



# Paterson Education Fund

Findings from a Citywide Survey of 400  
Adults in Paterson, NJ

March 30 - April 8, 2010

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## Methods:

- Interview dates: March 30 - April 8, 2010.
- The survey reached 400 adults in Paterson, NJ.
- The data were weighted slightly by gender and age, in order to ensure that it accurately reflects the demographic configuration of the Paterson population.
- Margin of error (MOE) for the sample is +/- 4.9 percentage points. The MOE is larger when analyzing data for subgroups (race, gender, region).
- This presentation also reports on data from 2008 Civic Index study in order to allow a comparison of trends. The 2008 data is from the Paterson Civic Index poll of 400 adults conducted February 27-March 3, 2008 (MOE is the same).
- For the purposes of this report, we define “non-parents” as adults without children under 18 years of age in the household.

# What is the Civic Index for Education?

- The Civic Index for Education was designed and implemented to measure a community's perception of itself with regard to its public schools. The tool was designed by the Public Education Network (PEN) and has been implemented twice nationally, twice in Paterson, NJ, and once each in Hamblen, PA, Denver, CO, Seattle, WA, San Francisco, CA, and statewide in West Virginia.
- The Index was designed after years of public opinion research regarding the public's outlook on education and their interpretation of what it means for a community to "take responsibility" for public education in their community. It includes ten categories, and each category has several "indicators" to measure how the local community is taking responsibility for improving public education. Some indicators are measurable by public-opinion surveys and some are not. To find out more information please see PEN's website.
- The ten index categories are tolerance and inclusiveness, performance data, active parents, officeholder leadership, youth involvement, business community, media, school board, civic organizations, and higher education.
- The measurements of the community would then be used as a guide to fix inequities or problems in the local school system. The Civic Index for Education surveys should be re-administered about every two years or so to measure the progress the community has made and areas in need of attention, as well as areas deserving of recognition and celebration.

# The Civic Index Since 2008 – Consistency and Shifting Public Priorities

- **These are challenging times for public education and its advocates. With an economy in recession and state, county, and city budgets in deficit, people are balancing many different priorities. Still, they do not want members of their community to forget that everyone has a role when it comes to improving public education. The latest edition of the PEN/Paterson Education Fund’s Civic Index for Public Education tells two dynamic stories.**
  - **First, people in Paterson have a lot on their minds** and while in 2008 public education was the most important issue (outpacing the economy), recent economic setbacks have made jobs the top issue. The focus on education, both because of the economy and because of no national election, has receded a bit and other issues have gained importance. The clearer focus people placed on education in 2008 now has more competition for attention. With that said, **adults in Paterson still clearly prioritize public education and want to see people in their local community take more responsibility for improving neighborhood schools.**
  - **Second, the Civic Index for Public Education itself shows remarkable stability** since its inception in Paterson in the spring of 2008. The rank order in which voters say their community is doing a good job – or where they say it needs improvement – is basically unchanged. The Tolerance and Inclusiveness category is again the city’s strength, while people in the city look for businesses, local colleges and universities, the media, and elected officials to do a better job fulfilling their role in improving the local public education system.

# Paterson's Civic Index in 2010

- Consistency and stability are the name of the game in 2010. Two years after the first Civic Index, adults in Paterson express many of the same overall attitudes toward their community's taking responsibility for improving public schools. Overall, the means of each Index category have changed little and the rank order is similar to 2008. There are changes around the "edges" with some fluctuations in the most intense scores ("5"), but in general adults in Paterson believe that while some things have changed, most still seem the same.
- Attitudes across racial and ethnic groups are fairly consistent in this year's installment of the Civic Index compared to each other this year and to 2008. As in 2008, Tolerance and Inclusiveness is the strongest Index category, with **adults in Paterson continuing to rate their community highly for reaching the goals of gender and racial equality.**
- As in 2008, **adults continue to believe the youth in Paterson are an asset** to the community and rate the community well for prioritizing their needs. At the same time, adults in Paterson continue to believe **young people are not given a real say** in their education experience and they would like to see changes in that regard.
- The local media comes through this year's Index with decent but unimpressive ratings. In fact, while the media's overall ratings have slightly increased since 2008, adults here still see room for improvement when it comes to the full coverage and explanation of local education issues. To be clear, adults in Paterson **think they hear a lot** about local schools, but they are **not always able to fully contextualize its meaning.**

## Paterson's Civic Index in 2010 – cont.

- Adults in Paterson give mixed ratings when it come to the Active Parents Index category, which is similar to what we learned in 2008. The public is more likely to think local schools do their part by **encouraging** parents to become involved, but are less sure that parents **actually participate** in school related activities.
- Adults know there is a lot of information available on how their local schools perform, so the Performance Data category rates high. However, **understanding that data and putting it to use are areas in need of improvement**.
- As we saw in 2008, Civic Organizations and the Business Community rate the lowest in the Index. There are two challenges – first, **adults want these groups to do more in general** but also lack enough information to adequately judge what businesses and civic organizations are doing in Paterson. Getting businesses more involved is key and publicizing more what civic organizations have done is also important.
- The School Board category is one where Paterson continues to lag. Adults say **others in the community do not follow the actions closely** and voting in those elections is also a challenge.
- Adults also hold elected leaders in some esteem, but see room for improvement. **Adults know the voting record is available** but show some **doubts that elected leaders stay in touch**. And, they also doubt that every member of the community considers that voting record when they decide how to vote in elections.
- The Higher Education category has undergone some change since 2008. The results, to a certain extent, remain the same. **People want their local colleges and universities to do more** to improve K-12 public education, **but they are uncertain what that means** and exactly how colleges and universities can help. **It is up to education leaders and advocates to help the public understand** that relationship.

## Attitudes Toward Community Involvement and Responsibility

- In 2008, when other local communities were launching their Civic Index, it was a real calling card for Paterson to say that they were among the few local communities who said education was the TOP issue. In 2008, 17% said it was the top issue while the economy and jobs trailed at 14%. Today, those figures are nearly reversed with the economy taking center stage (22% to 13% for education).
- Adults in Paterson view their community similarly to the view they had in 2008. Most think the community takes at least some responsibility for ensuring quality public schools. However the overall rating is down somewhat from 2008 (59% said a lot or some, compared to 55% now) and in intensity (27% said a lot in 2008, compared to just 22% today). That decline in responsibility and in intensity could be tied to their knowing that the economy is such a pressing issue that dominates attention.
- It is also true that adults in Paterson say that they too are less involved than they were just two years ago. Today, 46% say they are very or somewhat involved in helping to make public schools better, down from 51% in 2008.
- **In summary, the mood and focus since 2008 has shifted. Then, education was the top priority; today, the economy is the top concern. People have a lot on their minds, but their focus on the economy is clear. That shift in focus explains a lot of the remaining underlying attitudes toward public education, involvement, and responsibility. The energy that public education had in 2008 is less intense today and advocates have more work to do in that environment – especially as it comes to encouraging members of the community to take a more active role in improving public education.**



# Attitudes in the African American Community

African Americans continue to be the most pessimistic about the direction of schools in Paterson. However, where in 2008 African Americans felt schools were in decline, a plurality now say they are “staying about the same” – which at least pauses the downward trend. While African Americans are pessimistic about the direction of the city’s public schools, they do believe the community takes some responsibility for ensuring quality schools. On the other hand, they also self report less involvement this year than in 2008, a trend that needs to be reversed.

- Education has dropped from the most important problem in 2008 to the third most important problem this year among African Americans. They now rate the economy and jobs and health care and prescription drugs ahead of education.
- Generally, African Americans continue to believe the community takes responsibility for ensuring there are quality public schools. These attitudes have not changed since 2008. While African Americans believe that the community takes responsibility, the number of African Americans who report doing something personally to improve public education has decreased since 2008.
- African Americans continue to be disappointed in the community’s public schools, but they may see a negative trend being reversed. In 2008, a plurality of African Americans said schools have declined, but this year a plurality says they have stayed the same.
- African Americans say they receive the same amount of information today as they did in 2008, so they are paying attention and can continue be engaged. They are less likely to be on Facebook, but are more likely than whites or Latinos to get information from the newspaper. To be clear, television still dominates, but local papers are a good way to reach them.



# Attitudes in the Latino Community

Latinos remain the most optimistic about the direction of public schools in Paterson – which is typical for Latinos across the country. However, fewer Latinos feel the community takes responsibility than in 2008 and they are more critical of the community because of that. Still, they also report less involvement than in 2008. Latinos are the most likely to be on Facebook so an online component to reaching them may be in store.

