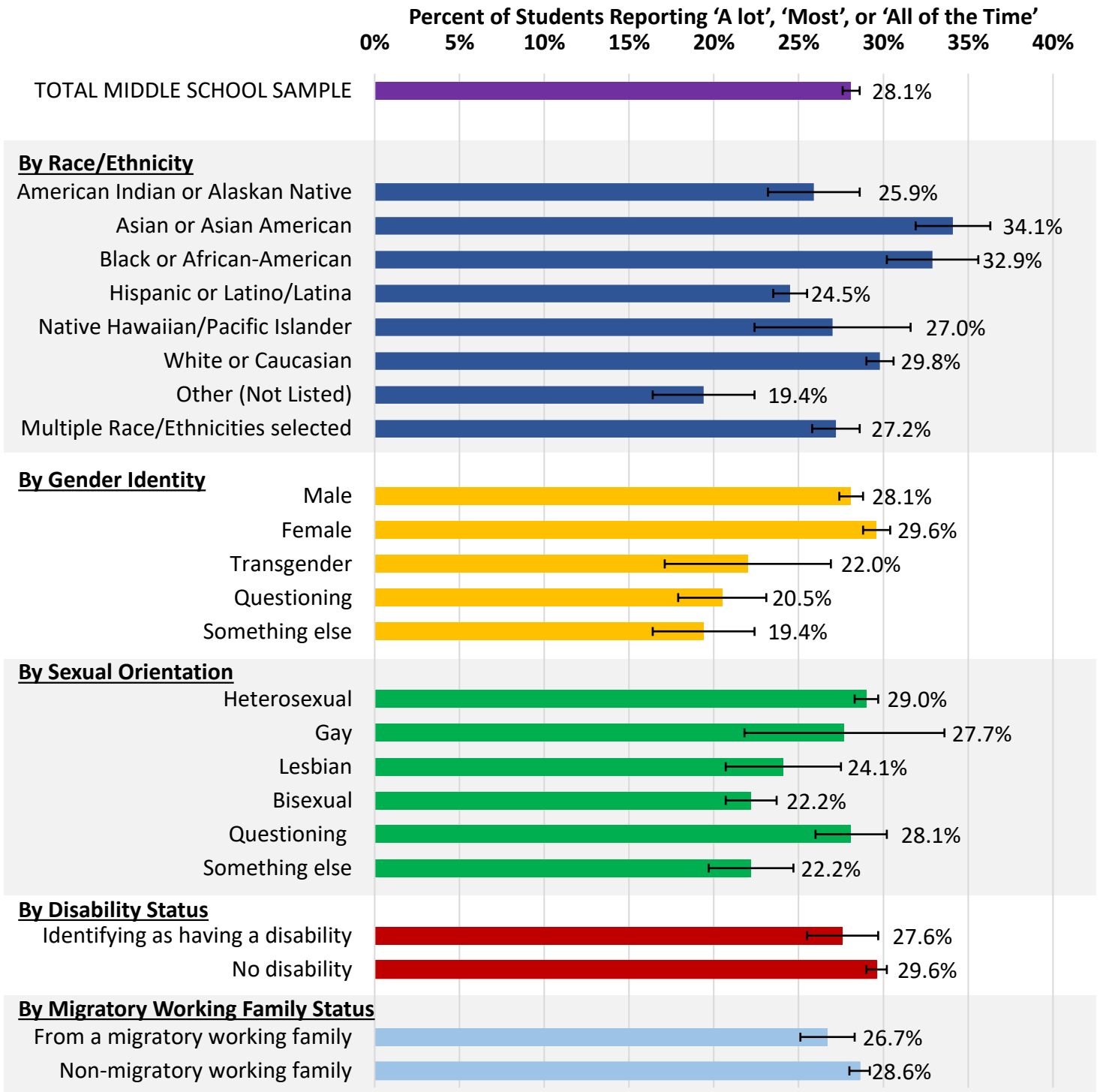
**NOTES:**

- Higher percentages indicate more students reported feeling their classes were interesting.
- Prevalence is displayed with 95% confidence intervals shown with black error bars.
- Response options included: 'None of the time', 'A little of the time', 'Some of the time', 'A lot of the time', 'Most of the time', and 'All of the time'. Percentages shown above indicate those who reported 'A lot of the time' or more.
- For more information about the survey or to view other reports, please visit: <https://csswashington.org>.

