

# Teachers' Perceptions of Their Working Conditions During the Pandemic:

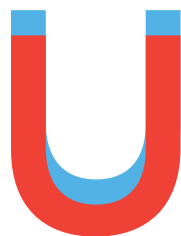
Results From the Fall 2020 Upbeat  
Teacher Engagement Survey

Matthew A. Kraft

Nicole S. Simon

Maleka I. Donaldson

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UPBEAT

Teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic has been an experience of unprecedented challenges and constant change for teachers. In this report, we explore teachers' experiences during the fall semester of 2020 as districts and schools attempted to move away from emergency remote teaching to a more purposeful and planned approach to educating students during the pandemic.

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## DATA & SAMPLE

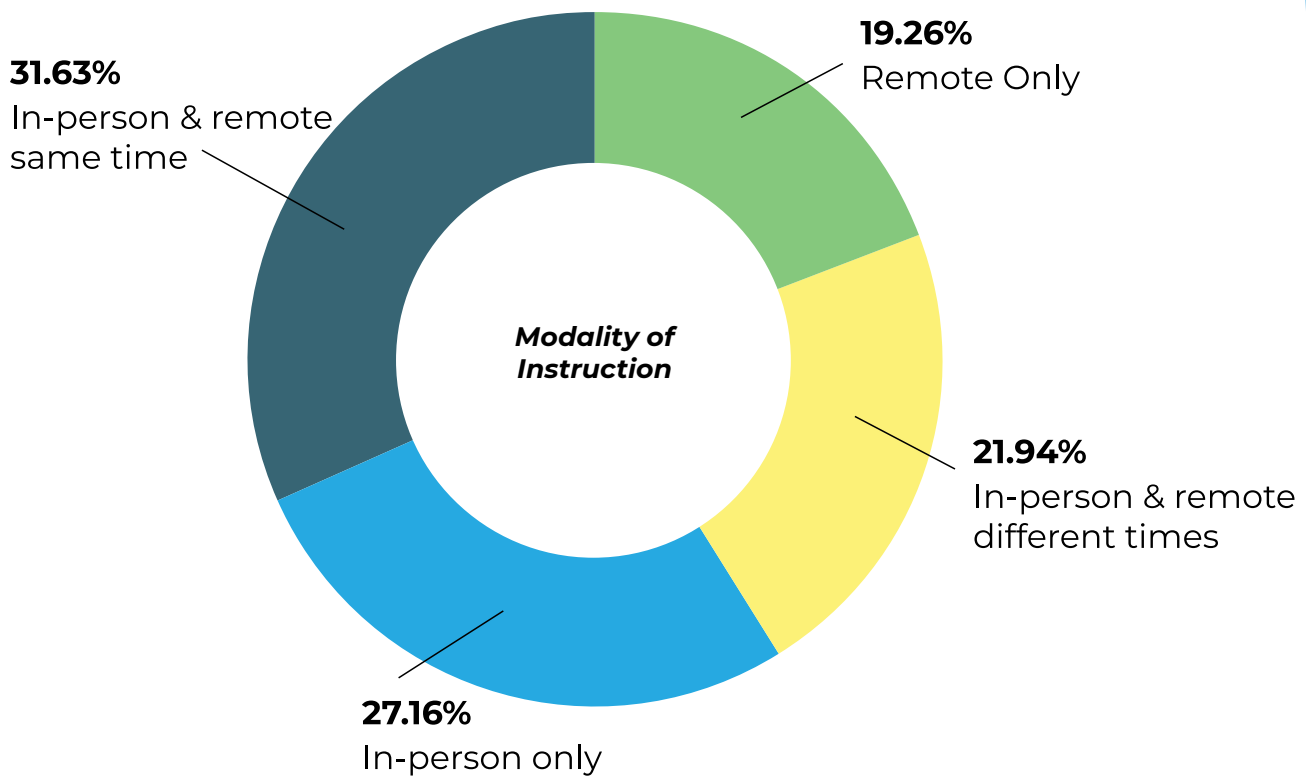
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Teach Upbeat collected responses to their Teacher Engagement Survey from 11,442 teachers across 303 schools in 17 districts in New York, Louisiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, South Carolina, Kentucky, Virginia, Texas, Georgia and Vermont in the Fall of 2020. Teachers responded between October 13, 2020 and January 4, 2021. Here we analyze the results of these survey responses with particular attention to how teachers' experiences were shaped by four modalities of teachers' instruction: (1) in-person only; (2) remote only; (3) in-person and remote at different times; (4) in person and remote at the same time. As Figure 1 indicates, these modalities of instruction were distributed somewhat evenly across the four different approaches.

***We describe the characteristics of the sample of teacher respondents in Table 1.***

<b>Table 1. Sample Characteristics</b>	
Female	82%
Male	18%
Asian	1%
Black	16%
Latinx	6%
Multi-racial	1%
Native American	1%
White	75%
Avg. years of experience	12
Pre-K	2%
Elementary School	50%
Middle School	23%
High School	25%
n	11,442

**Figure 1. Modality of Instruction Among Teacher Respondents**



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# MEASURES & TERMS

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## Overall Working Conditions

An overall average of teachers' perceptions of their working conditions in school across 22 domains:

Parent/Teacher Communication

Appreciation

Teacher Voice and Leadership

Professional Development

Collaboration

Recruitment, Hiring and Onboarding

Autonomy

Equity

Compensation and Career Path

Principal/Teacher Trust

Work/Life Balance

Resources and Facilities

Instructional Leadership

Self-Efficacy

Cultural Competence

School Safety & Order

Evaluation

Belonging and Wellbeing

Diversity

Inclusion

Care and Commitment

Satisfaction

## Teachers' Negative Perceptions of Working Conditions

These measures capture the percent of teachers that responded negatively to the items that constitute the working condition domains (i.e., selected Strongly Disagree or Disagree).