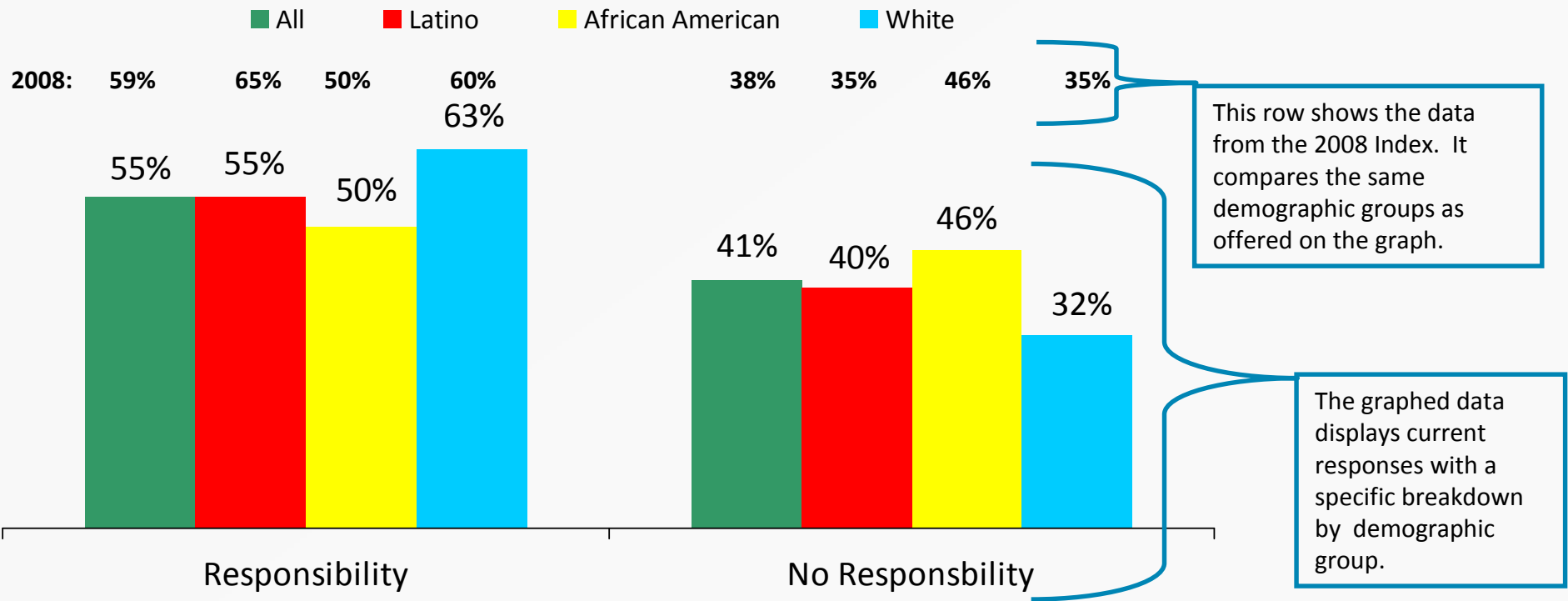
- Latinos, like all adults in Paterson, are most worried about the economy and jobs. However, they are the only racial or ethnic group that puts education ahead of health care and prescription drugs in this year's report.
- Latinos continue to be the most optimistic about the direction of public schools in their community. By wide margins, Latinos are the most likely to say schools have improved and are the least likely to say they have declined. This is similar to the findings from 2008.
- Whereas in 2008 Latinos gave the community solid ratings for taking responsibility to ensure quality public schools, these attitudes have declined since then (though a majority still agree they take responsibility). And, Latinos report the lowest personal involvement across racial and ethnic groups. In fact, their involvement has also declined from 2008, and now less than half report being personally involved.
- A lack of information may help define why Latinos are less involved now compared to 2008. They say they have received less information than in the past. This could be a language issue – but the data supports these findings as similar whether the respondent took the interview in Spanish or English. The reason is Latinos likely get their news differently. They rely on television, not newspapers, and they are also more likely watching on satellite. That means unique communication strategies will be needed to reach them.

# Attitudes in the White Community

White voters are certainly looking at the issues through an economic lens, and in this environment, the salience of education has decreased. White residents are pessimistic about the directions of local public schools, but feel people are taking responsibility for ensuring quality public schools. They also report an increased level of personal involvement from 2008.

- In this environment, education has really become a second tier issue among white voters as just 11% cite it as a top concern. The economy and jobs and health care and prescription drugs are the top concerns among whites. However, it should be noted that white voters did not prioritize education in 2008, as white residents then were more concerned with taxes, health care, and jobs and the economy than education.
- White residents are fairly pessimistic about the direction of local public schools, though large numbers of white adults moved toward thinking local public schools have stayed the same since 2008.
- Although whites are pessimistic about the direction of local public schools, they are most likely to feel people in their community take responsibility for ensuring quality public schools and these attitudes have remained consistent since 2008.
- White adults get the most information about public education and they are receiving the same amount of information as they did in 2008. White residents divide getting their news from television and newspapers and their primary television at home is through cable. Whites (as with African Americans) are less likely than Latinos to have a social networking profile or watch television programs over the Internet. However, whites are the most likely to send or receive text messages about public education, politics, or current events.

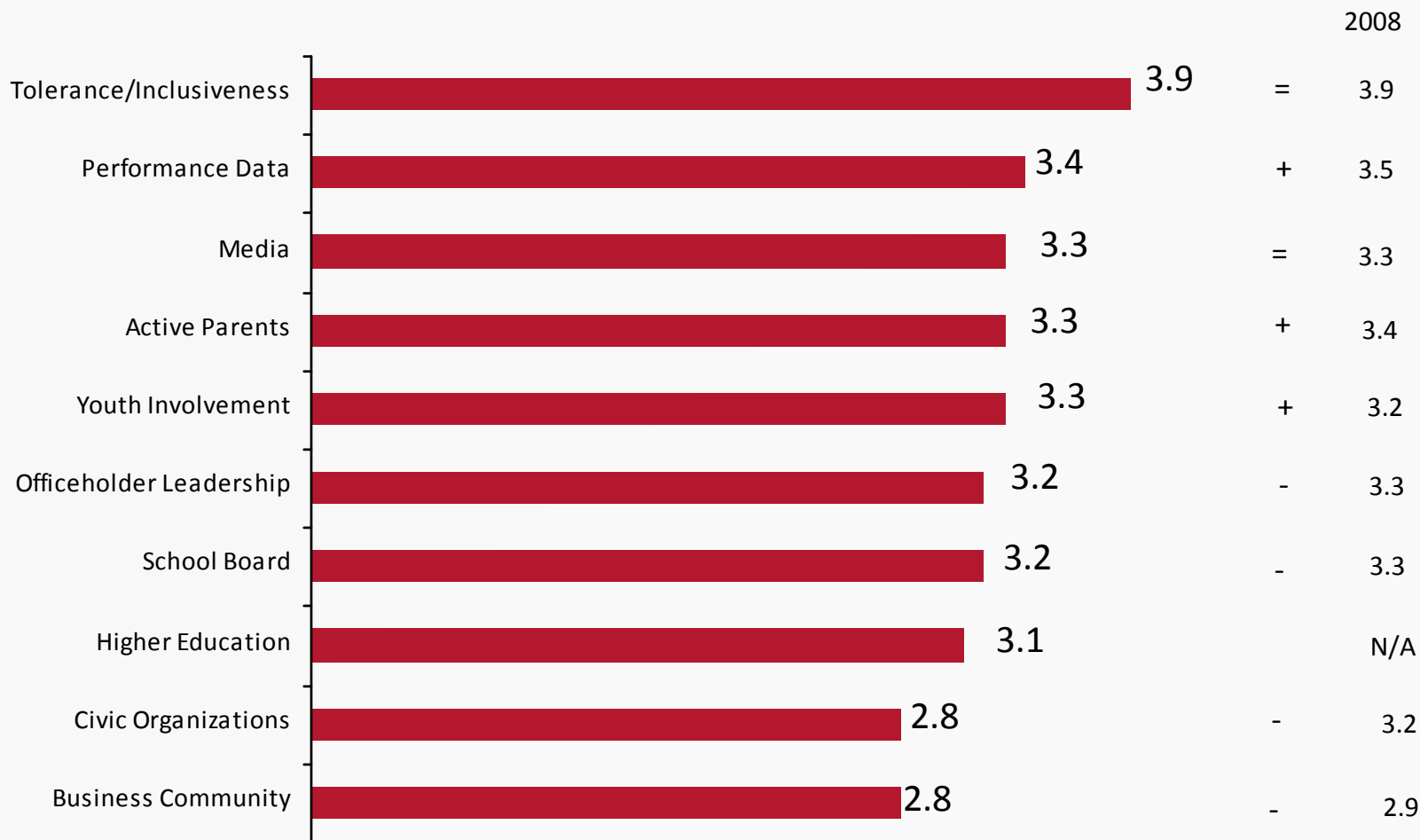
# How to Read the Slides Comparing Trend Data:



## Index Ratings

Even as the focus has shifted in Paterson from education to jobs and the economy, the Civic Index ratings remain remarkably consistent with 2008. There are slight changes in intensity, but for the most part the 2008 trends hold: Tolerance and Inclusiveness continues to be the top rated Index category while Civic Organizations and the Business Community continue to lag behind

