



BETWEEN THE LINES SERIES

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON PARENTS AND KIDS

KEY FINDINGS FROM A JULY 2020 NATIONAL SURVEY
OF PARENTS OF SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

INTRODUCTION

The staggering impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak on large-scale public systems—including politics, the economy, healthcare, and education—are well-documented.

Less understood is how deeply personal those impacts have been on families working to navigate the environment of risk and uncertainty.

Meeting Street Insights deployed one of the widest-reaching surveys in the market related to how parents are feeling about the risks of COVID-19 for their family's finances and their children's education.

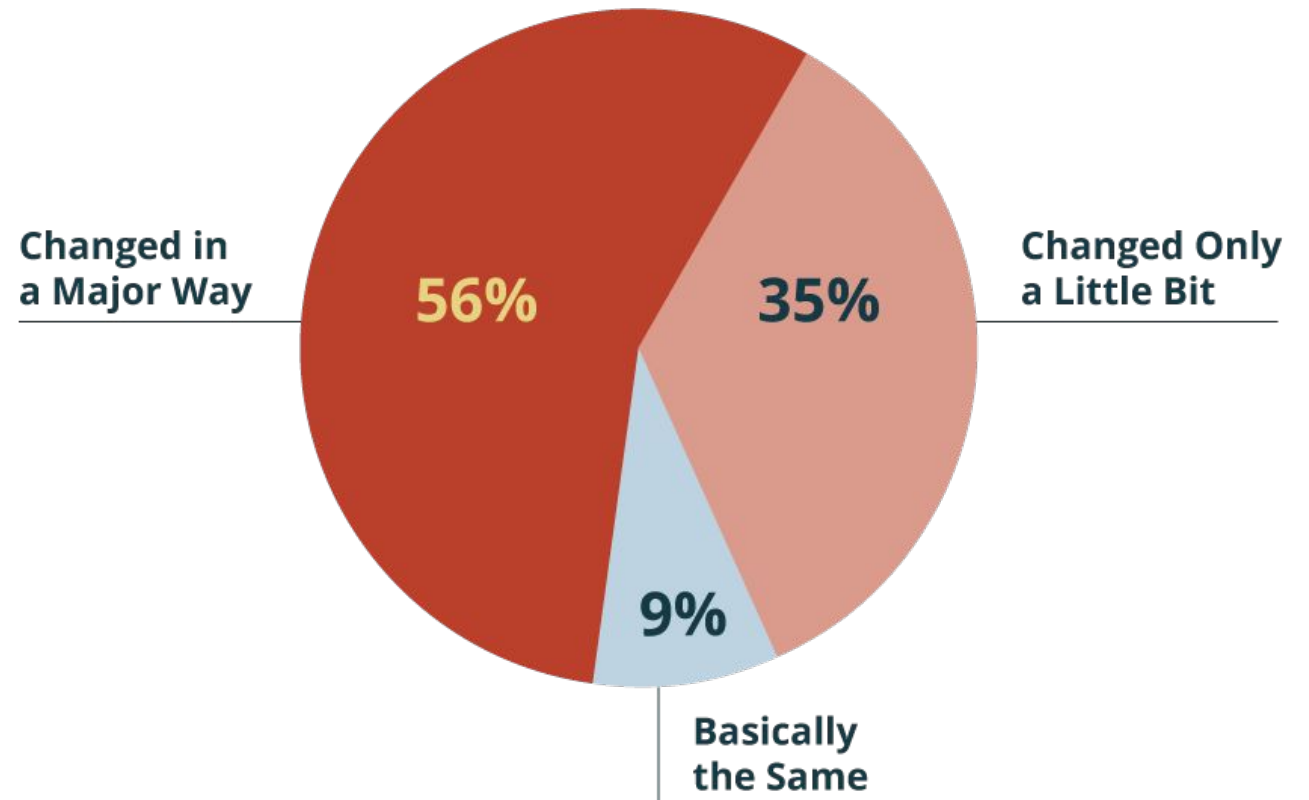
The results show that across regional, economic, racial, and gender lines, COVID-19 has changed how families and individuals are making decisions and behaving in profound ways. In many cases, financial instability and emotional turmoil are creating very real struggles with deciding the safest path for their children's education.

The study uncovers where parents are reaching a consensus and where there are noticeable and even profound divides between groups.

The vast majority of parents say their children's lives have changed because of COVID-19.

“As a result of the coronavirus outbreak, would you say your child's life has changed in a major way, changed only a little bit, or is their life basically the same as it was before the outbreak?”

As we explore the specific impacts, it is important to note that almost all parents agree their lives and the lives of their children have changed since the outbreak. Very few families claimed that their children's lives are basically the same as before COVID-19.



METHODOLOGY

Meeting Street Insights conducted an online national survey of parents with at least one child between the ages of five and eighteen (N=1,000).

The study was conducted July 3 – July 9, 2020.

COVID-related considerations about education and financial health are widely discussed topics across social media, major news outlets, podcasts, television and cable, and between parents. People are talking about this historic, disruptive environment, trying to figure out how to manage through this time.

This research uniquely brings together input about what parents are thinking and feeling about the educational, financial, and developmental impacts of COVID-19.

HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis we explored (and proved) is that parents are overwhelmed.

They feel like their kids' education suffered in the spring in the midst of rapid digital transformation and carry a general unease about what will happen in the fall. All of those challenges are influencing how parents perceive what is best for their children, specifically, and their families, in general, with respect to education.

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PART ONE: FAMILY FINANCES
PART TWO: EMOTIONAL IMPACTS
PART THREE: SPRING SCHOOL SHUTDOWNS
PART FOUR: UPCOMING EDUCATION DECISIONS



M E E T N G
S R E E T

FAMILY FINANCES

MAIN TAKEAWAYS

1

COVID-19 is causing significant financial instability in a majority of families.

Over half of parents in the U.S. report that at least one family member has lost a job, had hours or shifts reduced, or taken a pay cut due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Another 1 in 5 American parents say they worry about a family member losing a job or taking a pay cut.

As a result, many parents are concerned about meeting their families' basic needs, like having enough food in the house.

2

Despite economic instabilities, most parents don't often discuss financial concerns with their children.

Only 31% report talking about the family finances weekly or more. 34% report talking once a month, and 35% say they rarely or never discuss the family's finances with their kids.

Parents are far more likely to discuss screen time than they are the need for the family to cut back on spending.

3

Parents are frequently having other important conversations with their kids.

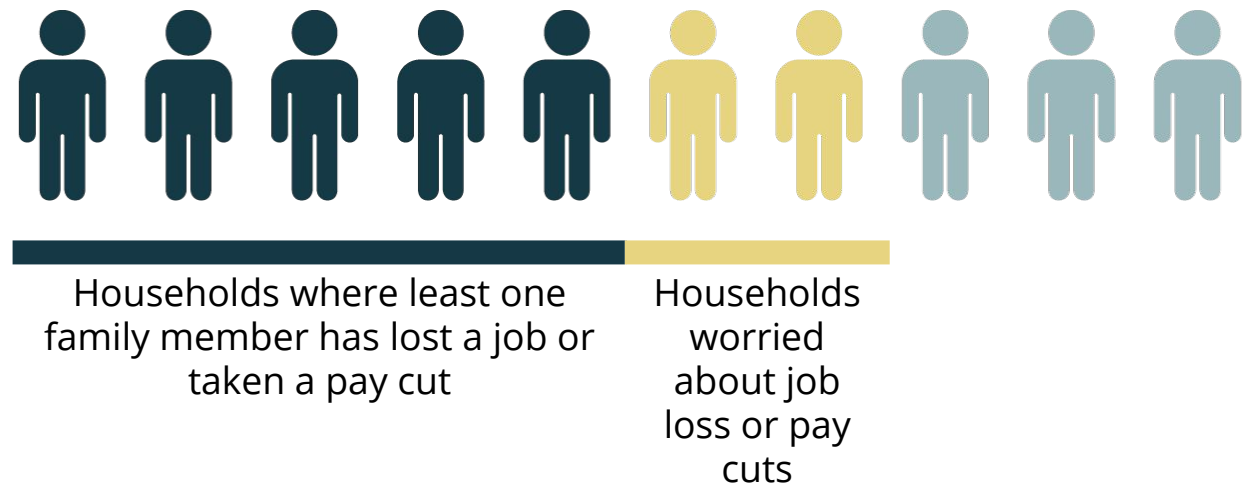
A majority of parents report that they discuss their children's academic progress, stopping the spread of the coronavirus, screen time, and their children's social life at least weekly.

They are also doing things that attempt to keep a sense of continuity or normalcy in the lives of their children, like giving them the same amount of allowance and chores.

COVID-19 is destabilizing family finances in the majority of households.

“Have you or another family member living in your household experienced any of the following as a result of the coronavirus outbreak, or not? How worried are you about you or another family member living in your household losing a job or receiving a significant pay cut?”