## Sense of Success

A single Likert-scale item asking teachers the degree to which they agree with the statement, "I feel successful as a teacher."

## Student Engagement

Teachers reported on the percent of students regularly engaged in learning. The answer choices for this question were in quintiles and then coded to indicate the median value of each quintile (e.g., if a teacher reported that 41-60% of their students were engaged, this was coded as 50.5%).

## Teaching Modality

**In-person only:** Teacher teaches exclusively in-person at school.

**Remote only:** Teacher teaches exclusively online (either from home or from school).

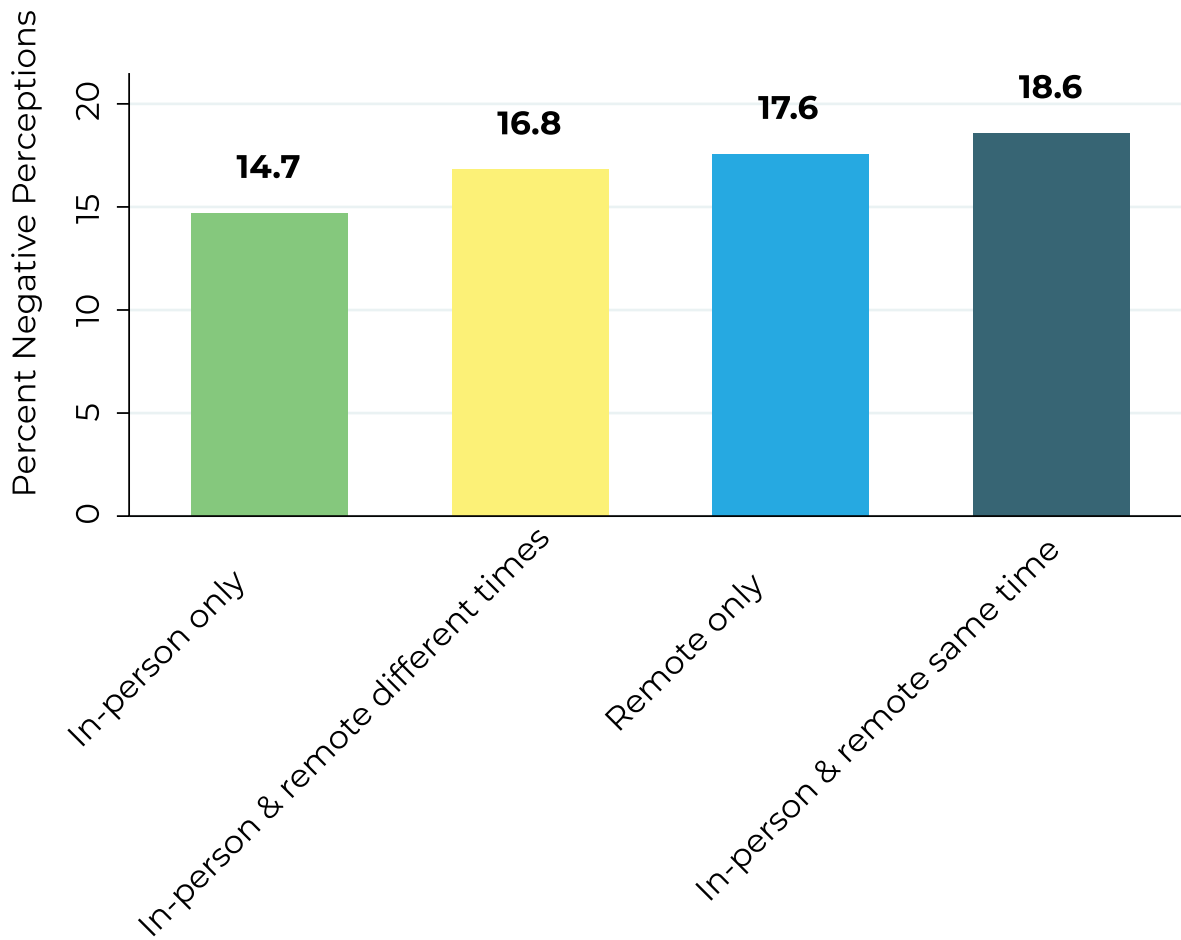
**In-person and remote at different times (separately):** Teacher teaches some periods of in-person-only students and some periods of remote-only students.

**In-person and remote at the same time (simultaneously):** Teacher teaches both in-person students and students at home, remotely watching the live instruction.

# TEACHER WORKING CONDITIONS

Teachers who taught both in-person and remote students simultaneously were most likely to report negative perceptions about their working conditions. Those who taught entirely remotely were the second most likely to report negative working conditions.