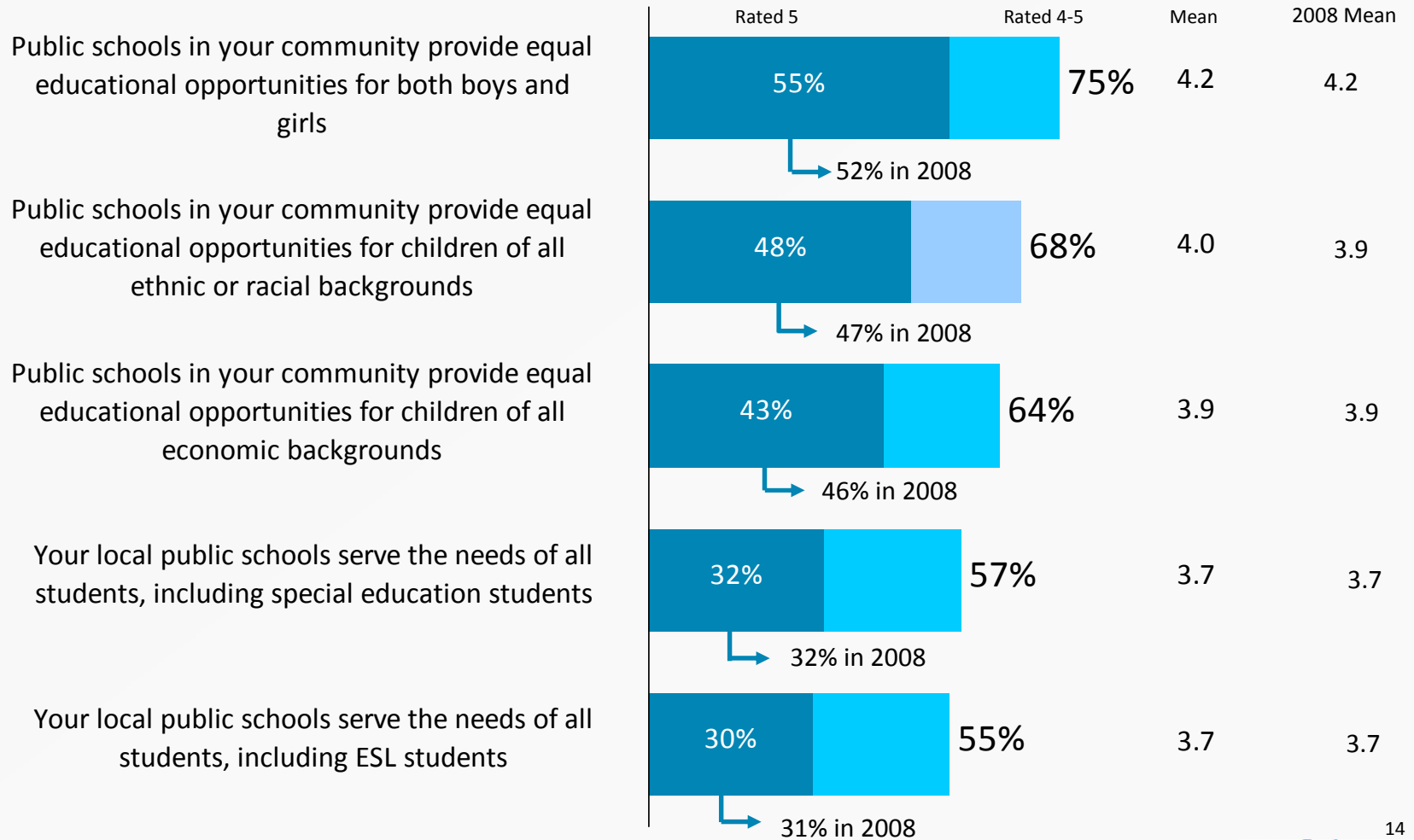
Consistency is the rule when it comes to the most recent iteration of the Paterson Civic Index. Ratings are consistent with where they were in 2008 with only slight fluctuations on intensity. For the most part, ratings are down slightly, but just slightly. Adults in Paterson feel most comfortable saying their community is reaching its goals on tolerance and inclusiveness and youth involvement. They remain the least pleased with civic organizations, the business community, and higher education – but these are also the index categories that have the least clarity on when it comes to public education.



\* The higher education category was categorized differently in 2008 and 2006 when the Index was first launched.

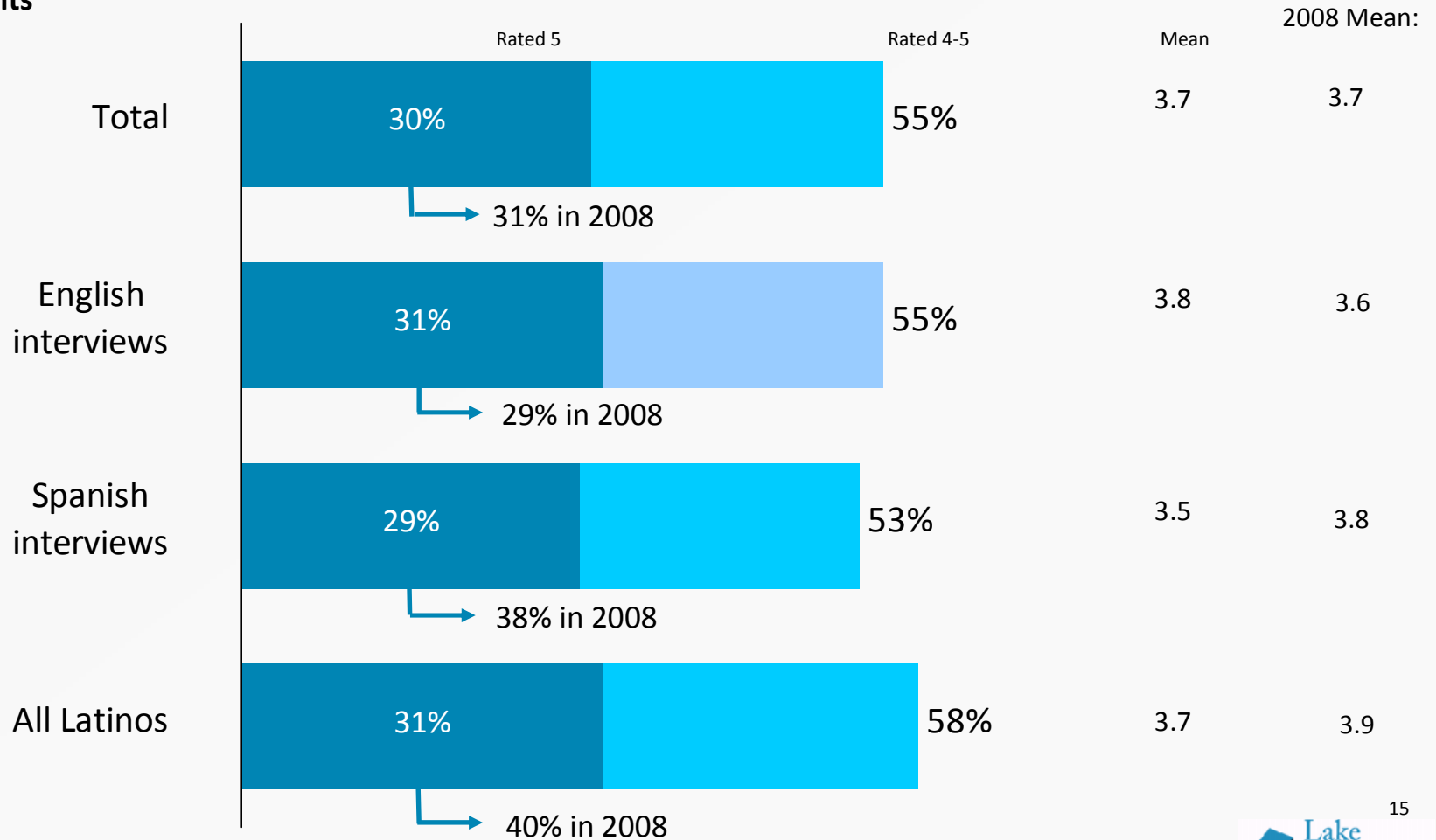
Adults in Paterson believe the community is reaching its goals when it comes to equality in the school system. Tolerance and Inclusiveness is the highest rated Index category again this year. Even if the reality is something different, adults want to know that their schools are bastions for working hard, getting a leg up, and avoiding discrimination.

Tolerance and Inclusiveness



Adults believe ESL students have their needs met, but Spanish speakers are less likely to agree even compared to all Latino adults. In fact, there has been a dramatic decrease in that measure since 2008 in intensity. There may be an opportunity to engage these parents on this issue.