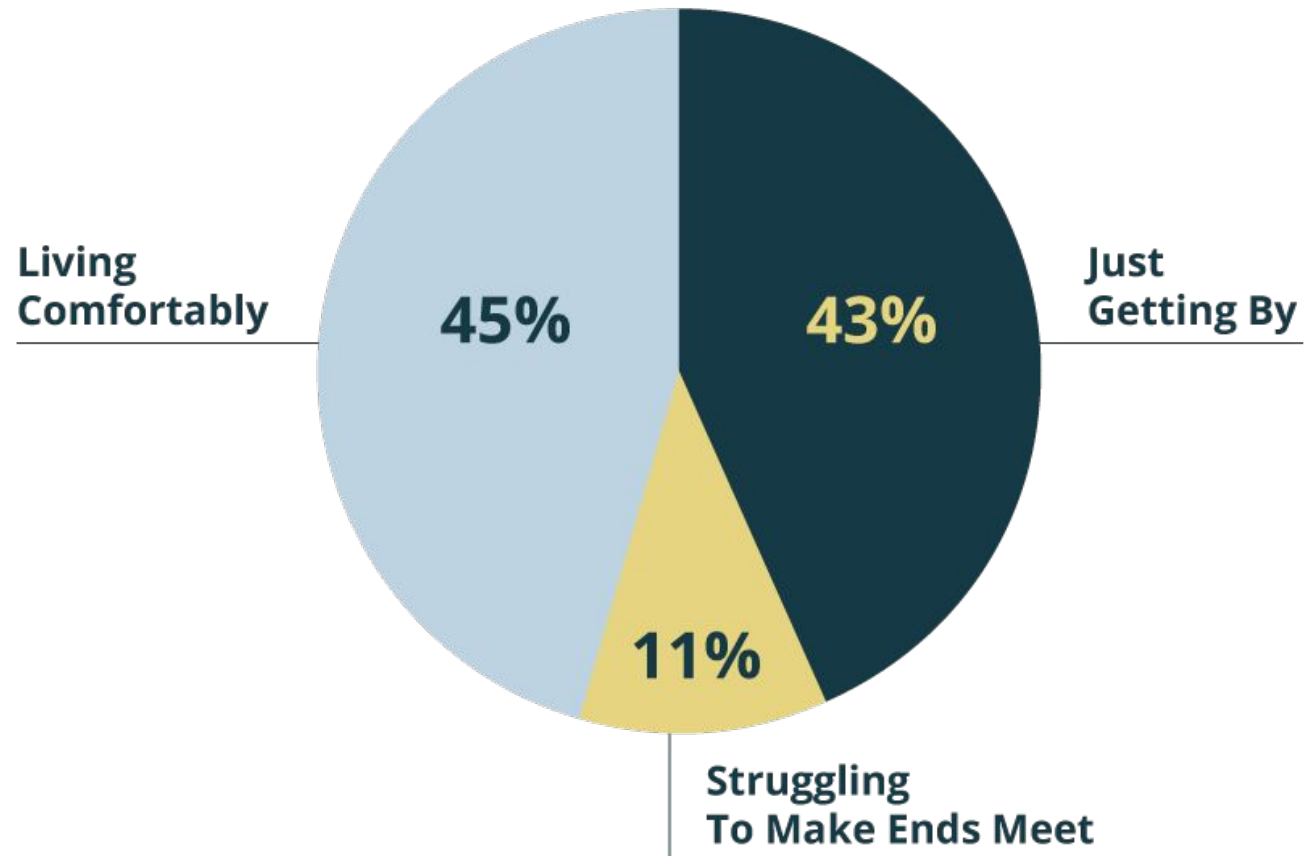
In the majority of households (52%), at least one family member has lost a job, had hours or shifts reduced, or taken a pay cut due to the COVID-19 outbreak. An additional 20% of parents worry that they or another family member will lose their job, have their hours reduced, or receive a pay cut.



Many parents report that their family is just getting by.

“Thinking of your family's financial situation, would you say you are living comfortably, just getting by, or struggling to make ends meet?”

The pandemic is severely impacting family stability. Over 40% of parents say their family is barely getting by. Another 11% of parents say their family is struggling to make ends meet.



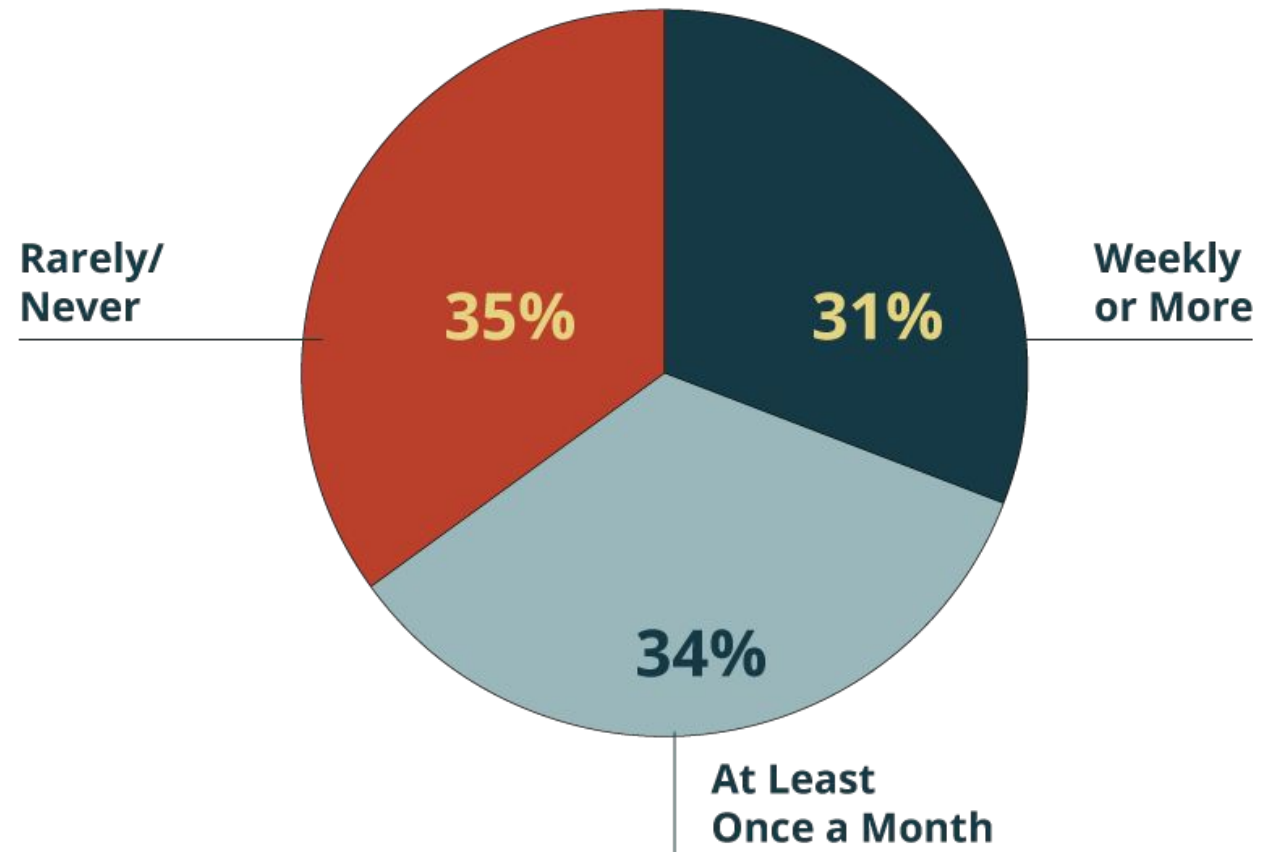
Despite the financial impact of COVID-19, most parents don't discuss their family's finances with their children.

"Please select how often you and your child had a conversation or discussion about family finances over the past couple of months, if at all."

During the months since the start of COVID-19, only 31% of parents say they have discussed family finances with their children at least weekly.

35% report that they rarely or never discuss family finances.

Parents are significantly more likely to discuss academic progress, stopping the spread of the coronavirus, and screen time.



Parents are having frequent discussions about timely topics with their children.

“For each of the following topics, please select how often you and your child had a conversation or discussion over the past couple of months, if at all.”

Parents are significantly more likely to discuss academic progress, stopping the spread of the coronavirus, and screen time than they are financial concerns like cutting spending or the family finances in general.

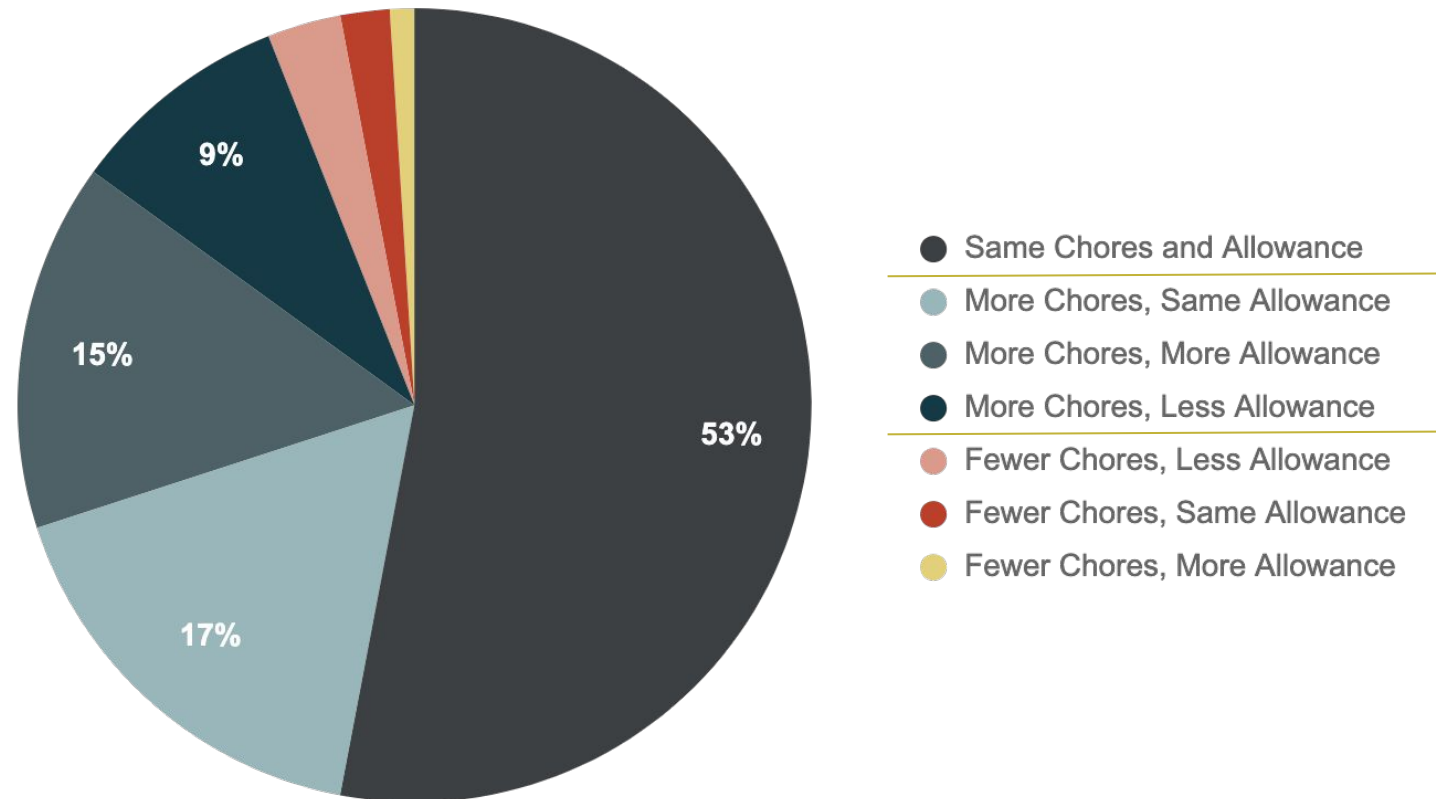
Topic	Weekly	At Least Once a Month	Rarely/ Never
Your child's schoolwork and academic progress	68%	26%	6%
The spread of the coronavirus and what you can do to stop it	64%	29%	7%
The amount of time your child spends on electronic devices or playing video games	62%	28%	10%
Your child's social life and friends	57%	34%	9%
The need to save money and cut back on spending	40%	38%	21%
Racism and discrimination	39%	42%	19%
The family finances	31%	34%	35%

Parents are trying to keep some things consistent, despite the disruptions of COVID-19.