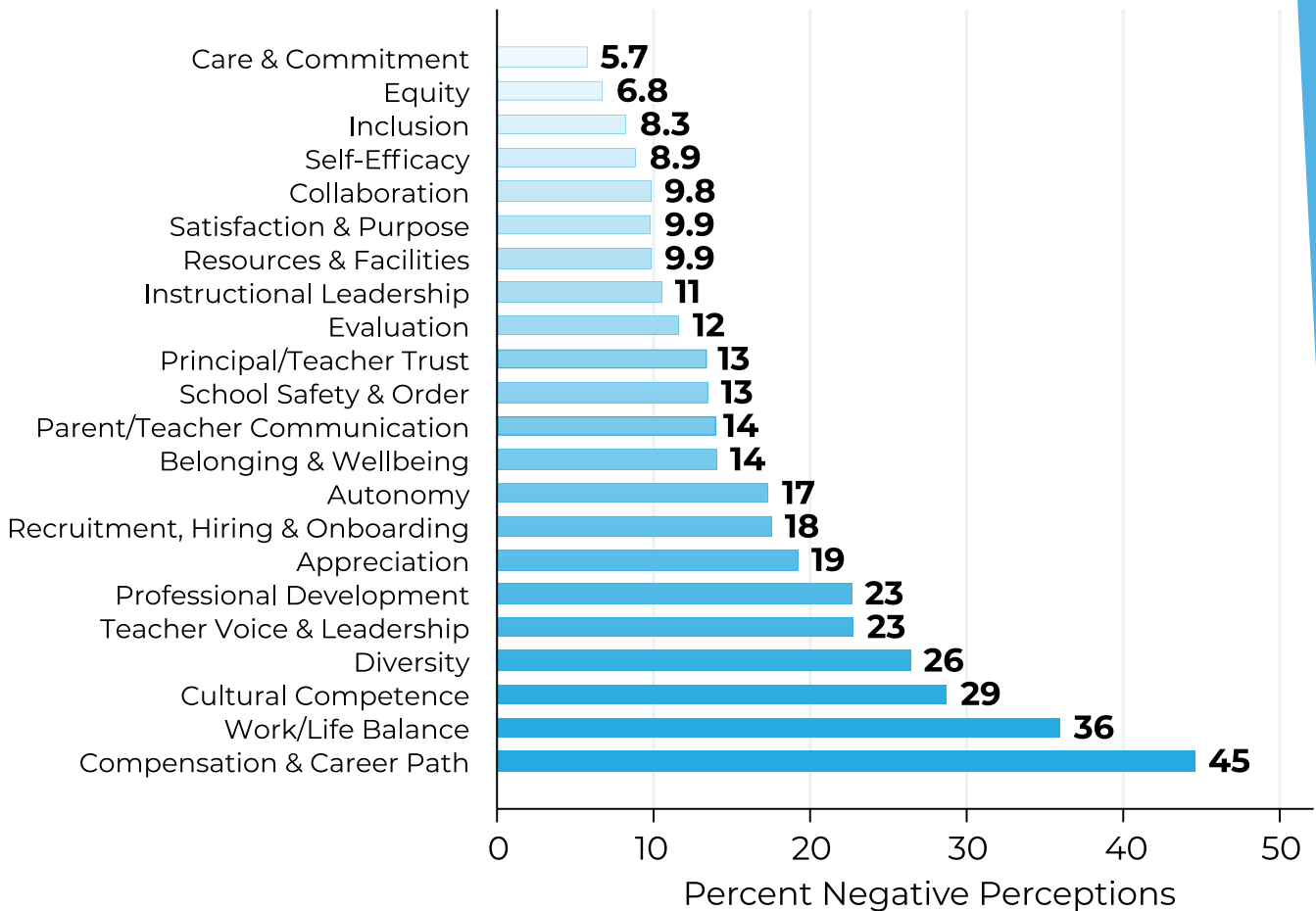
**Figure 2. Teachers' Negative Perceptions About Their Overall Working Conditions**



Overall, teachers were the least satisfied with their compensation and career path opportunities, work/life balance, and the diversity and cultural competencies of their schools.

- » 45% of teachers reported negative perceptions of compensation and career path, and 36% reported negatively about work-life balance.
- » While relatively few teachers reported negative perceptions of inclusion and equity efforts at their schools (8% and 7% respectively), over one-quarter held negative perceptions of diversity (26%) and/or cultural competence (29%).