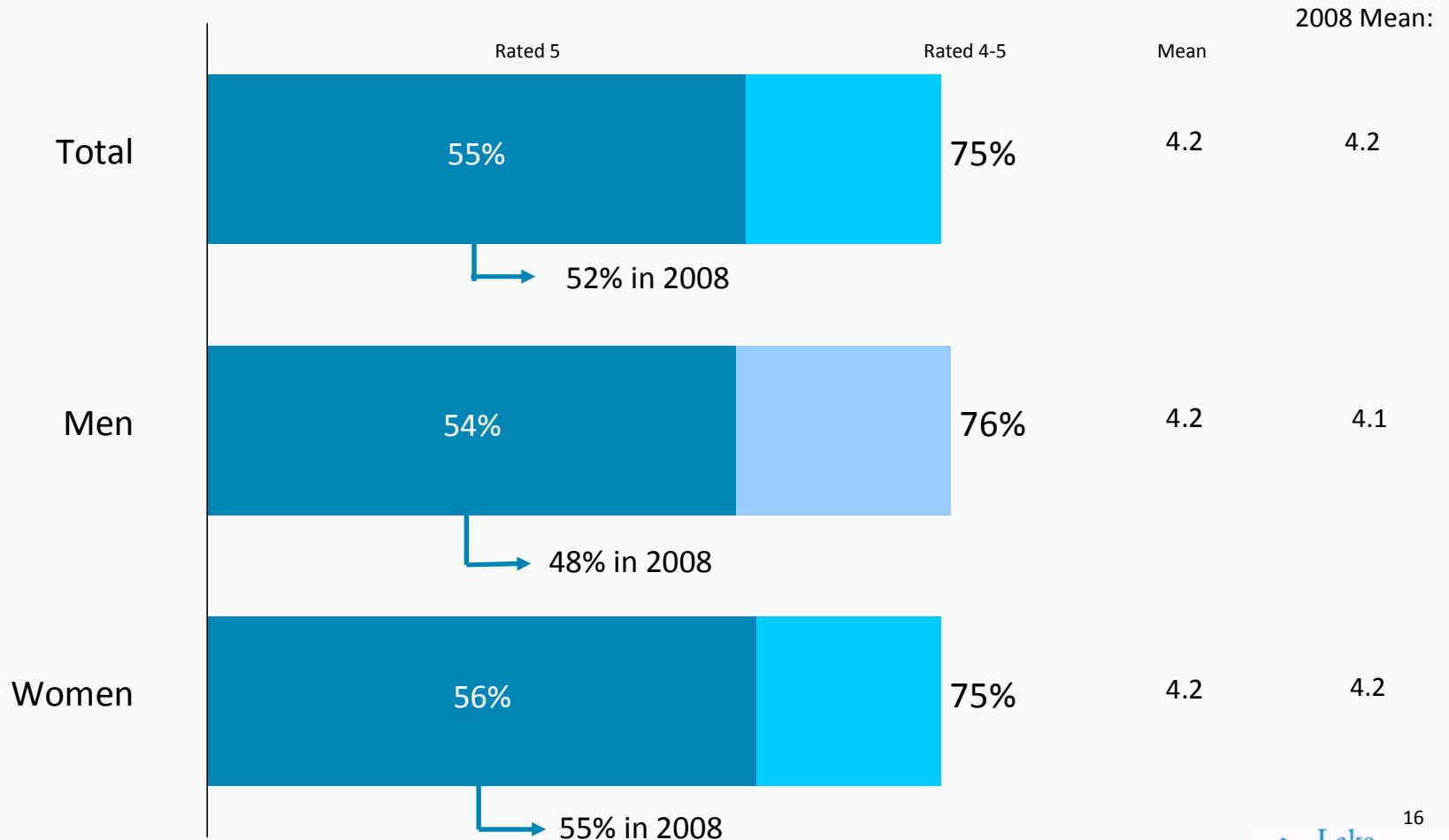
**Your local public schools serve the needs of all students, including English as a second language students**





# Men and women equally believe public schools provide equal opportunities for boys and girls. Men have increased six points in intensity since 2008.

**Public schools in your community provide equal educational opportunities for both boys and girls.**



58% of college women rate this a "5."

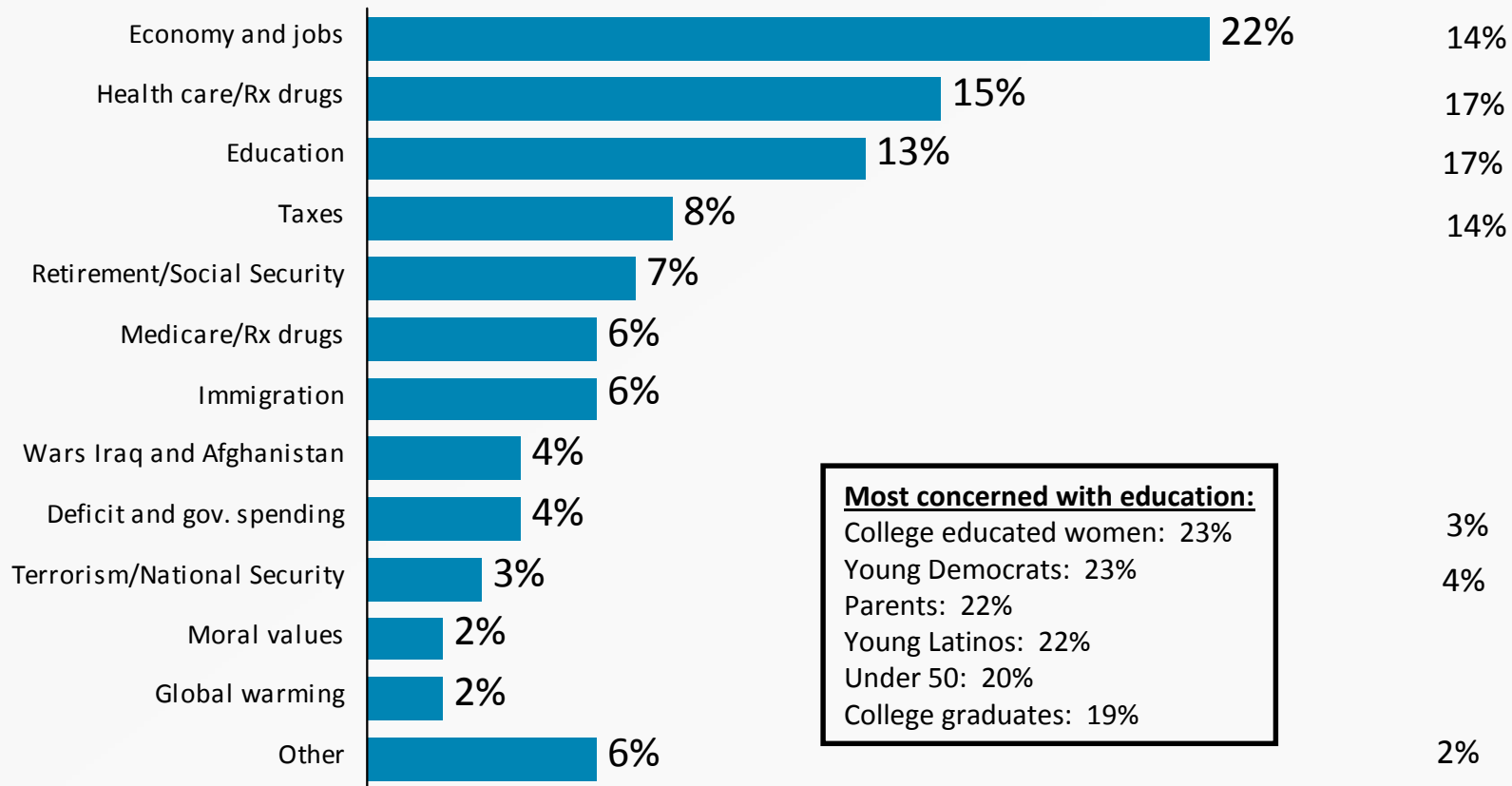
## The Perception of Public Education

People in Paterson have a lot on their minds. The economy, crime, and education are all important priorities for them. Importantly, however, jobs and the economy is the clear priority at this time when in 2008 education topped the list. That slight change in focus means even more must be done to keep the community involved in improving education.

Adults in Paterson have a lot on their minds and they have a clear hierarchy of concerns. Two years makes a difference as the economy and jobs is the clear priority for people in Paterson. Education and health care are important issues, but they drop to the second tier. People in Paterson still have a lot on their minds, but need to be reminded that the economy won't improve in their area if the education system doesn't also progress.

Most Important Issue for Local Leaders to Do Something About

**2008**

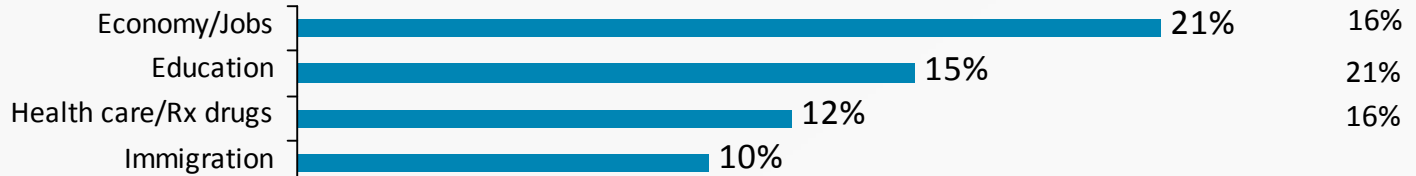


**Most concerned with education:**  
 College educated women: 23%  
 Young Democrats: 23%  
 Parents: 22%  
 Young Latinos: 22%  
 Under 50: 20%  
 College graduates: 19%

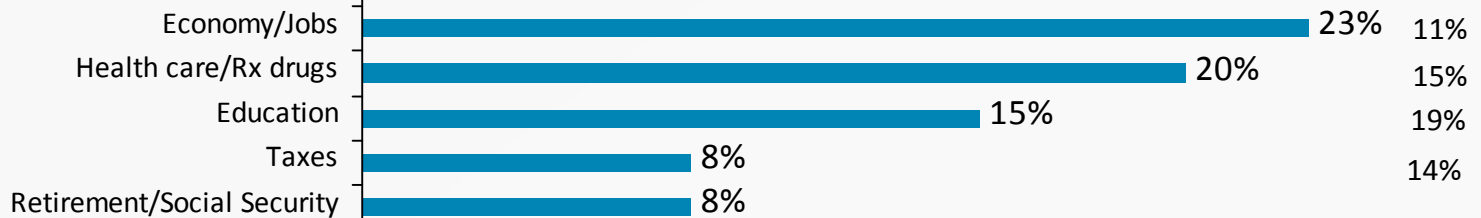
The economy and jobs is the top concern across Paterson’s racial and ethnic spectrum. Latinos, as they did in 2008, prioritize education ahead of other issues such as health care, immigration and taxes, but they too are most concerned with the economy.