“Which of the following statements best describes how chores and allowance in your household have been affected by the coronavirus outbreak, if at all?”

More than half of parents (53%) say they have not changed the chores or allowances they give their kids.

Another 32% of parents are giving their kids more chores. Only 6% of parents are giving their kids fewer chores. A lucky 1% of kids are getting fewer chores but more allowance.





M E E T N G
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EMOTIONAL IMPACTS

MAIN TAKEAWAYS

1

Parents report frequently feeling emotions like worry and stress since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Feeling overwhelmed, bored, and sad round out the top five most common emotions. Very few parents report feeling positive emotions like happiness and enjoyment “frequently” since the outbreak.

2

Parents report their children are experiencing similar emotions.

Over half of parents report that they believe their children frequently feel bored during the pandemic, far and away the highest emotion parents say their children are experiencing. Confusion, worry, sadness, and loneliness comprise the rest of the top five.

3

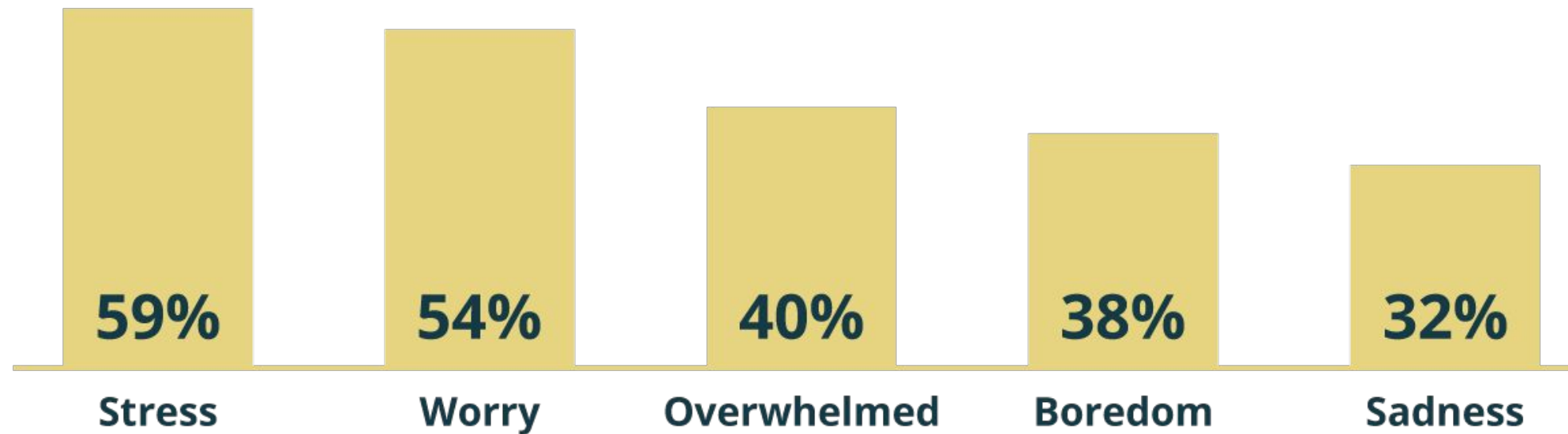
While there is a lot of overlap between common emotions in kids and parents, there were a few significant differences.

Most parents report frequently feeling stress (59%), but only 29% think their children frequently feel the same way. The same is true of worry (54% for parents and 35% for kids) and overwhelmed (40% vs 17%).

Parents do report they think their kids are frequently feeling bored (53%) at a much higher rate than they report feeling bored themselves (38%).

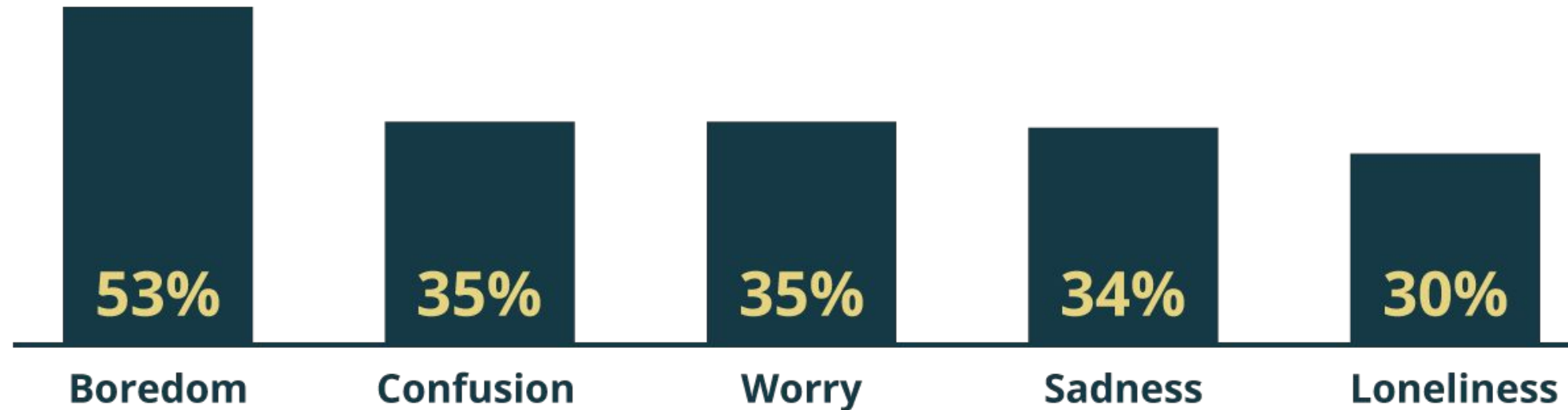
Parents report feeling stress, worry, and other negative emotions frequently during the outbreak.

“Did you experience any of the following feelings frequently during the coronavirus outbreak this spring? Select as many as apply.”



While parents say their kids are sad and worried as well, most say their kids are bored.

“And, as far as you know, did your child experience any of the following feelings frequently during the coronavirus outbreak while at home this spring? Select as many as apply.”



Parents report that their families have rarely felt happiness or enjoyment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Frequently Felt Emotions

Happiness and enjoyment are not frequently felt emotions for the vast majority of parents.

They report that their kids aren't doing much better than they are.

Emotion	Parents	Children
Boredom	38%	53%
Confusion	27%	35%
Worry	54%	35%
Sadness	32%	34%
Loneliness	23%	30%
Stress	59%	29%
Enjoyment	15%	21%
Happiness	16%	20%
Anger	26%	17%
Overwhelmed	40%	17%



M E E T N G
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SPRING SCHOOL SHUTDOWNS

MAIN TAKEAWAYS

1

The school shutdowns caused significant disruptions for parents, who had to balance new and existing responsibilities.

Parents struggled to balance helping their children and the other responsibilities they have in their lives. A plurality of parents spent more time helping their children with schoolwork compared to the months before the shutdowns.

2

Parents are concerned about the impact of COVID-19 and school shutdowns on their children's lives.

In general, parents are more worried about the impact of COVID-19 on their children than they are about juggling other responsibilities. 4 in 5 adults say they are concerned about their children staying on track academically during the shutdowns. Their children's mental health and ability to interact socially with friends and classmates are also deeply concerning for parents.