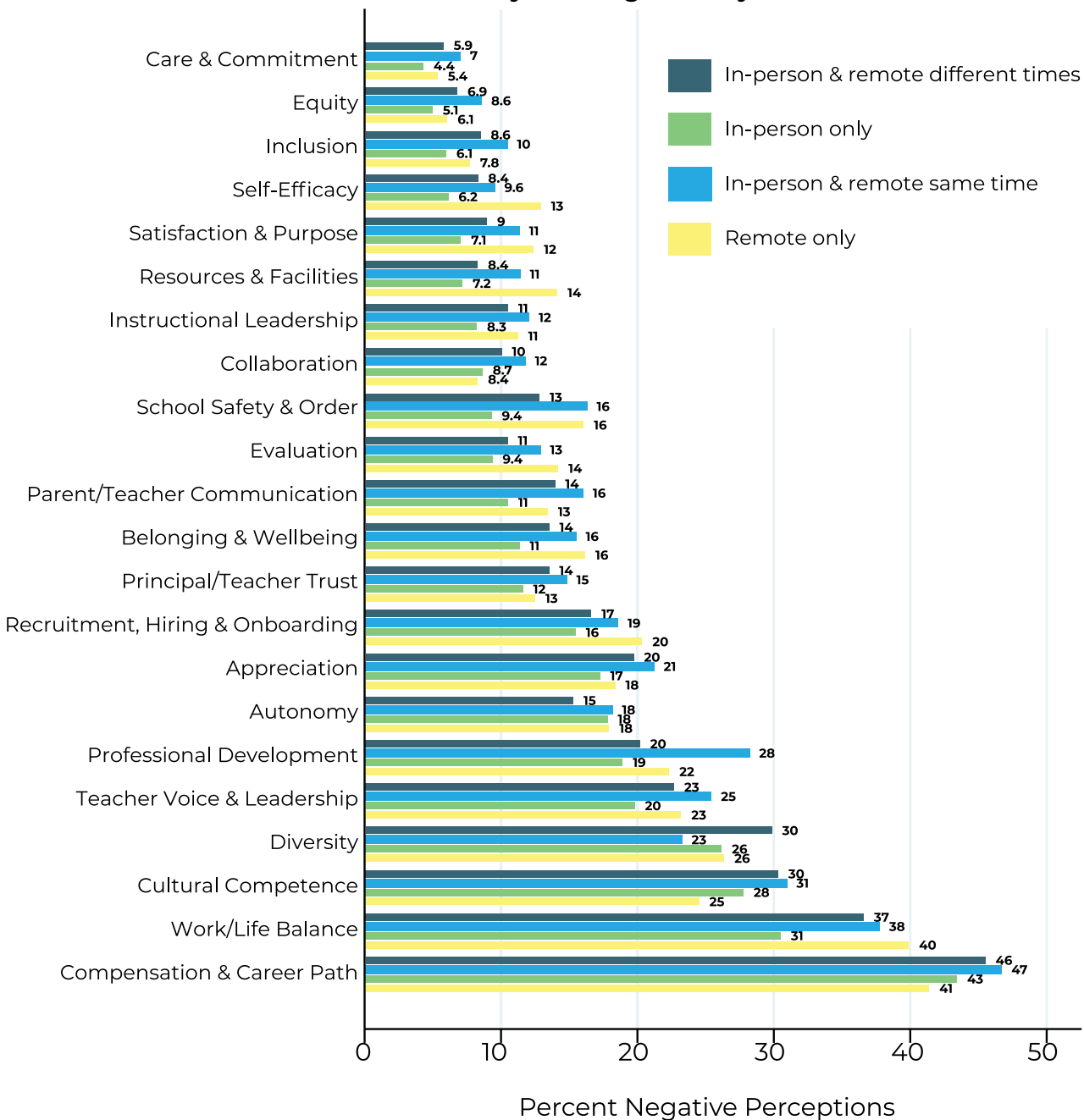
**Figure 3. Teachers' Negative Perceptions About Their Working Conditions**



Teachers' perceptions of specific elements of their working conditions also differed in systematic ways by their instructional modalities during the fall.

- » Teachers who taught remotely in some form were much more likely to rate their work/life balance poorly as compared to teachers who taught exclusively in person.
- » Teachers who taught students in-person and remotely at the same time (simultaneously) were much more likely to hold negative views about the degree that their professional development supported their instruction.
- » Teachers who taught students remotely were more likely to hold negative views about the resources and facilities that were made available to them for teaching.

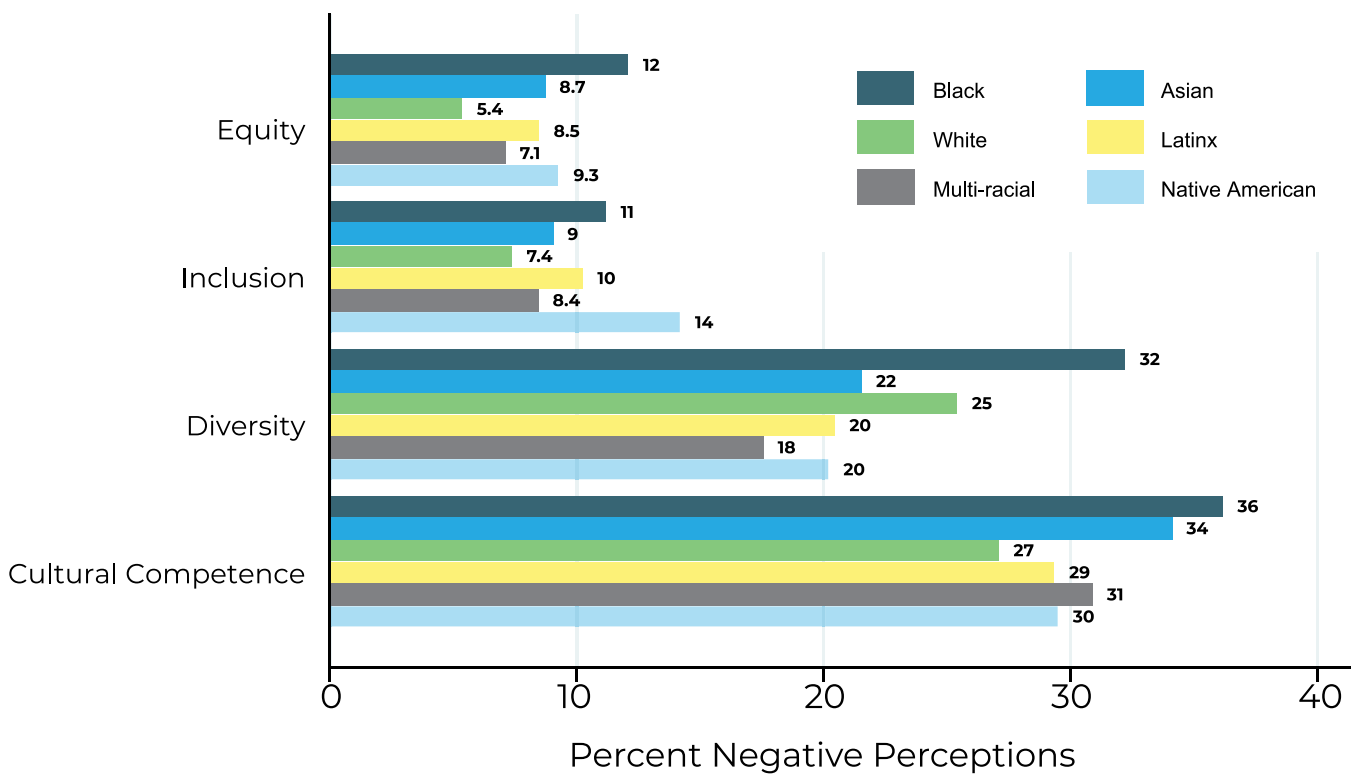
**Figure 4. Teachers' Negative Perceptions About Specific Working Condition Domains by Teaching Modality**