**2008**

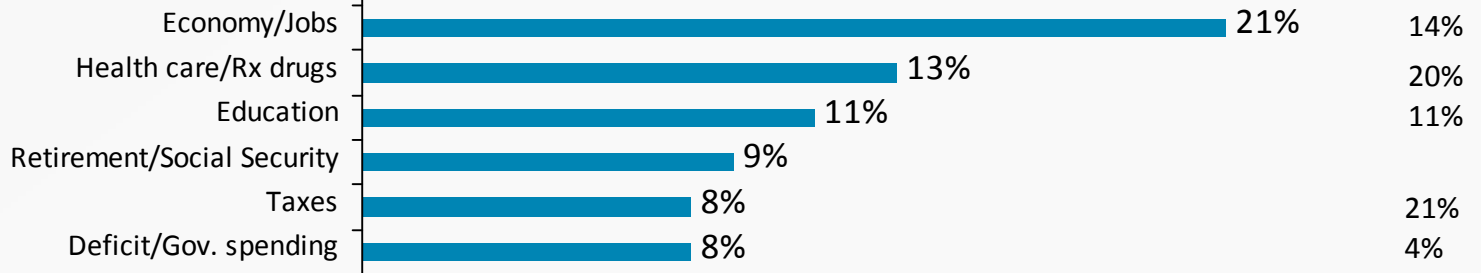
**Latinos**



**African Americans**



**Whites**

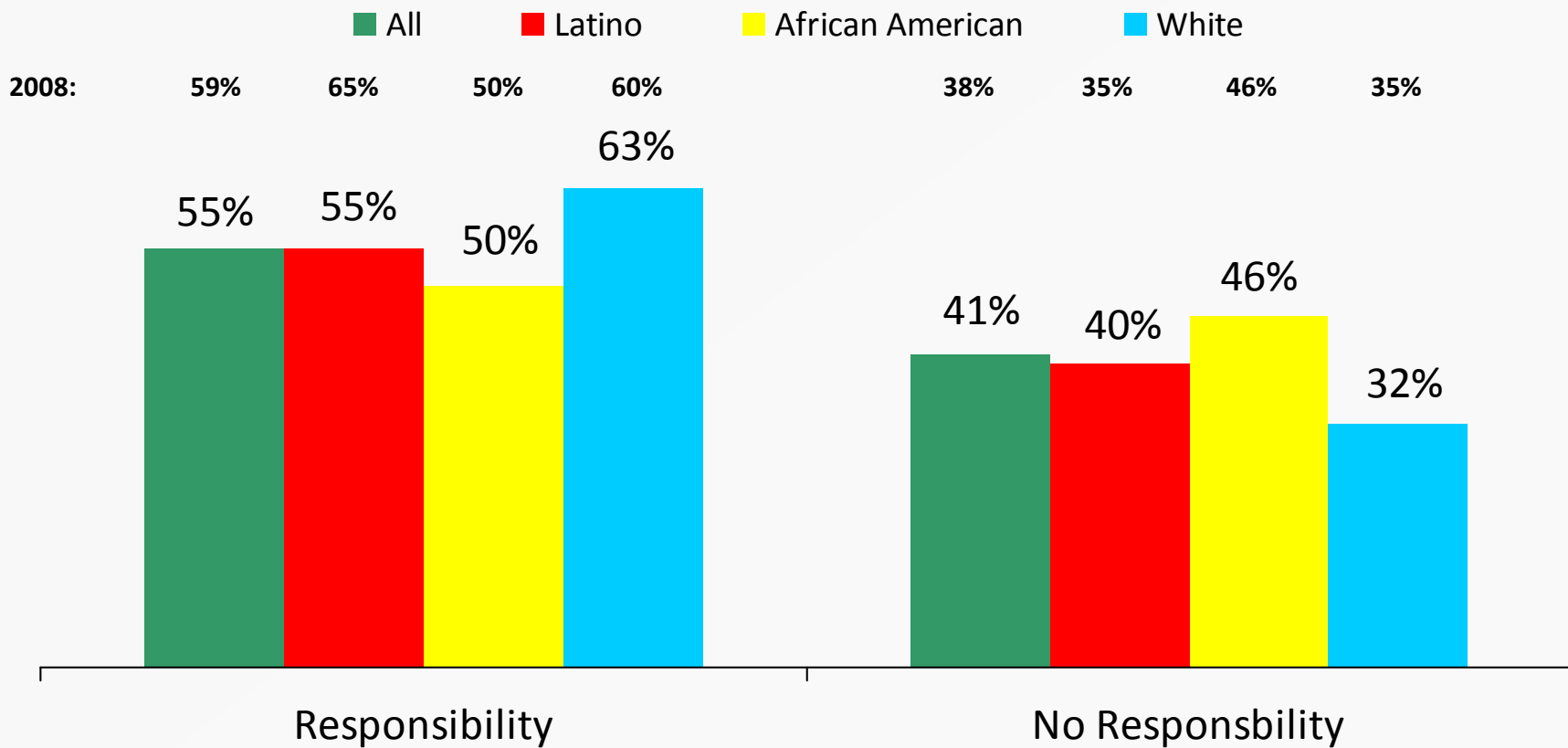


Black men (31%) are twice as concerned with the economy as black women (16%). Meanwhile Latino women (24%) are more concerned with the economy than Latino men (19%).

## Community Involvement in Public Education

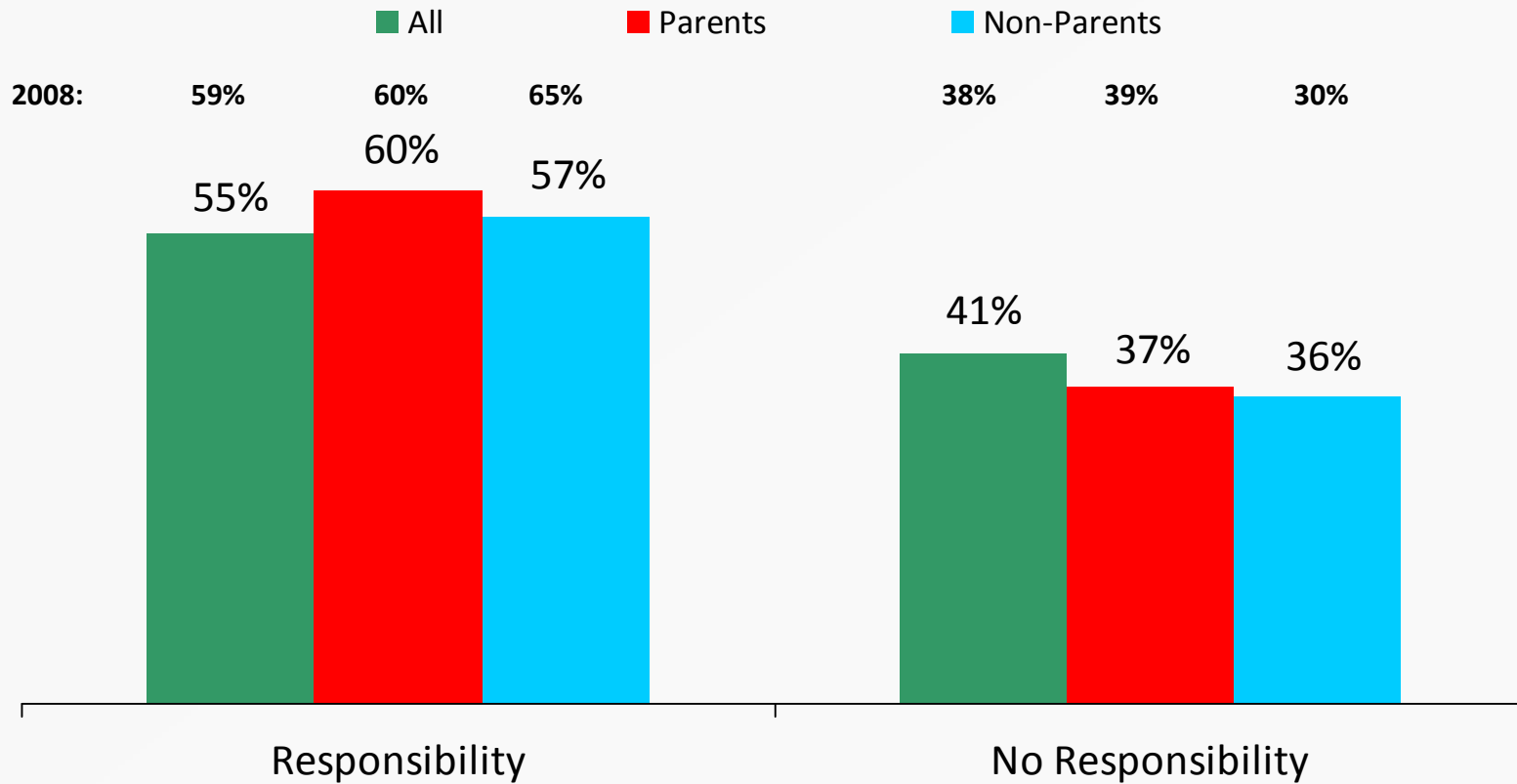
Public education has become slightly less of an immediate priority for people, and that means both their personal involvement and community involvement have not improved since 2008. They are not critical, yet, but are primed to be encouraged to get more involved and to take on a bigger role in improving public schools.