# School Experiences: Middle School Students

## Teacher Encouragement

**Question:** How often did you get praised by your teachers?



**NOTES:**

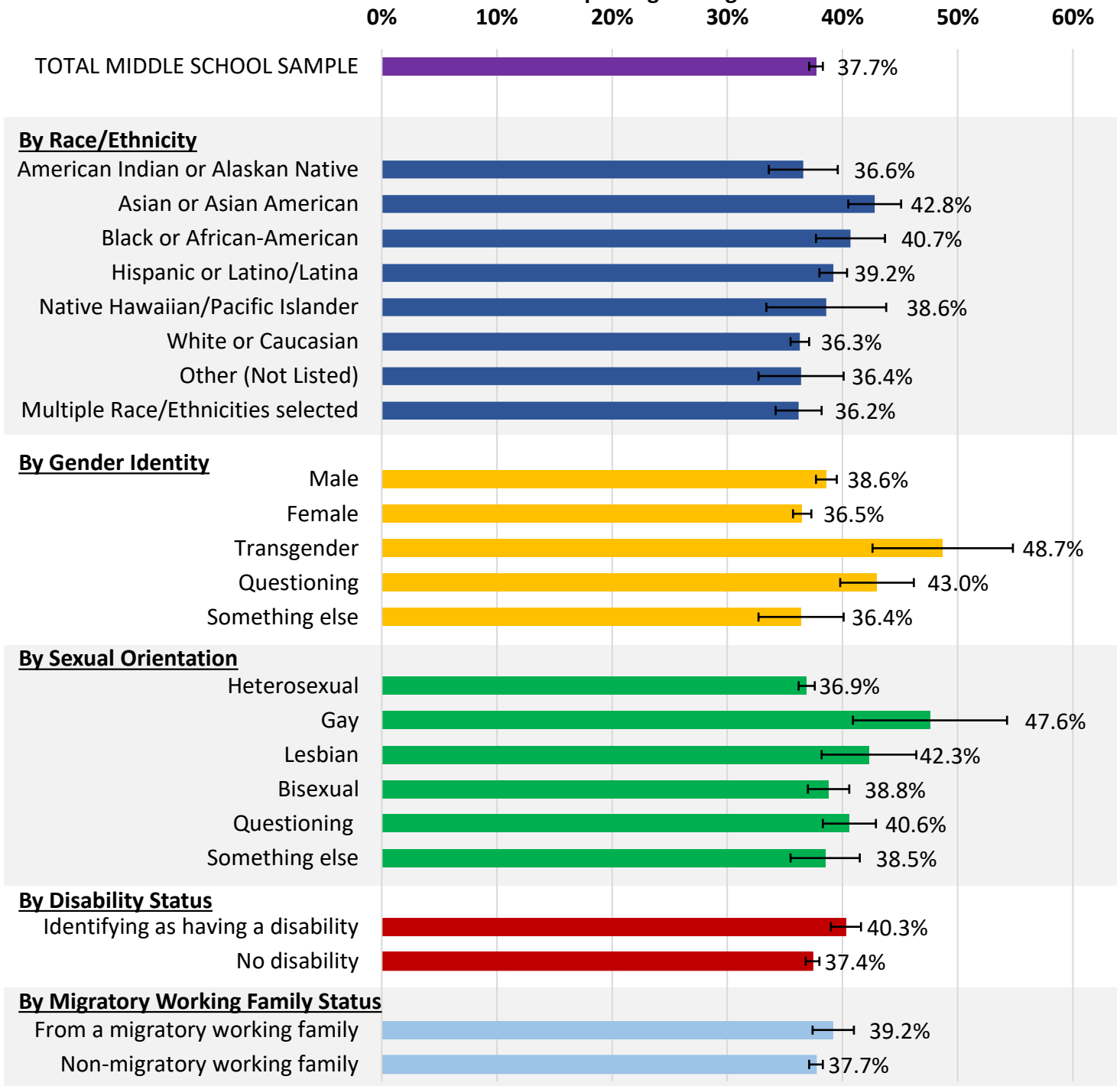
- Higher percentages indicate more students reported being praised by their teachers.
- Prevalence is displayed with 95% confidence intervals shown with black error bars.
- Response options included: 'None of the time', 'A little of the time', 'Some of the time', 'A lot of the time', 'Most of the time', and 'All of the time'. Percentages shown above indicate those who reported 'A lot of the time' or more.
- For more information about the survey or to view other reports, please visit: <https://csswashington.org>.

# School Experiences: Middle School Students

## Safety from Bullying

**Question:** *When school is online do you feel safer from bullying than when school is in-person?*

Percent of Students Reporting Feeling Safer when School is Online



**NOTES:**

- Higher percentages indicate more students reported feeling safer from bullying when school is online.
- Prevalence is displayed with 95% confidence intervals shown with black error bars.
- Response options included: 'Yes', 'No', and 'I am not sure'. Percentages shown above indicate those who reported 'Yes', that they felt safer from bullying when school is online.
- For more information about the survey or to view other reports, please visit: <https://csswashington.org>.

# School Experiences: Middle School Students

## School Experiences Topic Summary Washington State Middle School Students

Health Care Authority  
Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery  
626 8th Avenue SE  
Olympia, WA 98501

Department of Health  
Town Center East  
111 Israel Road S.E.  
Tumwater, WA 98501-7835

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Old Capitol Building  
P.O. Box 47200  
600 S. Washington  
Olympia, WA 98504-7200

### Prepared by:

Center for the Study of Health and Risk Behaviors  
Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health  
University of Washington School of Medicine  
Seattle, WA 98105

### Suggested citation:

University of Washington Center for the Study of Health & Risk Behaviors, Washington State Health Care Authority, Washington State Department of Health, Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. *COVID-19 Student Survey: School Experiences Topic Summary - Middle School Students*, Seattle/Olympia, WA. Published August 2021.

### References Cited in this Document:

1. Scott, S. R., Rivera, K. M., Rushing, E., Manczak, E. M., Rozek, C. S., & Doom, J. R. (2021). "I Hate This": A qualitative analysis of adolescents' self-reported challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 68, 262-269. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2020.11.010>

**Legal requirements:** Federal and Washington state regulations prohibit discrimination against LEP individuals who are Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, or visually impaired. Read HCA [Policy 01-27](#) "Language Access Services" and [Policy 01-30](#) "Equal Access to Services for Individuals with Disabilities" for more information. If you have a question about an accommodation, please contact the HCA Prevention Section at [prevention@hca.wa.gov](mailto:prevention@hca.wa.gov).