Black teachers reported more negative experiences with diversity, equity, inclusion and cultural competence in their schools than their peers in other racial/ethnic groups.

- » 36% of Black teachers and 34% of Asian teachers reported negative perceptions about the cultural competence of their work environment compared to 27-30% of teachers from other racial/ethnic groups.
- » 32% of Black teachers reported negative perceptions about the diversity of their work environment compared to 18-25% of teachers from other racial/ethnic groups.
- » Native American teachers were the most likely to feel as though their schools were not inclusive working environments (14% vs. 7-11% for other racial/ethnic groups).

**Figure 5. Teachers' Negative Perceptions of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Cultural Competence by Race and Ethnicity**

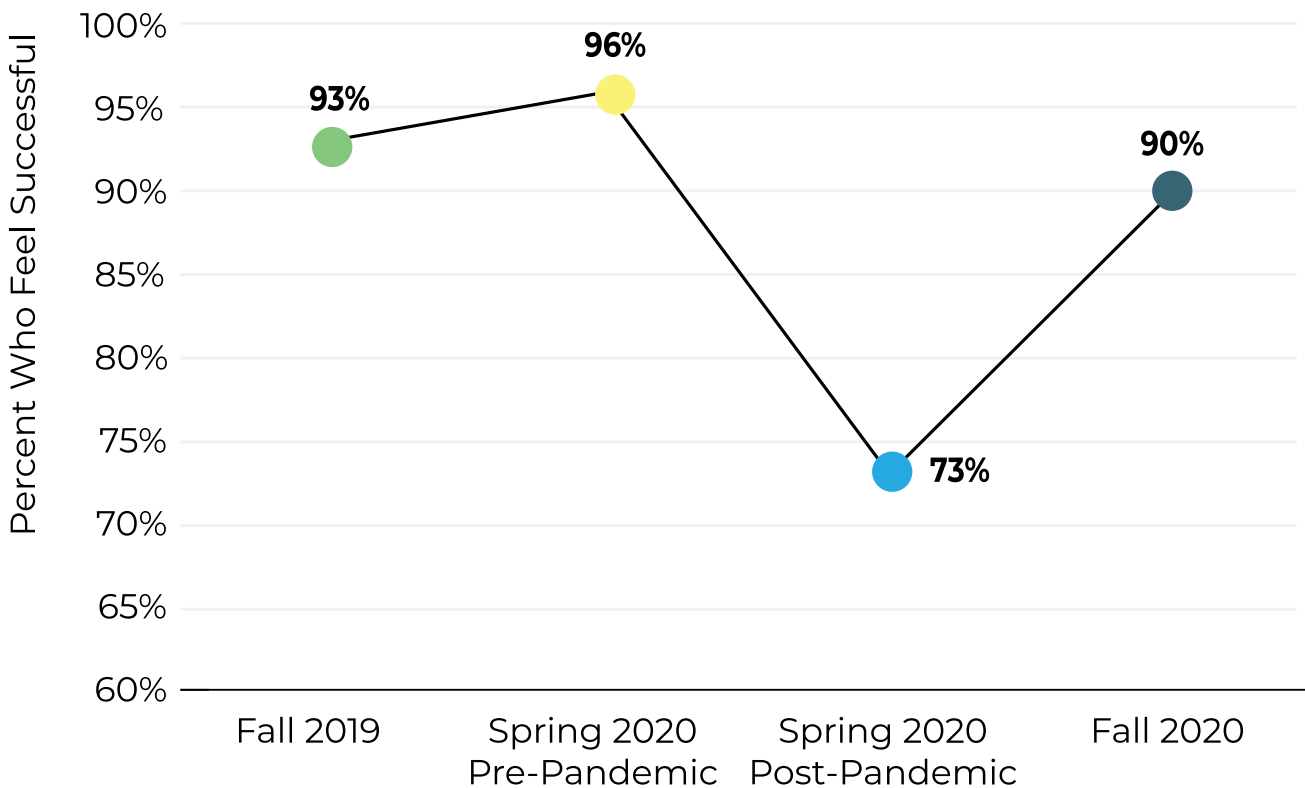