3

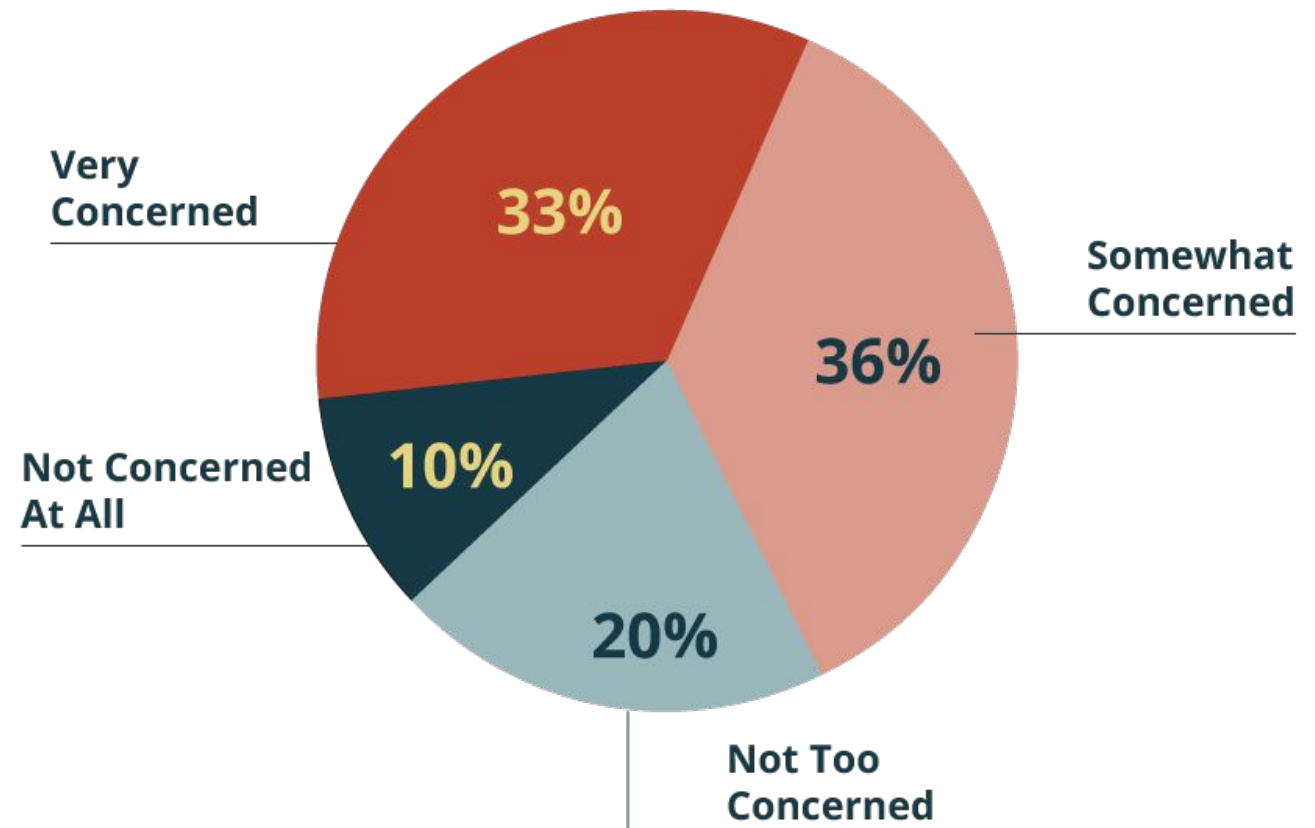
Despite these challenges, most parents feel like their children's schools handled the COVID-19 outbreak well.

A plurality of parents (41%) feel like distance learning went about as well as expected. They also give their children's schools high marks on their handling of the pandemic.

Parents struggled to juggle multiple responsibilities during the school shutdowns in the spring.

“How concerned were you about balancing work, school, and other responsibilities during the coronavirus outbreak and resulting school closures?”

More than half of parents report being concerned about their ability or capacity to help their children with school work while juggling the other responsibilities in their life.



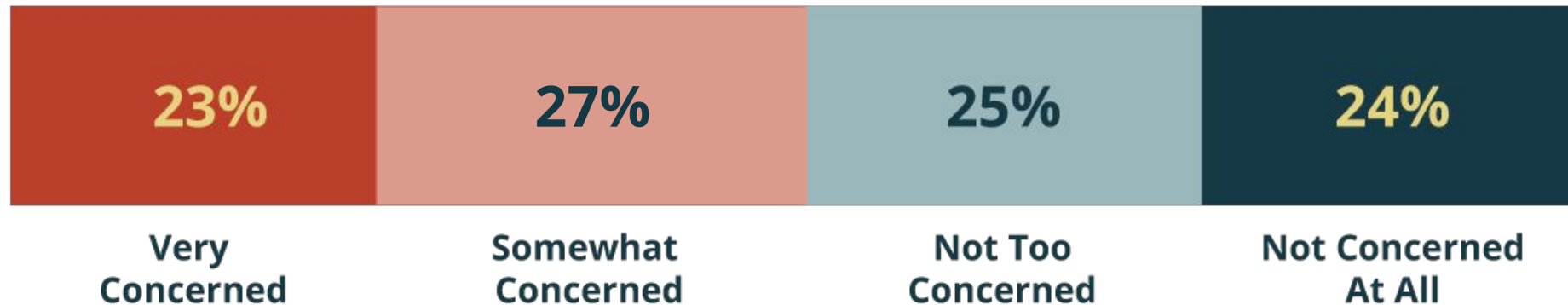
Parents were also concerned about their children's academic progress, social interaction, and mental health.

"How concerned were you about issues related to your child's balance and well-being during the coronavirus outbreak and resulting school closures?"

Issue	Very Concerned	Total Concerned
Making sure your child is staying on track academically	43%	82%
Your child not being able to socially interact with their classmates and friends	37%	79%
Your child's mental health and well-being	36%	76%
Your child having too much screen time	34%	72%
Being able to do your job during the day while your child is at home	27%	57%

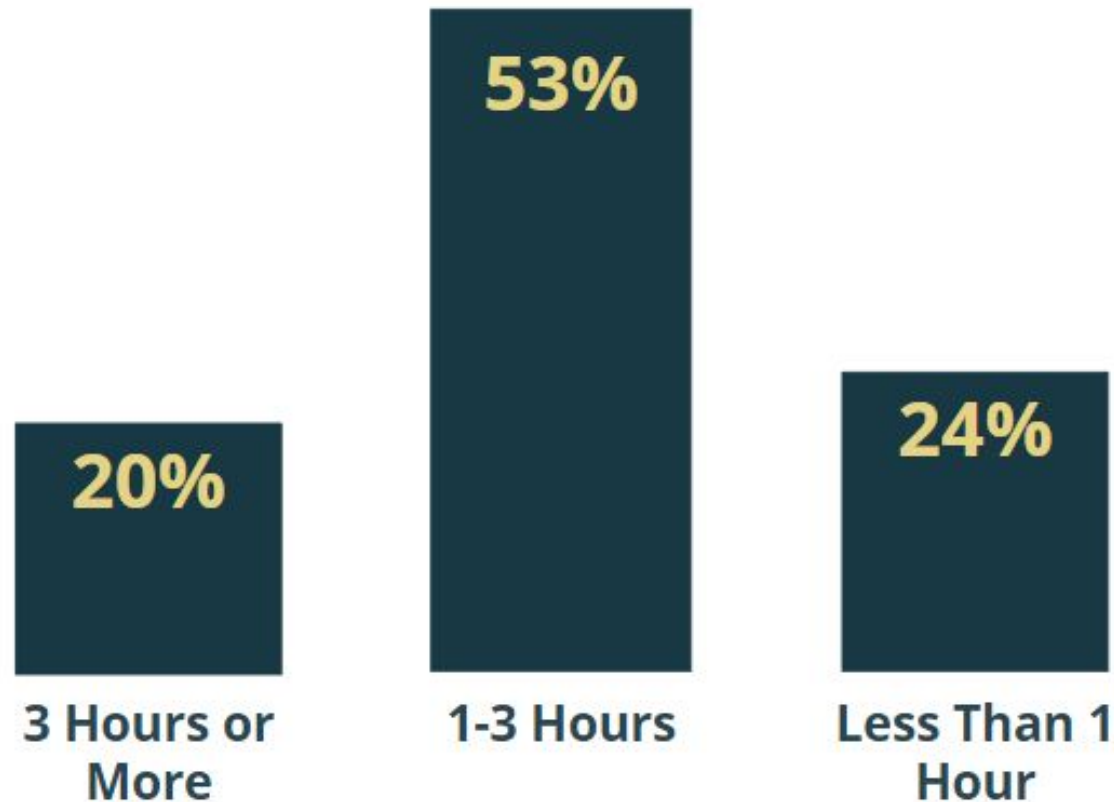
Even providing basic necessities was a concern for many parents.

“How concerned were you about being able to have enough food in the house for your family during the coronavirus outbreak and resulting school closures?”



Parents spent a lot of time helping their kids with schoolwork during the spring shutdowns.

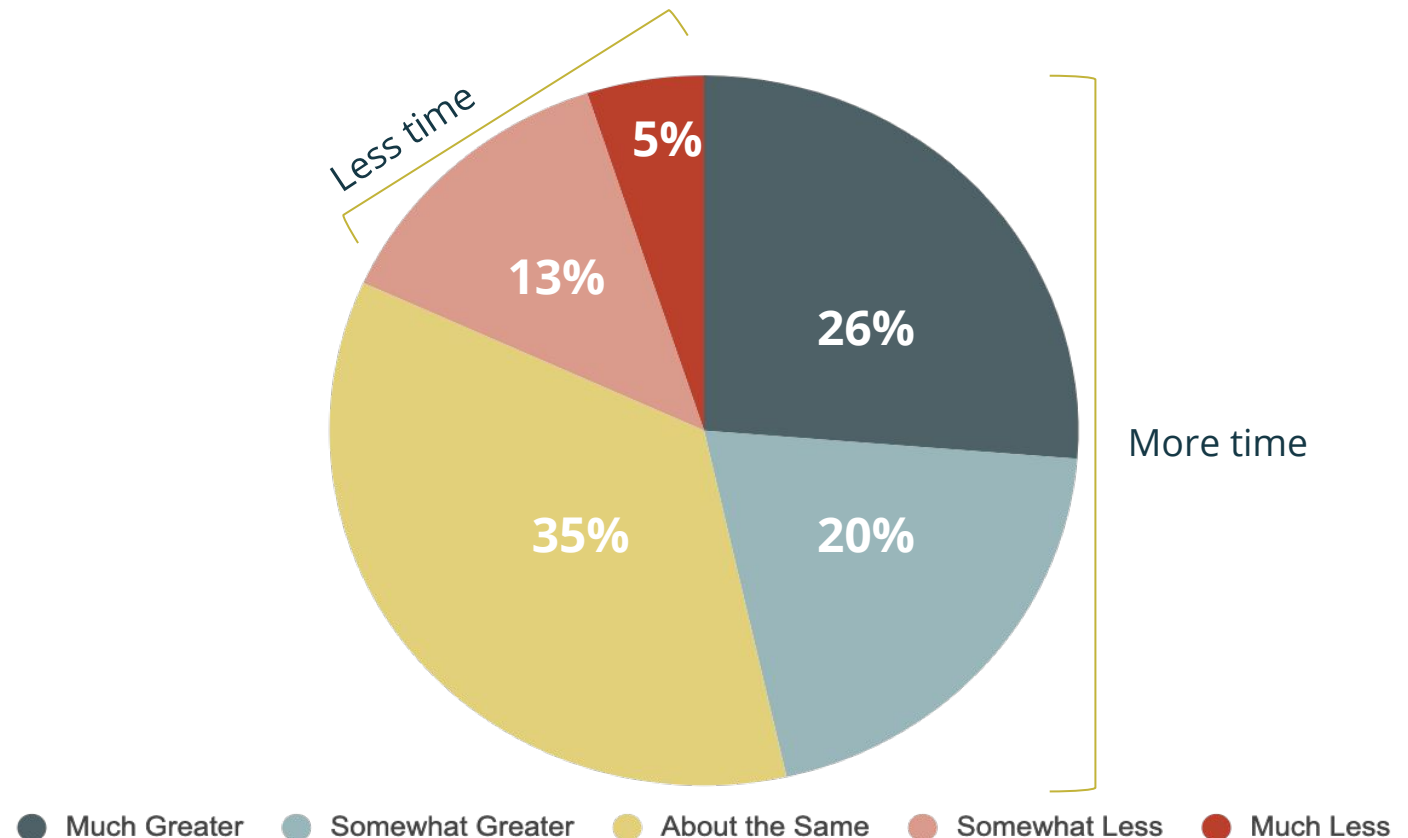
“Generally speaking, how much time would you say YOU spent helping or supporting your child's schoolwork during the average school day during the coronavirus outbreak this spring?”