The most dramatic change regarding attitudes toward community responsibility has occurred among Latinos. In 2008, 65% felt their community had taken responsibility, compared to 55% today. Some attention should be paid to that drop because it alone represents the overall differences year to year. Otherwise, African Americans and white adults hold similar views to 2008.



Both African American women (53%) and Latino women (60%) feel the community takes more responsibility than African American men (47%) and Latino men (50%).

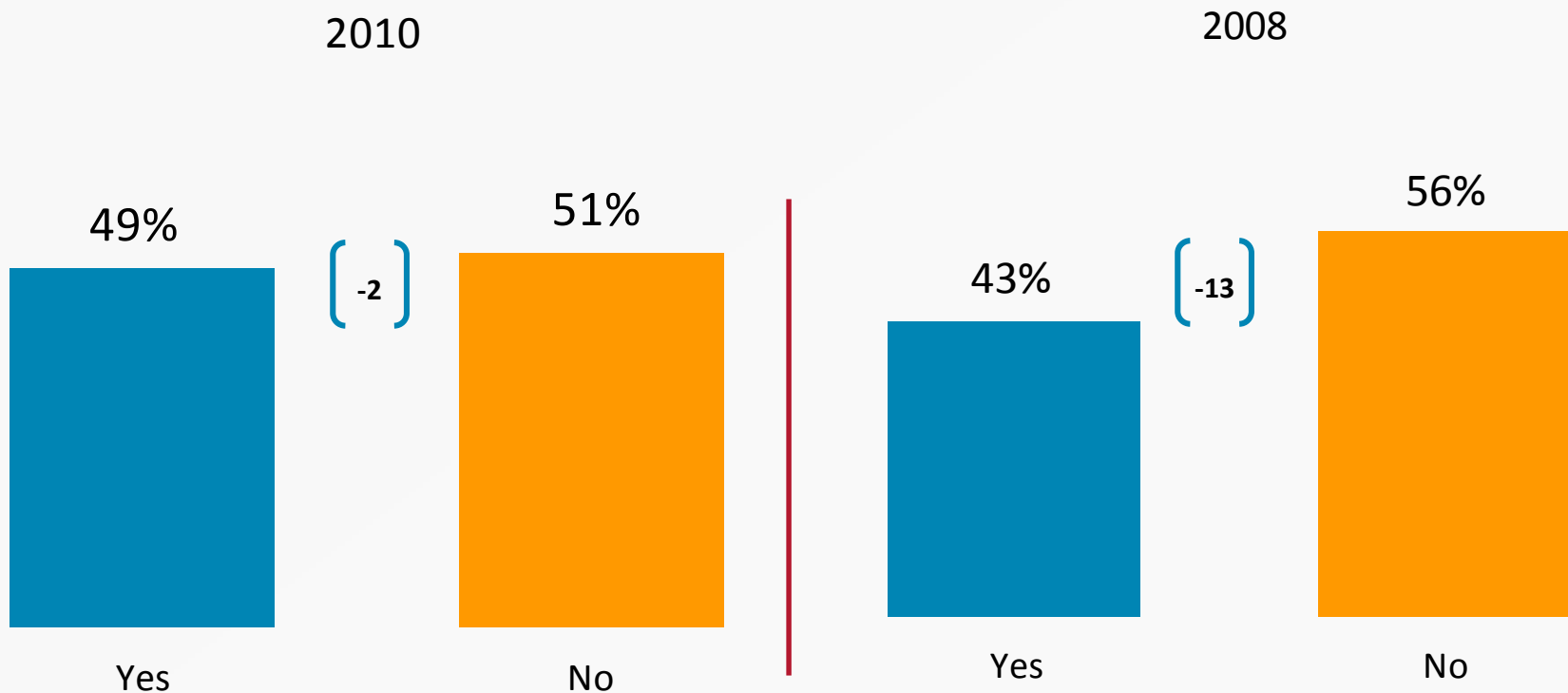
There are only slight differences between parents and nonparents when it comes to evaluating the responsibility people in the community take for ensuring quality public schools. Parental attitudes remain constant from 2008, but there is some slippage among non-parents.





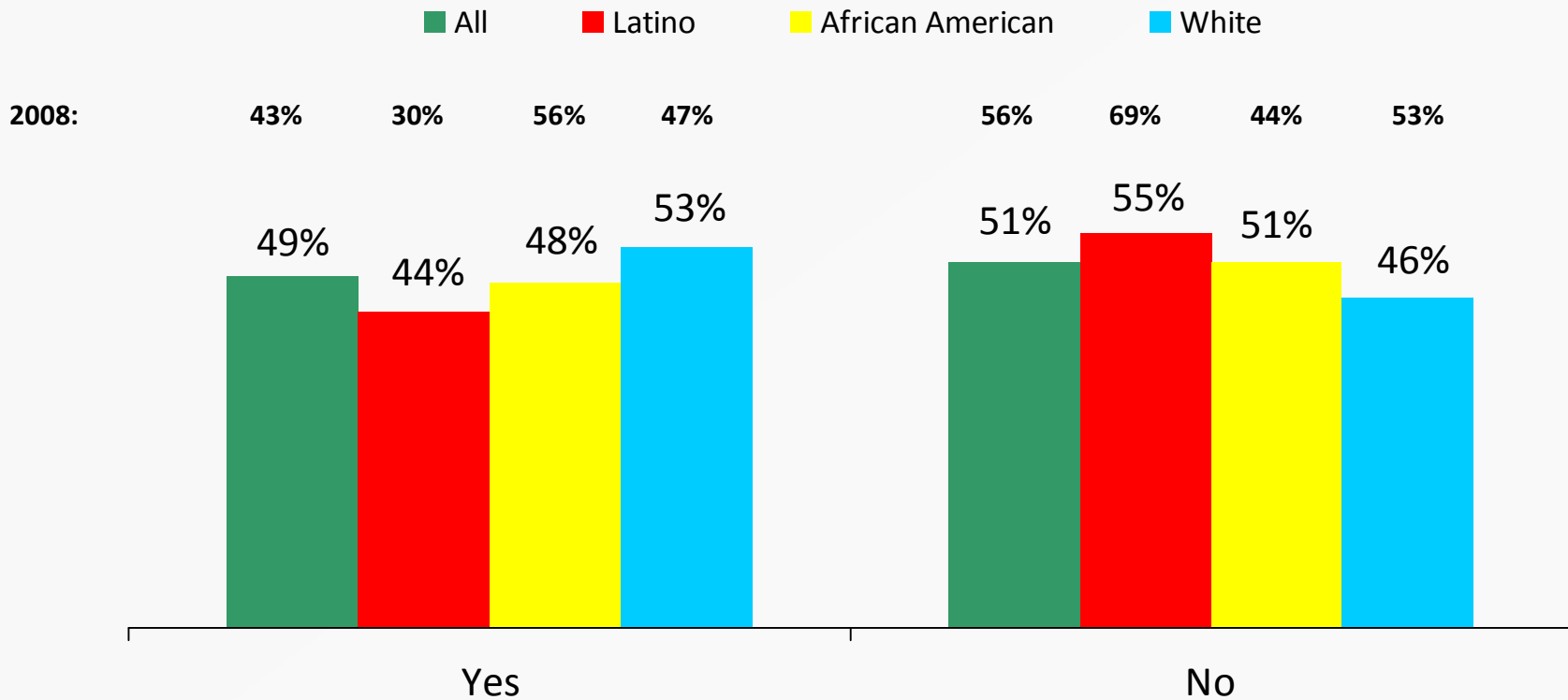
While adults in Paterson think the community is taking slightly less responsibility for public schools today, the opposite is true for their sense of personal responsibility. Today, adults split on the issue while in 2008 they tilted more heavily toward saying they had NOT personally done something to support public schools in their local area.