# TEACHERS' SENSE OF SUCCESS

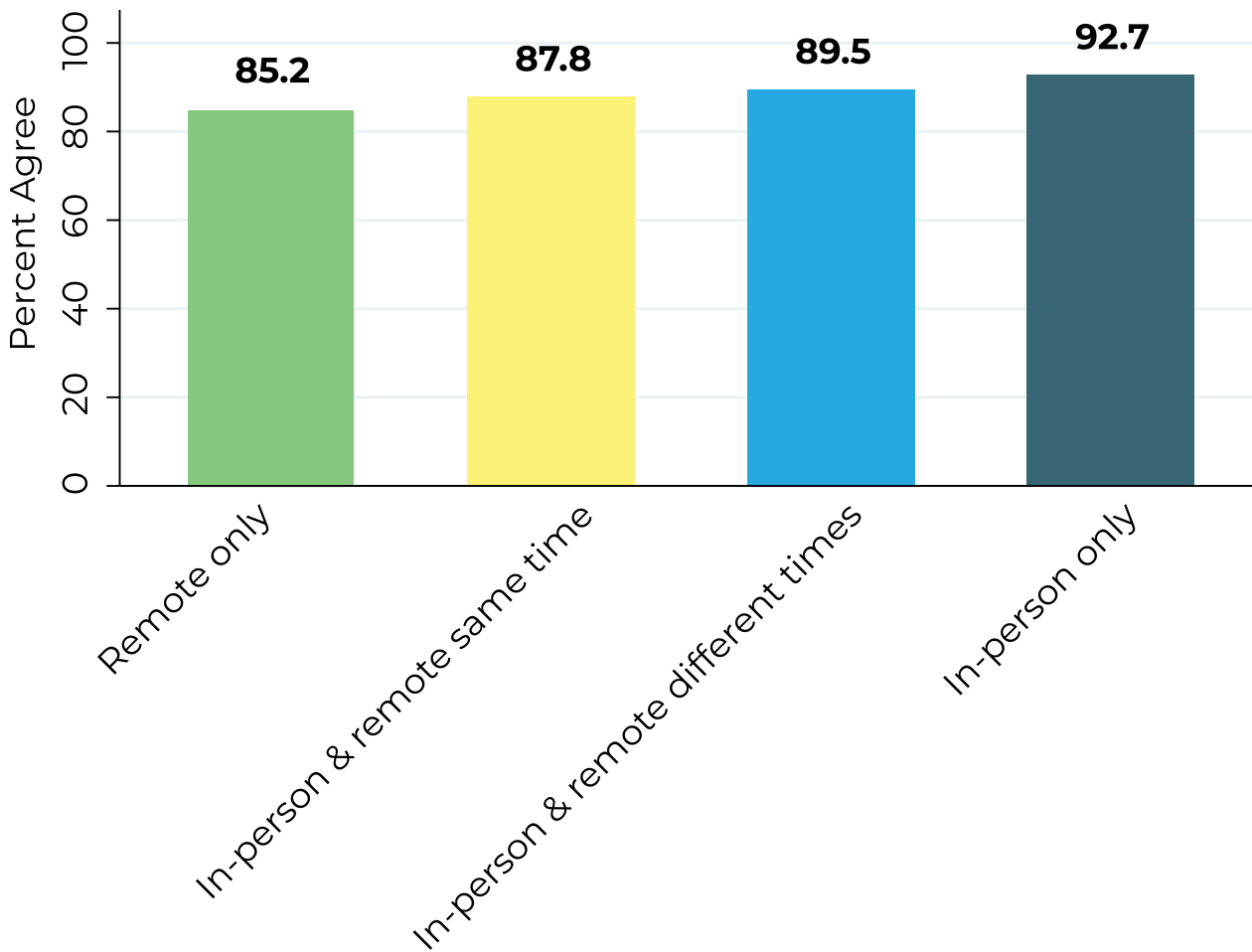
Among a common sample of teachers for whom we have repeated survey responses across time (n= 4,571), we find that the portion of teachers who felt successful dipped drastically (by over 20 percentage points) within the context of Spring 2020 emergency remote teaching at the start of the pandemic. Fortunately, by Fall 2020, 90% of teachers felt successful, nearly returned to Fall 2019 pre-COVID levels.

**Figure 6. Teachers' Sense of Success Measured Over Time**



However, in the full Fall 2020 sample we find that teachers working fully in-person were somewhat more likely to report feeling successful than their colleagues who taught some or all of their students remotely.