Almost half of parents spent more time helping their children with schoolwork during the shutdowns.

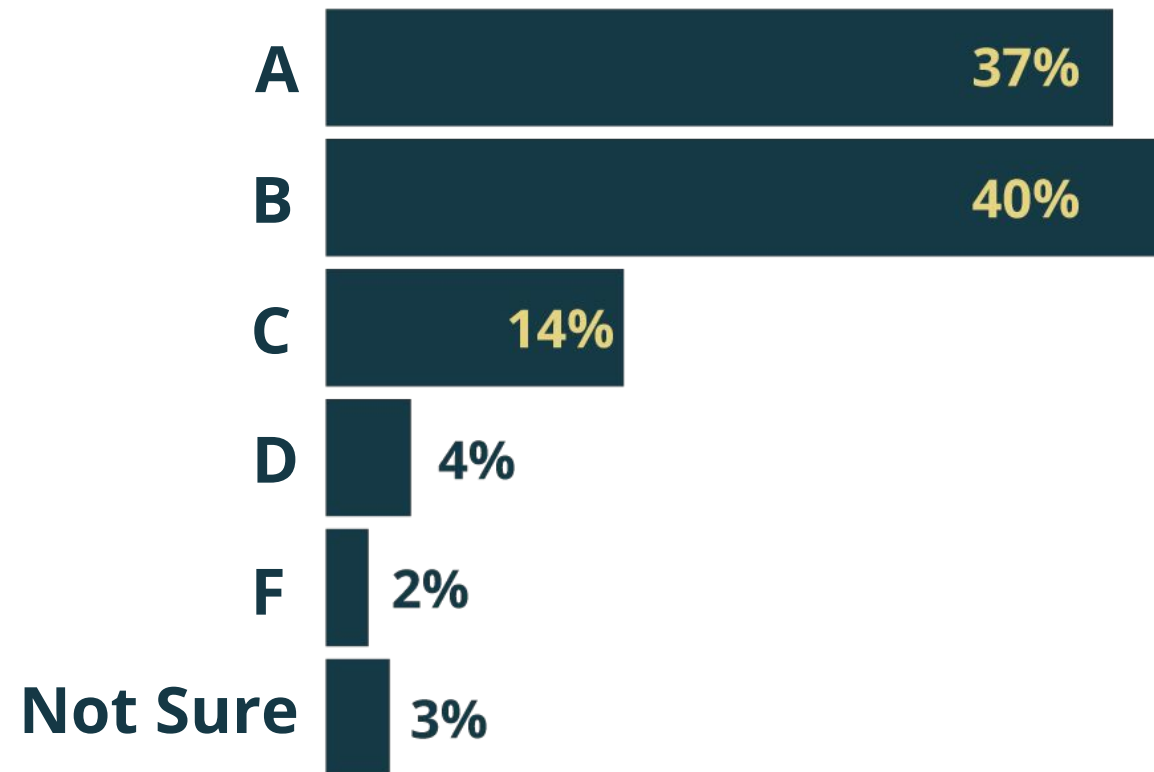
"Compared to the fall semester before the coronavirus outbreak, do you think the amount of time you spent helping your child with their schoolwork was less than or greater than normal or was it about the same?"

A plurality of parents (46%) report spending more time helping their children during the shutdowns than before. Slightly fewer (35%) report spending about the same amount of time. Very few (18%) spent less.



Despite pandemic-related challenges, most parents think their children's schools responded well.

"Generally speaking, what letter grade would you give your child's school for the job they did handling the coronavirus outbreak this past school year?"



Parents say some aspects of distance learning went better than they anticipated.

“What areas do you feel your online distance learning was BETTER than expected?”

Category	%	Sample Responses
Virtual Interactions	25%	Interactions with teachers/access to instructor One-on-one help/tutoring Face time class/virtual class/Zoom class meetings Receive feedback/answered questions/communication/instructions Interact with students/classmates
Learning Ability	21%	Learning/ability to learn (non specific) Quality of learning/learning new things/learning a lot Range of activities/use of different technology platforms/access to apps and websites Video lessons/live lessons
Work Ethic Acquired	16%	More focused/less distracted/able to stay on track Work at their own pace/can take their time Child didn't need much help/could do it on their own Responsibility/child became more responsible
Other	34%	Better than expected/liked it/worked well (general) Easy to do/expected it to be harder/easy to understand Protection from getting sick/coronavirus/keeping me child safe Adaptability of teachers/putting things together at short notice

When it comes to online distance learning, a lack of support is the area parents are most likely to say was worse than expected.

“What areas do you feel your online distance learning was WORSE than expected?”

Category	%	Sample Responses
Lack of Support	46%	No interaction with teacher (non specific) Unhelpful teachers/no assistance from teacher/no guidance Assignments not properly displayed/lack of explanation/work was unclear
Learning Ability Concerns	40%	Not enough work/not challenging enough Lack of focus/bored/child didn't want to listen Didn't learn/not much learning happening (non specific) Not structured/lack of structure More work/lots of homework
Other Concerns	22%	Worse than expected/hard to do (general) Hard on parents/parents aren't teachers Technology concerns/problems uploading work



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UPCOMING EDUCATION DECISIONS

MAIN TAKEAWAYS

1

Overall, parents of all demographic groups are very concerned their children will become sick with COVID-19 if they return to school in the fall.

While there are some differences between groups, this is true across racial lines, whether a child attends public or private school, and across the political spectrum. Dads and moms are equally concerned as well.

2

Nonetheless, many parents are comfortable sending their children back to school. Differences in comfort level between demographic groups are stark.

Demographic groups are considerably more split on how comfortable they are about sending their children back than about how concerned they are about their children contracting COVID-19.

Republicans are more comfortable than Democrats or Independents, and white parents are more comfortable than African American or Hispanic parents.

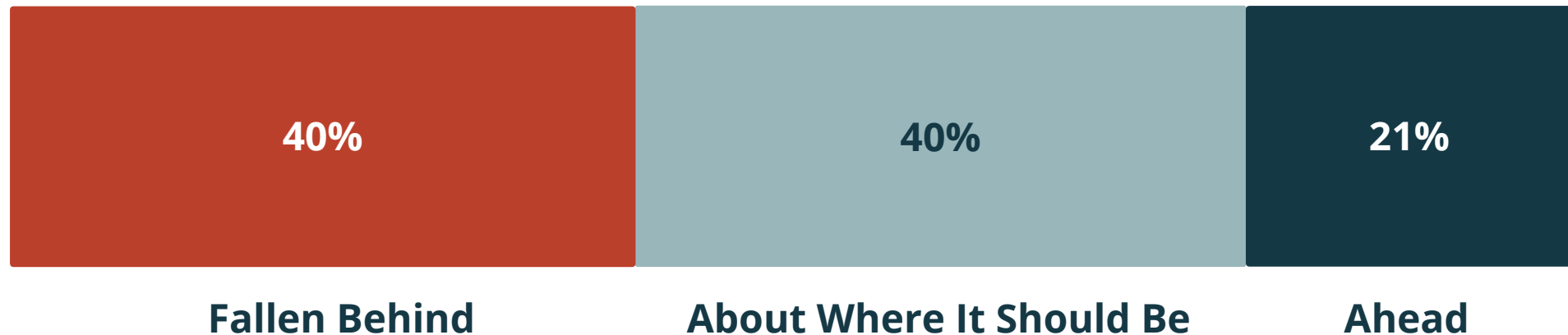
3

Parents report more confidence in schools' ability to enforce some policies than others.

Parents have relatively high levels of confidence in policies that can be controlled by school staff (e.g., sanitation procedures or transitioning to distance learning). They are less confident in the policies that require student participation, like getting students to wash their hands or socially distance regularly.