In the last year, have YOU personally done anything to support the public schools in your local area?



Darker colors=intensity

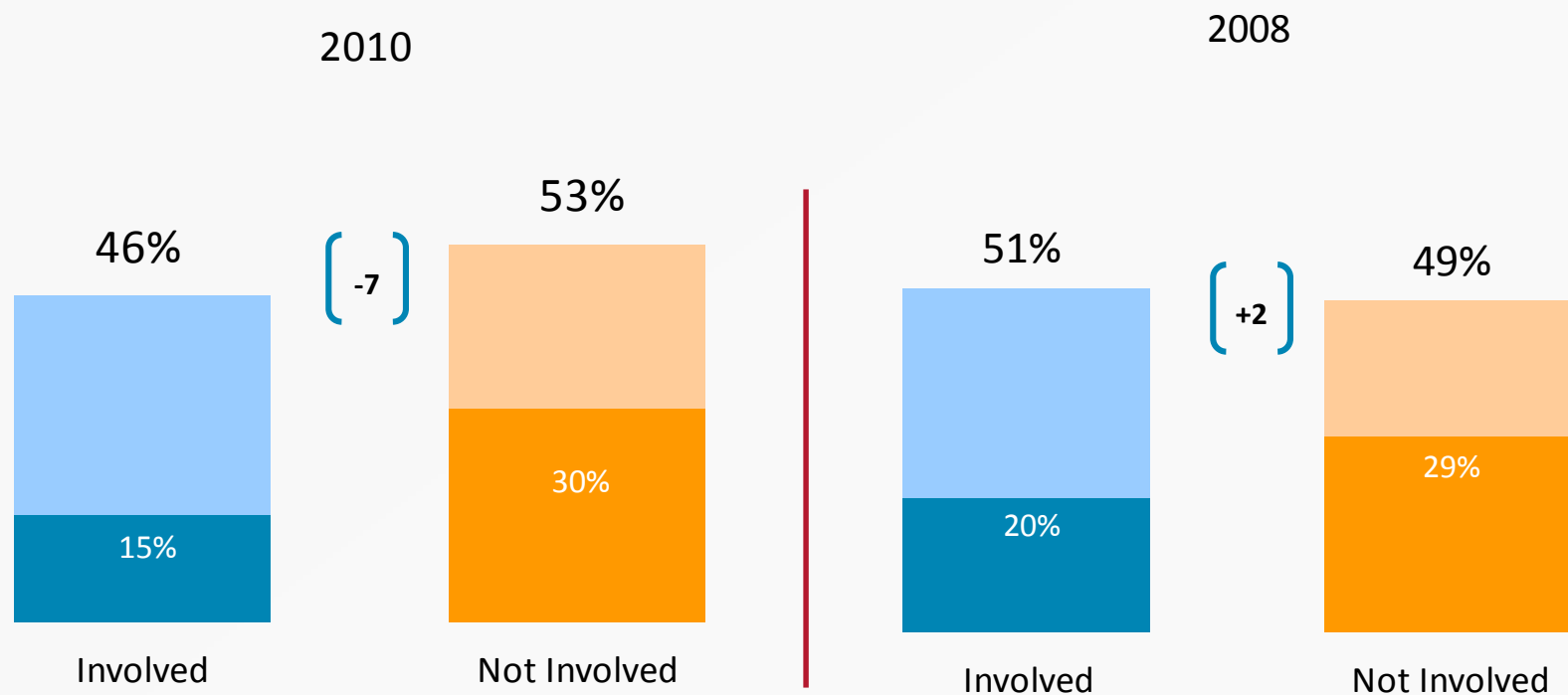
The most significant shift in “personally” doing something to support public schools has occurred among both whites and Latinos. On the other hand, the share of African Americans who say they had done something is down from 2008. This may stem from African Americans having the highest number saying they do not have children under 18.



African American women drive participation rates as 55% report doing something personally while only 39% of African American men say so.

Adults in Paterson continue to make careful distinctions when it comes to doing something “personally” to support public schools and being highly involved. Half of adults in Paterson (49%) say they did something personally and nearly half say they are “involved”, but only 15% say they are VERY involved in helping make public schools better. Levels of involvement are down since 2008, and most of the drop is in intensity.

Honestly, how involved would you say you are in helping to make public schools better – very involved, somewhat involved, not too involved, or not involved at all?



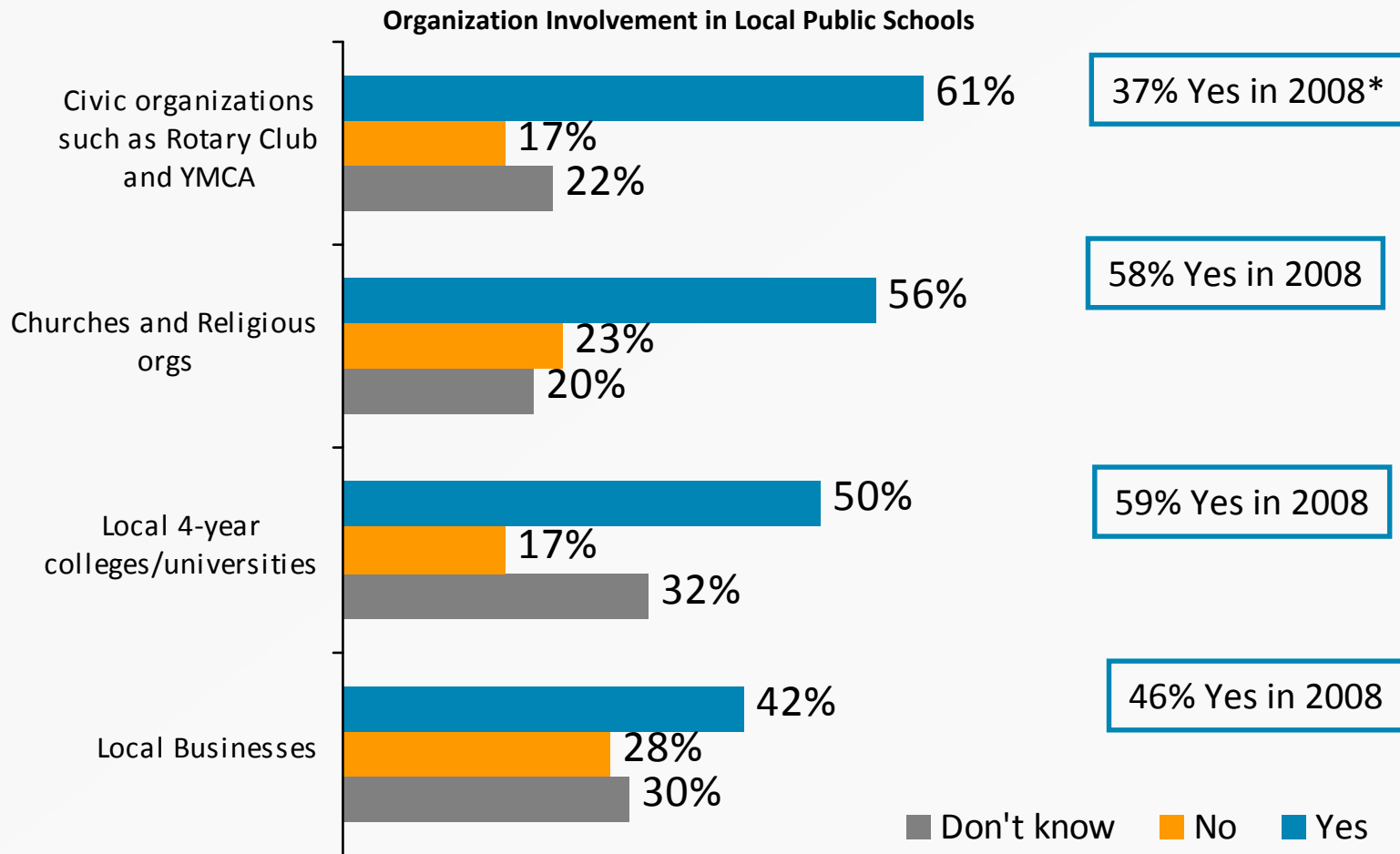
Darker colors=intensity

61% of adults most concerned with education say they are involved. This is down from 2008 when 68% reported they were involved.

## Organizational Involvement

Adults in Paterson want organizations to be more involved in improving public schools. But, they are unsure what that means or how it might happen.

There is a 24 point growth in civic organizations involvement in local public schools from 2008. This may partly be explained by giving adults a more specific definition of civic organizations than offered in 2008. Although slightly down from 2008, majorities of adults continue to give decent marks to churches and universities for their involvement. Colleges have fallen-off since 2008, but adults are hard-pressed to know just how to rate their local colleges on this issue.