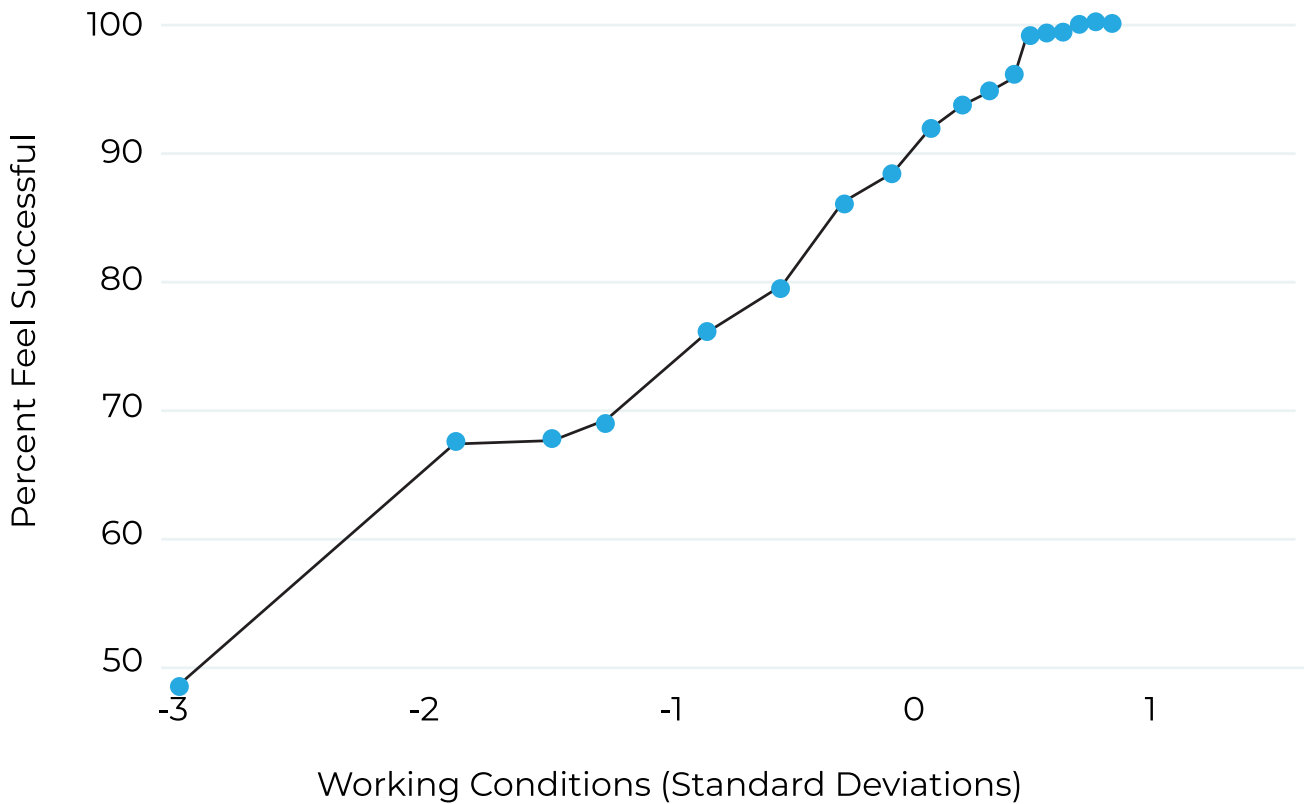
**Figure 7. Percent of Teachers Who Agree They Feel Successful by Teaching Modality**



We also see a clear positive relationship between teachers' sense of success this fall and their individual perceptions of their working conditions in school.

- » Teachers who report high-quality working conditions (1 standard deviation above the mean) are more than twice as likely to report feeling successful as teachers who report low-quality working conditions (2 standard deviations below the mean).

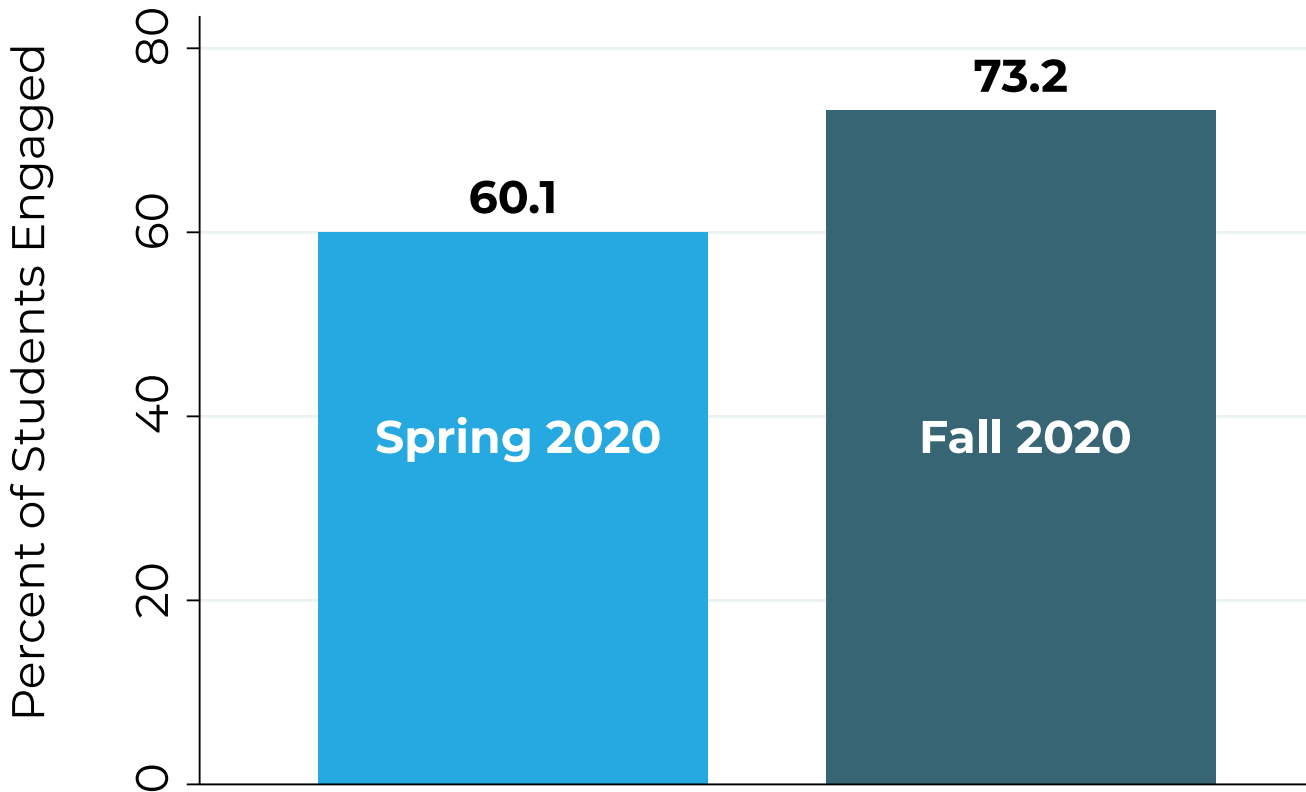
**Figure 8. Percent of Teachers Who Agree They Feel Successful by Overall Working Conditions**



# STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

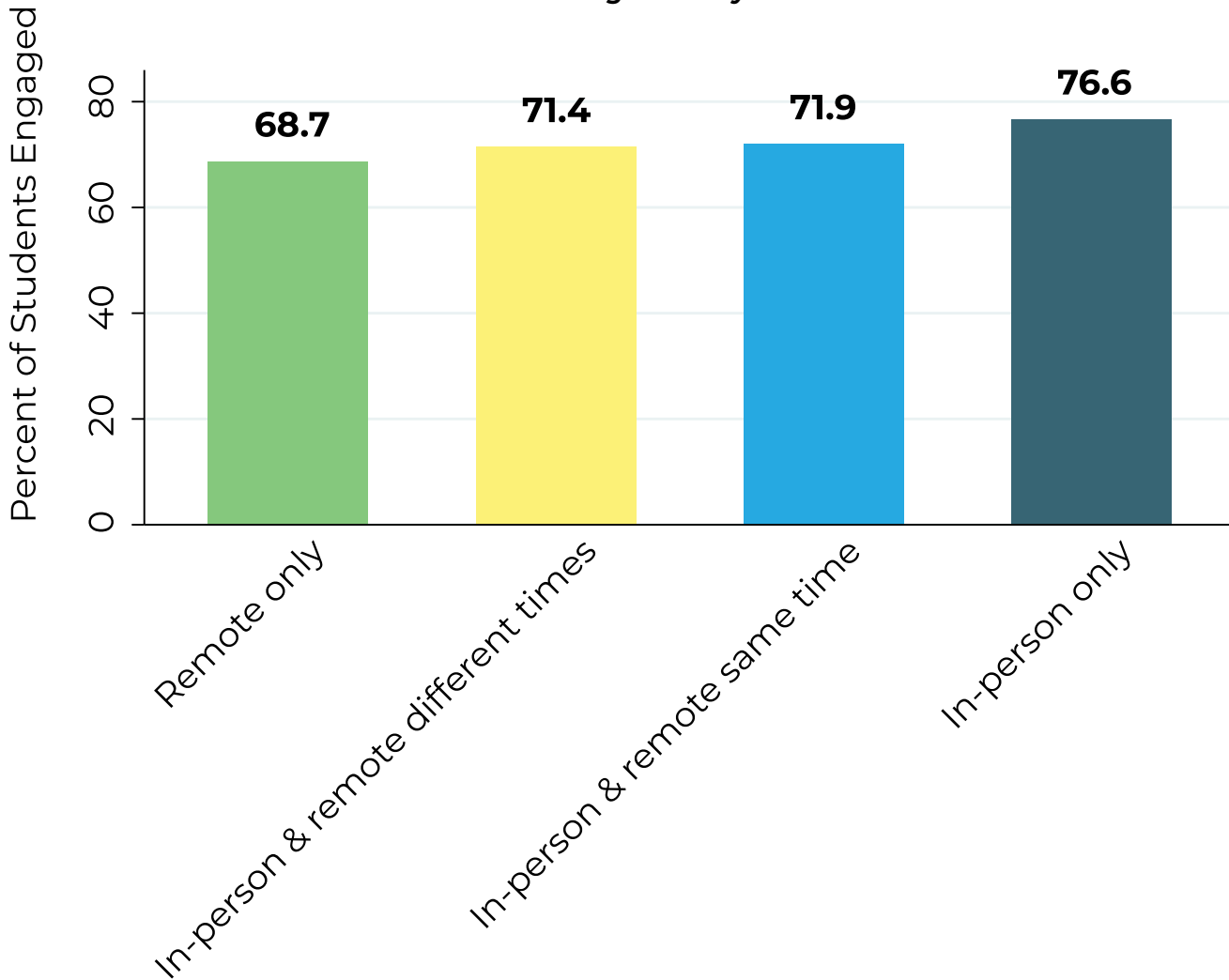
Among a common sample of teachers for whom we have repeated survey responses across time (n=4,571), we also find that teachers perceived a noticeable increase in the percent of students who were able to regularly engage in learning activities in the fall compared to the Spring of 2020.

**Figure 9. Percent of Students Able to Regularly Engage in Learning Activities**



However, teachers who taught remotely perceived that their students were less likely to be regularly engaged in learning than teachers who taught in-person.

**Figure 10. Percent of Students Able to Regularly Engage in Learning Activities by Teaching Modality**



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# CONCLUSION

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Overall, these results suggest that teachers' sense of success and student engagement improved meaningfully in Fall 2020 relative to their experiences during the emergency remote teaching in Spring 2020. However, we find clear patterns that teachers who delivered some or all of their instruction remotely confronted a more challenging work environment than those teachers who taught all students in person.

Our findings also point to key areas where schools can strengthen their work environments including via compensation and career path opportunities, a better work/life balance, and the diversity and cultural competencies of their school leadership and staff.