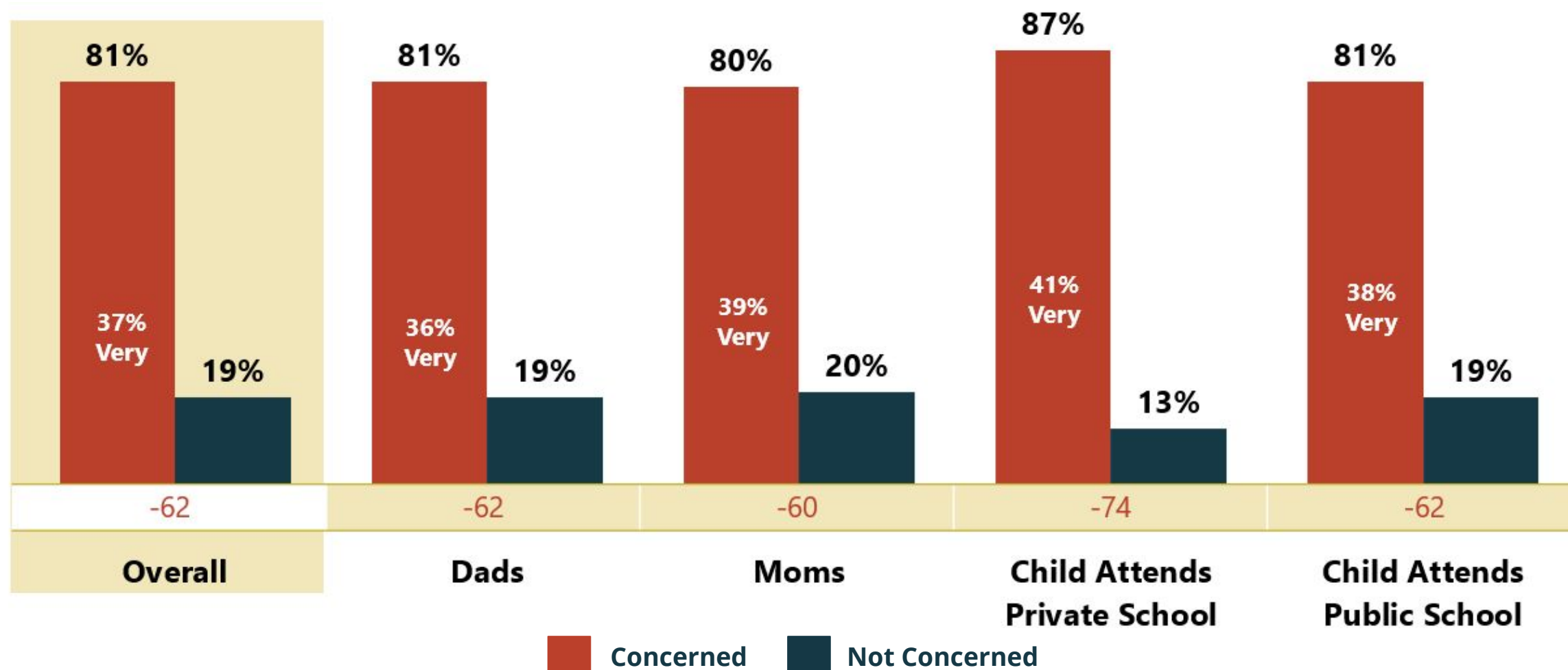
More parents say their children are falling behind where they should be academically.

“All in all, as a result of the coronavirus, do you feel like your child's academic progress has fallen behind, is ahead of where it would have been normally, or about where it should be?”



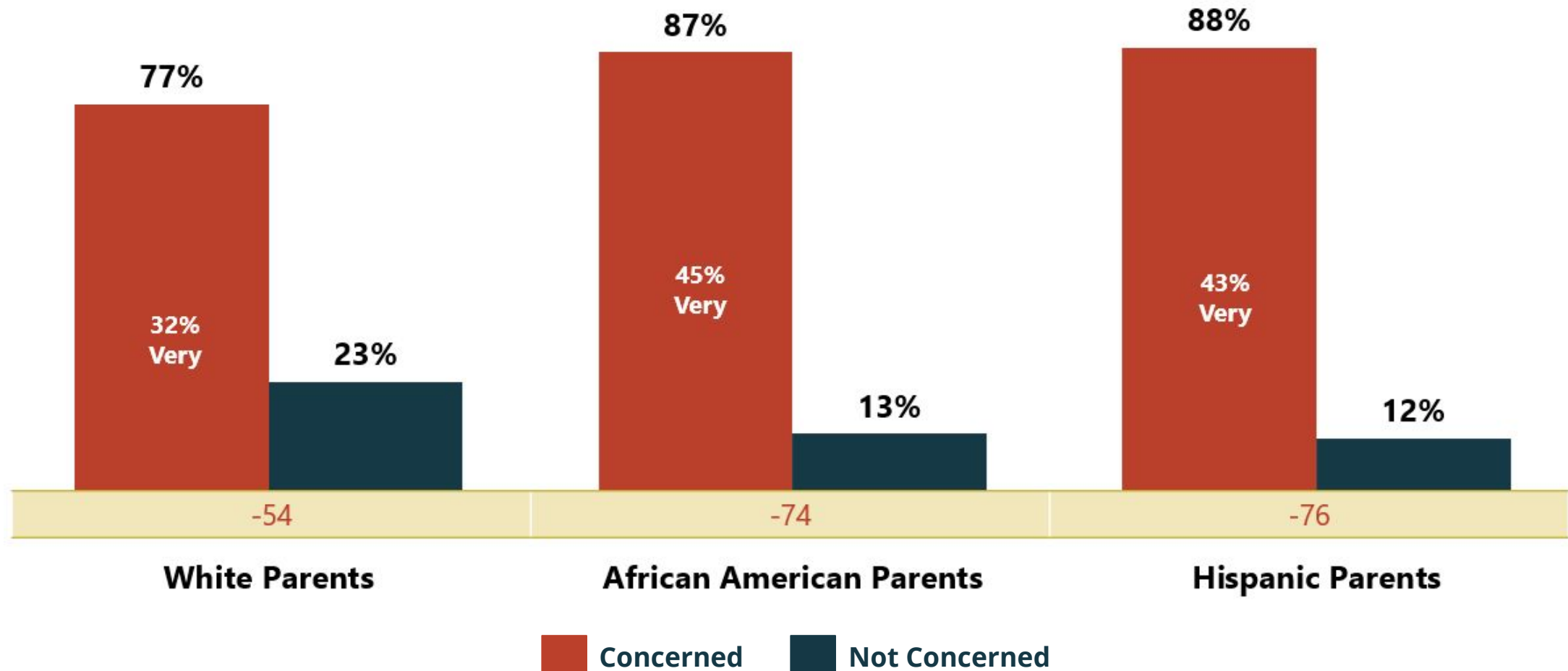
Moms and dads have an equal level of concern about their children becoming infected if schools open.

“If schools do open for the new school year, how concerned are you that your child will get infected with the coronavirus while at school?”



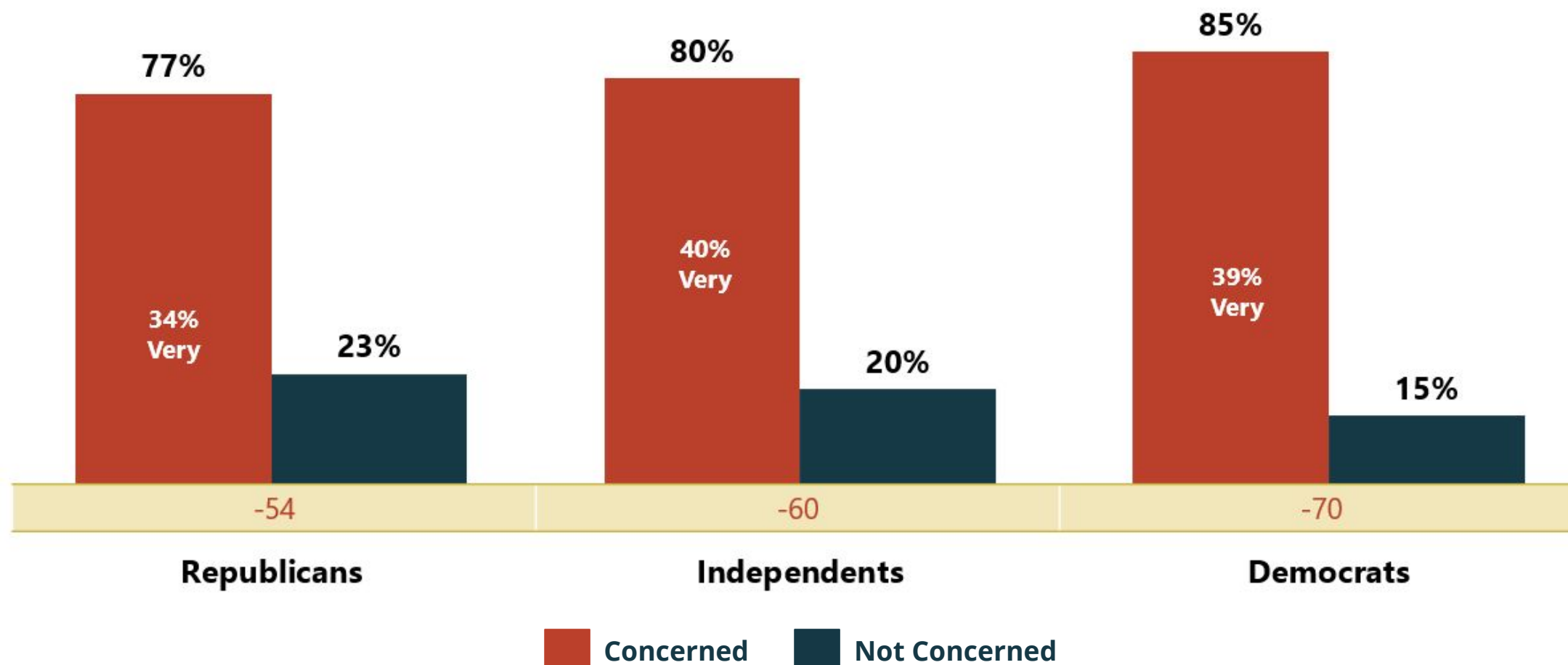
Parents are concerned about the risk of infection across racial lines. African American and Hispanic parents are more concerned than white parents.