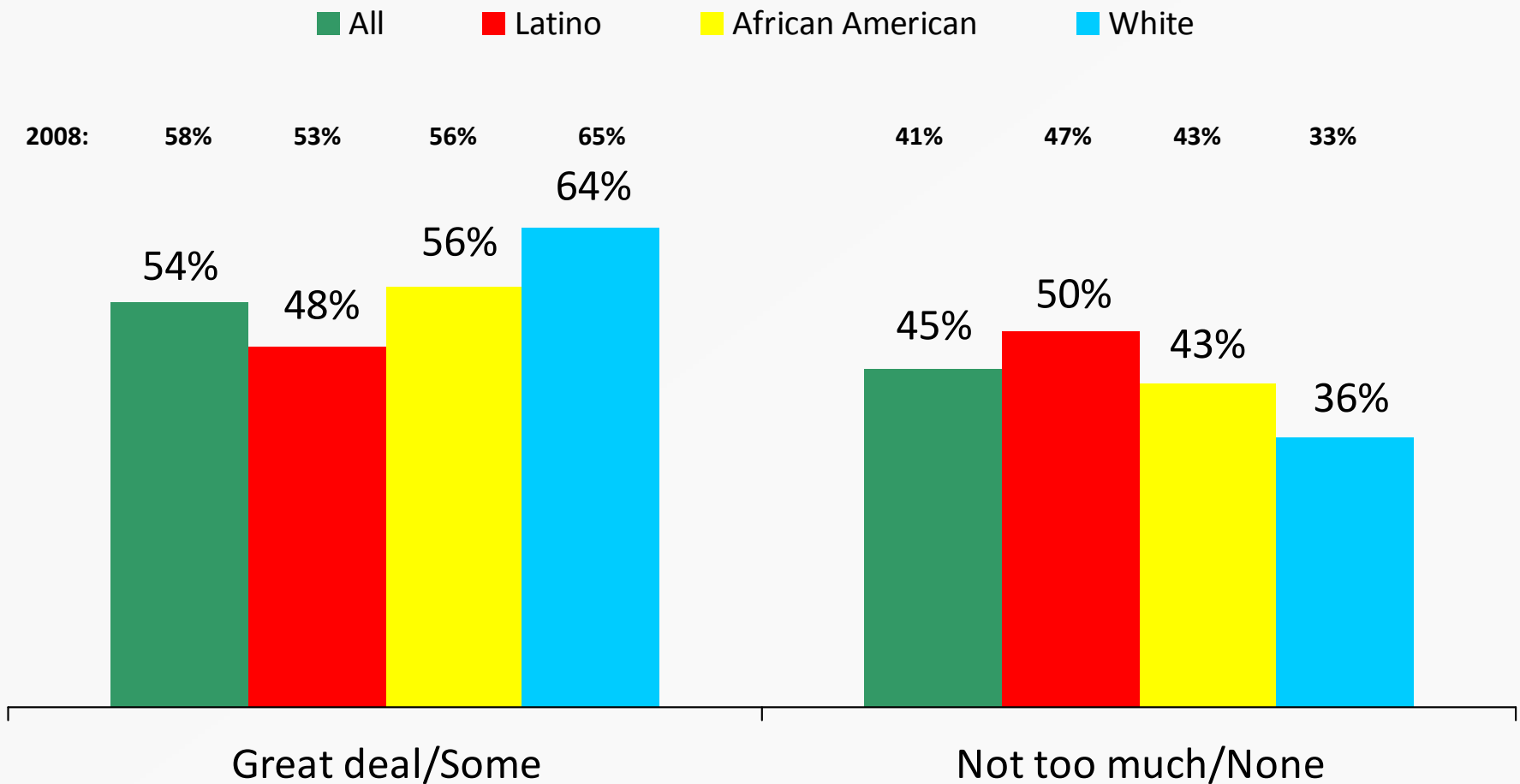


\*Question wording changed from 2008 to 2010. In 2008, we asked "Civic Organizations, such as the Rotary Club."

## Information Sources

People in Paterson report receiving information about public education, but the sources differ by race and ethnicity. Additionally, there may be a real opportunity to start a text-messaging campaign around following education issues and to help prioritize action on improving public schools

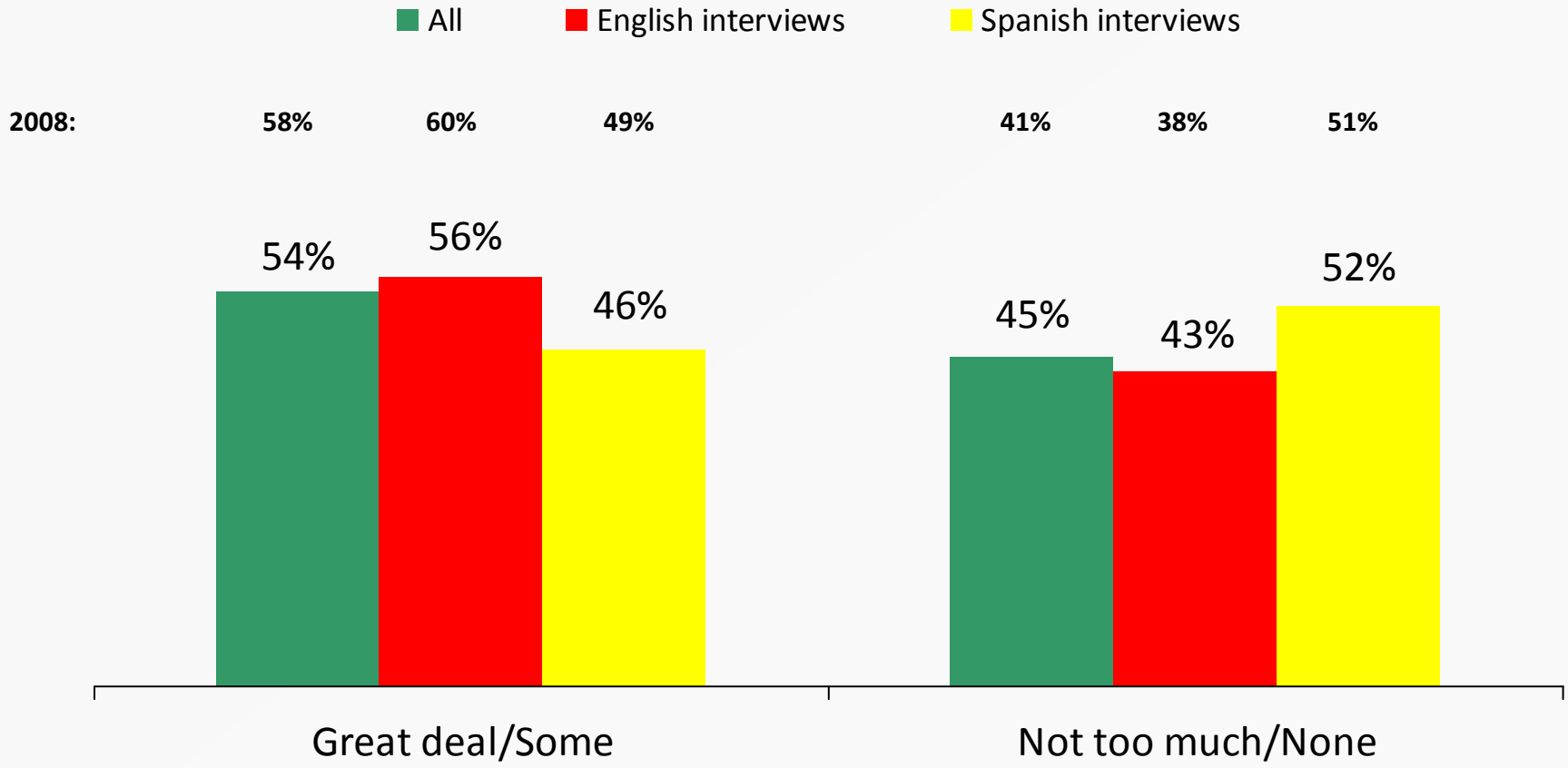
African Americans and Latinos tell two different stories. African Americans receive information at about the same rate as the total population and report receiving the same amount as in 2008. On the other hand, Latinos report receiving the least information and report receiving less this year than two years ago. Whites are pretty consistent from one year to the next.



African American women are certainly driving the amount of information African Americans receive about public education as 62% report receiving a great deal or some information.



Latinos' low reports of receiving information may stem from the more than half of Spanish speakers who say they received not too much or no information at all about education.



54% of interviews among Latinos were conducted in Spanish.

African Americans and white adults in Paterson get their news from both the television and the newspaper. Latinos, however, predominantly receive their news from the television. To reach Latinos, especially Spanish speakers, the Paterson Education Fund needs to think creatively about how to get on television.

	Total	All Latinos	African Americans	Whites	Spanish Speakers
Television	52%	61%	51%	41%	80%
Print Newspapers	28%	15%	32%	42%	7%
Online Newspapers	5%	5%	7%	4%	0%
Non-Newspaper Websites	5%	7%	3%	2%	1%
Radio	2%	1%	3%	3%	1%
Magazines	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%

The logo for the Paterson Education Fund is a green rounded rectangle. Inside, the word "Paterson" is written in a white serif font at the top. Below it, the word "EDUCATION" is written in a white, bold, sans-serif font, with each letter contained within a white rectangular box. At the bottom, the word "Fund" is written in a white serif font.

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EDUCATION  
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