Infection Concern by Race



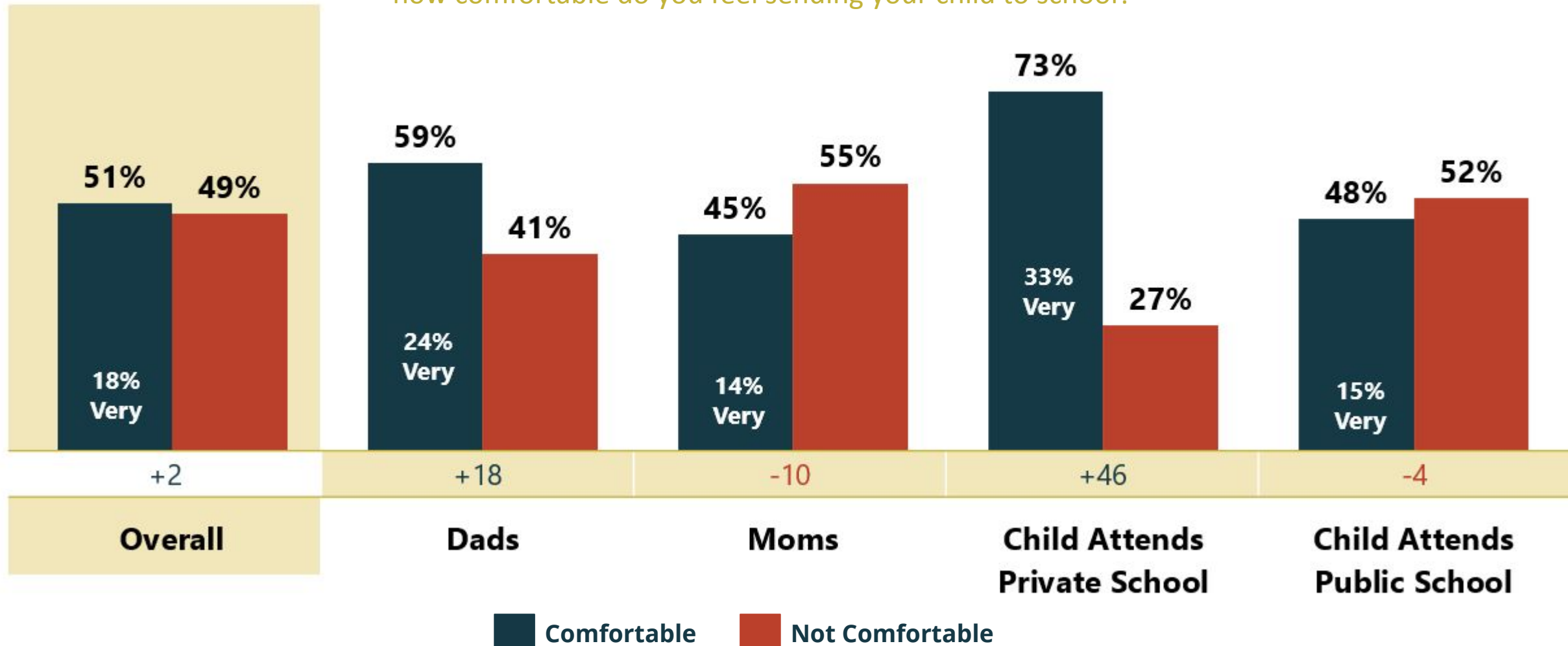
The concern over children becoming infected at school is shared across party lines.

Infection Concern by Party



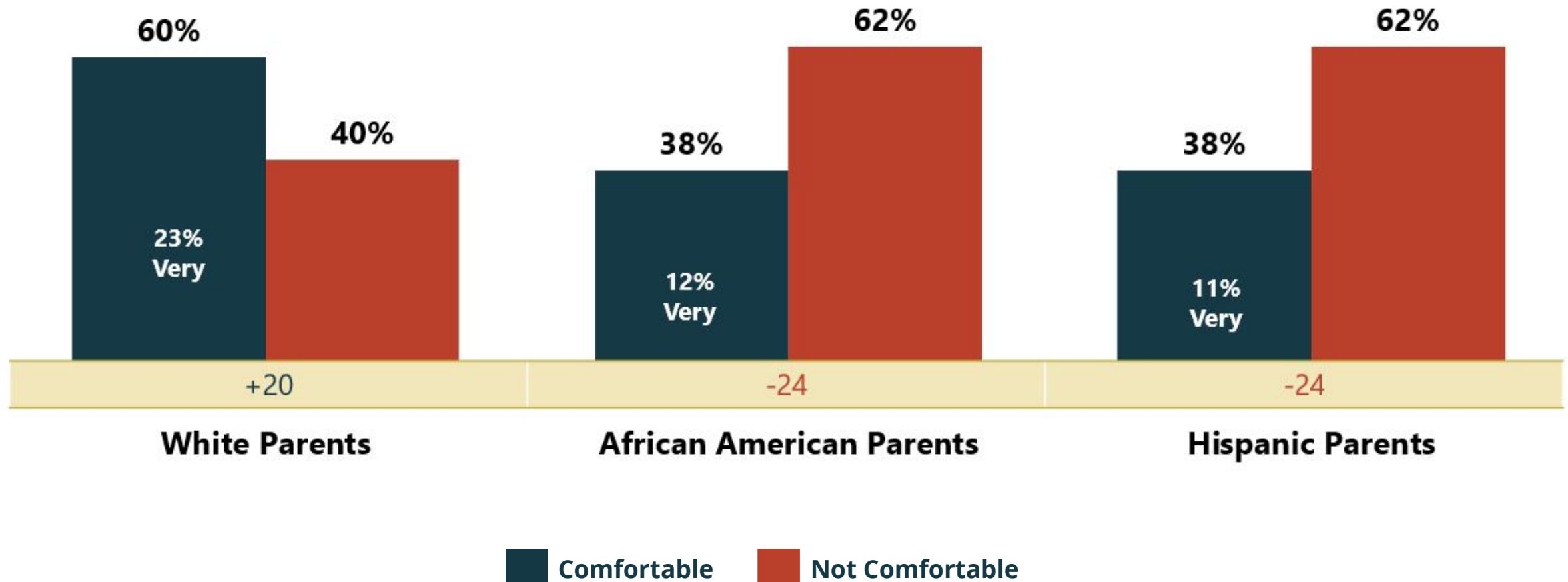
Families with children attending private schools are significantly more comfortable than those with kids in public schools.

“If your child's school decides to open as scheduled and operate normally for the new school year, how comfortable do you feel sending your child to school?”



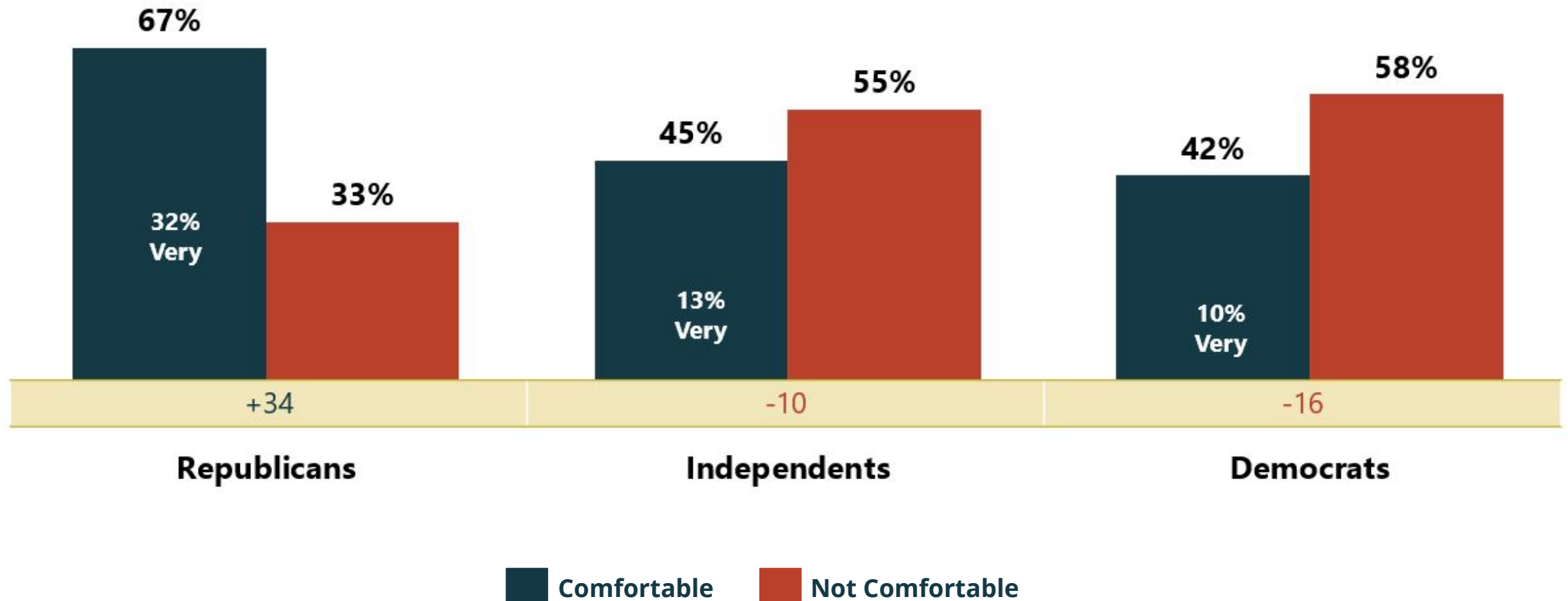
White parents are more comfortable sending their kids back to school than African American or Hispanic parents.

Comfortable Returning to School by Ethnicity



Republicans feel far more comfortable returning their kids to school than Independents or Democrats.

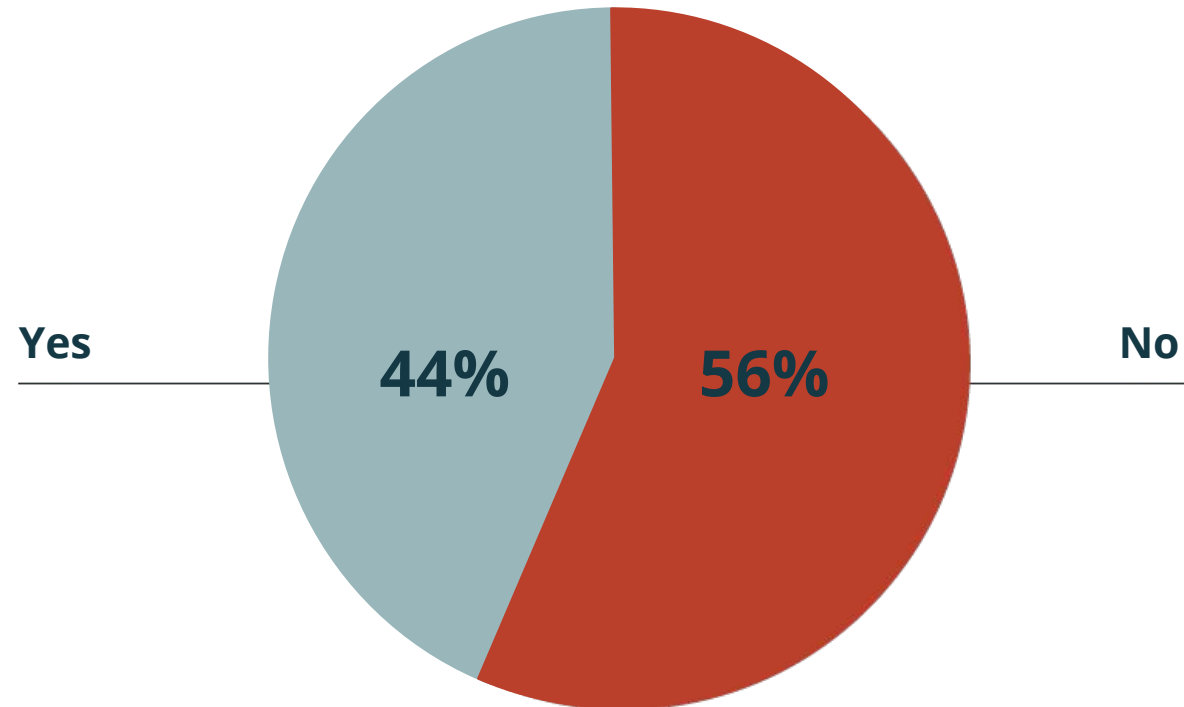
Comfortable Returning to School by Party



Over half of parents say they have not received a clear plan of action for the next school year.

"Has your child's school shared with you a clear plan of action for the next school year?"

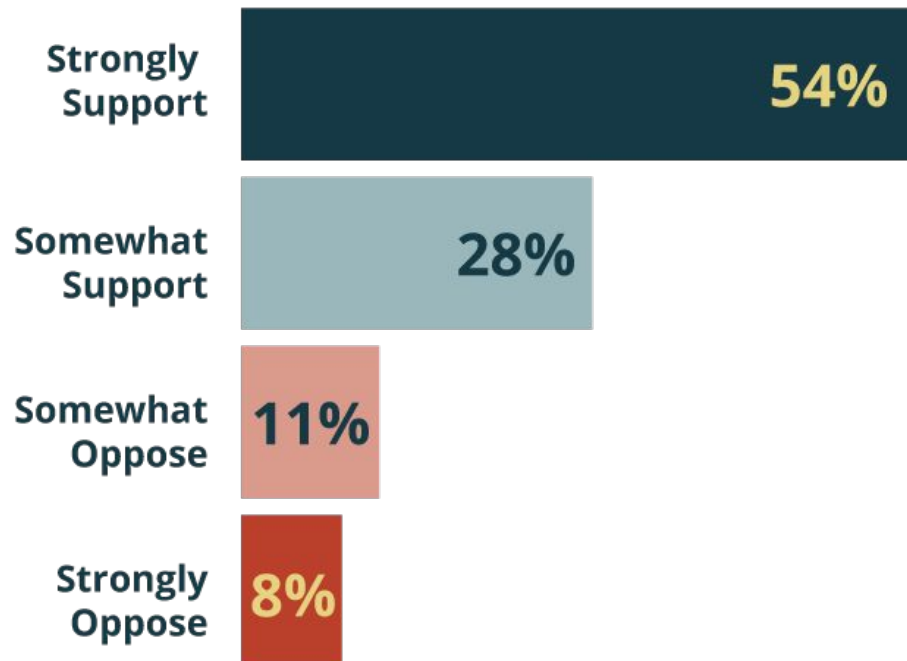
As parents try to decide what to do about their children's education in the fall, many are lacking vital information. 56% of parents say their child's school has not shared a clear plan of action for the next school year.



Parents strongly support requiring teachers and students to wear masks at school.

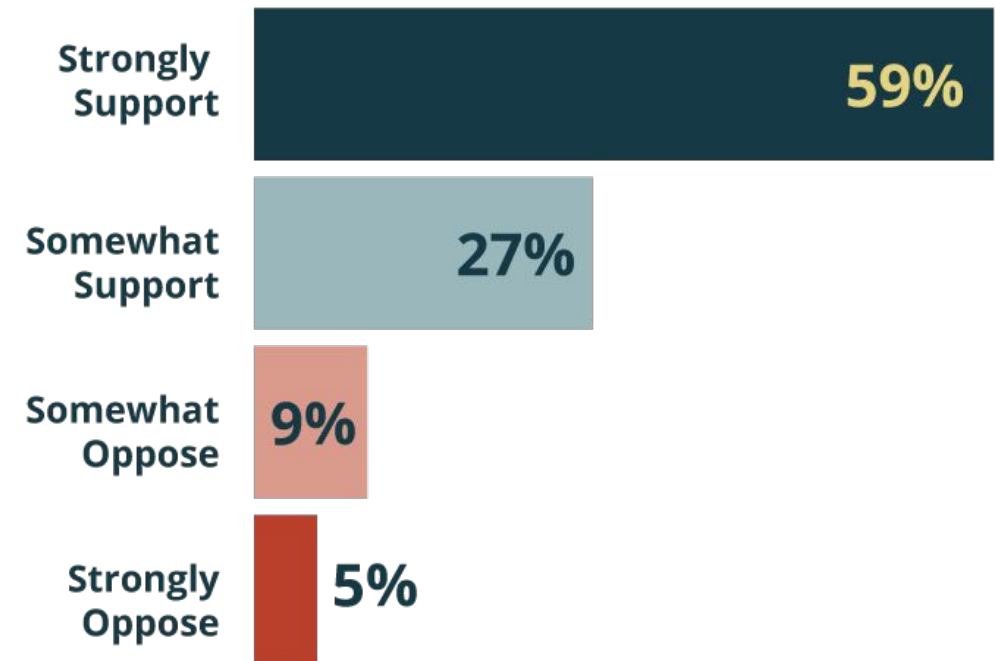
“Would you support or oppose your child's school requiring all **students** to wear a mask while at school?”

Students



“Would you support or oppose your child's school requiring all **teachers and staff** to wear a mask while at school?”

Teachers & Staff



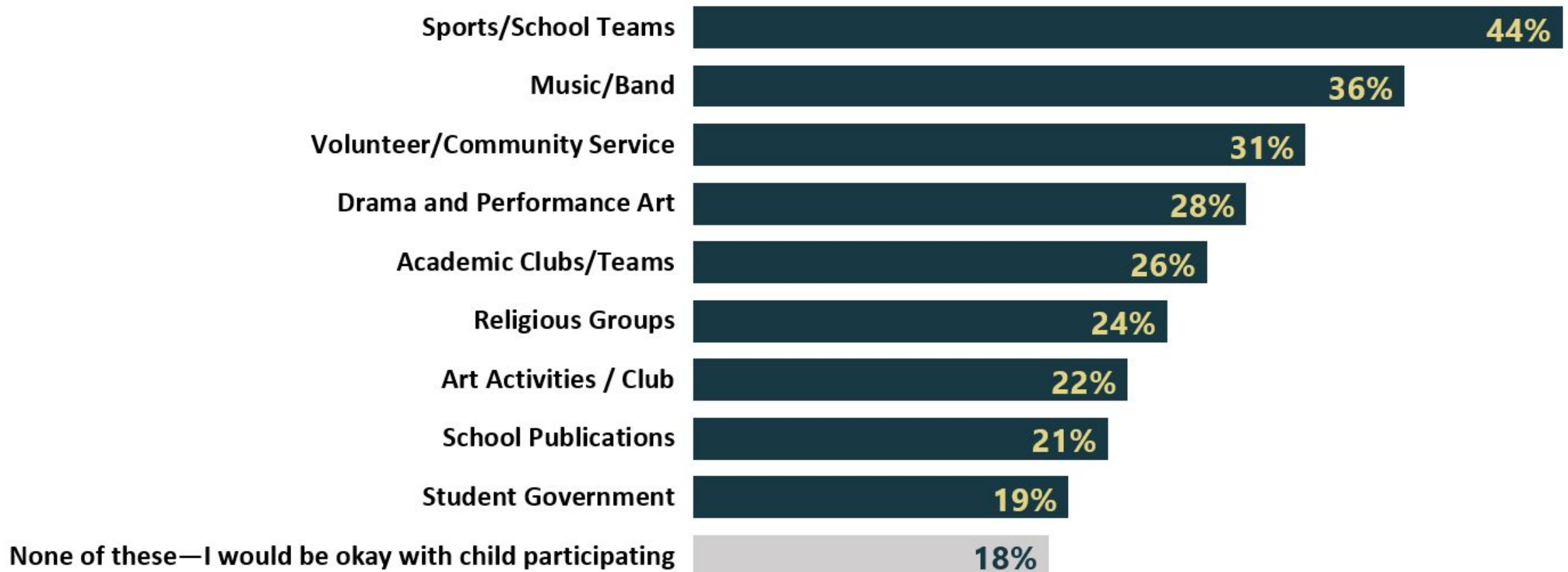
Parents are fairly confident schools will be able to enforce distancing and other safety policies.

“How much confidence do you have that your school will be able to successfully implement COVID-19 precautions?”

Policies	Great Deal of Confidence	Fair Amount of Confidence	Not Too Much Confidence	Not Confident At All
Put into place sanitation procedures that keep schools clean and disinfected	40%	43%	11%	5%
Transition quickly to full-time remote, distance learning if schools have to close	34%	44%	15%	7%
Get students to wash their hands regularly and often	34%	37%	21%	8%
Get students to wear face coverings or masks while in school	29%	36%	24%	11%
Get students to follow social distancing restrictions in the classroom	28%	35%	25%	12%
Get students to follow social distancing restrictions outside the classroom while at school	29%	29%	25%	17%

Some parents do not want their children to participate in some or all extracurricular activities.

“If your child's school opens normally for the upcoming school year, are there any of these extracurricular activities that you would NOT want your child to participate in out of concern for their health and wellbeing?”



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