



# FLUENT FAMILY WELLBEING STUDY

RESEARCH REPORT FOR THE JED FOUNDATION - DECEMBER 2020



FLUENT  
RESEARCH

# Introduction

This report presents research findings from the Fluent study on the wellbeing of families during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey addressed two key research questions:

1. What impact has the pandemic have on the wellbeing of families?
2. How do families cope with the effects of the pandemic?

This report focuses on questions designed to support JED's mission, including children's emotional and mental health challenges during the pandemic.

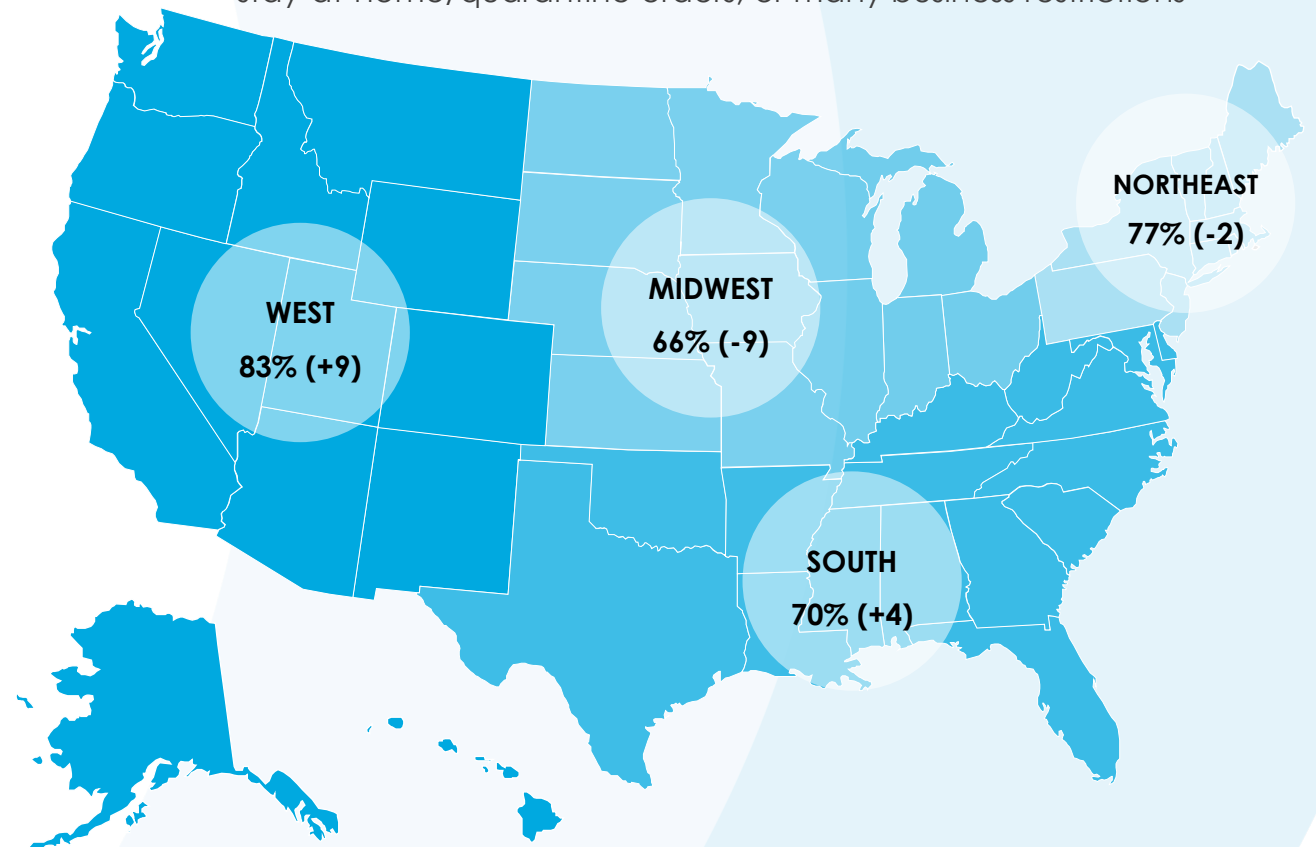
The survey was conducted online among a national sample of 2,074 US residents, ages 18 or older, who are parents or guardians of children ages 2 – 18. In addition, 899 teens ages 13-18 from these households completed a separate section of the survey. Figures for race/ethnicity were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population.

The survey was conducted September 16 - October 23, 2020.

# The weight of COVID-19 remains heavy.

Much like in the spring, three in four families (74%) were living (at the time of the survey), in an area with some sort of restrictions, including stay-at-home orders with only essential businesses open (14%), or many (23%), or some (37%) restrictions or limits places on businesses, stores, restaurants, etc.

% of Families Living with Government-mandated stay-at-home/quarantine orders, or many business restrictions



Q70 Which of the following best describes the state of the coronavirus/ Covid-19 outbreak in your community right now? (n=2074)

# The pandemic has disrupted family and school life for children.

## Many families have been directly impacted by the pandemic.

- 50% of parents know a family member or friend who has had Covid-19.
- 47% of families have experienced job loss, furloughs or salary reductions due to the pandemic.
- During the prior week, 75% of parents have tried to comfort their child to address their worries about Covid-19.

## School has been disrupted, bringing its own concerns.

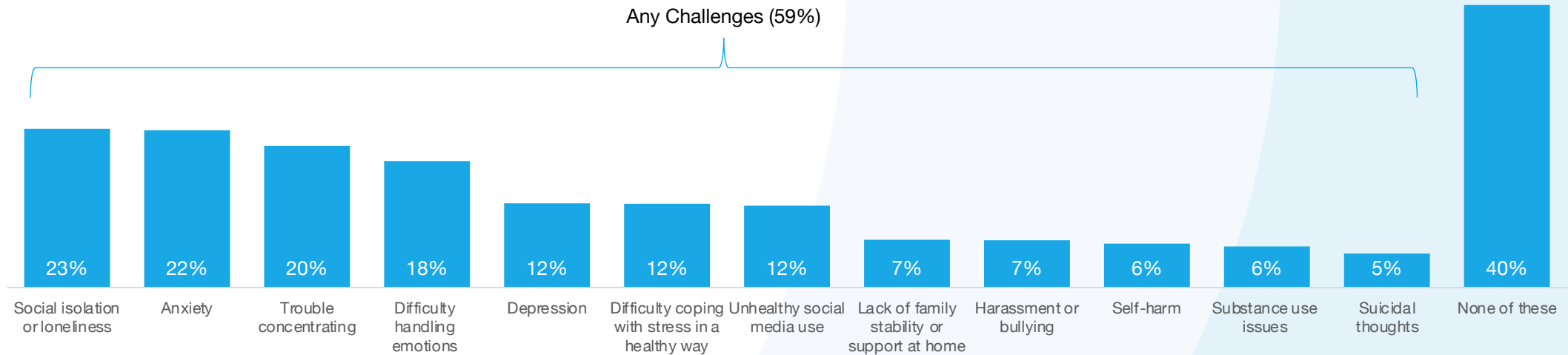
- Two-thirds of children were **not** attending school in-person full-time at the time of the survey: 47% were attending remote learning full-time and 20% were attending blended remote/in-person.
  - Three in 10 (31%) were attending school in-person full-time.
- More parents were worried about the risks of contracting Covid-19 while attending school in-person than were worried about their child's emotional wellbeing from not attending school in-person.
  - 53% of parents are extremely/very worried about the risk of their child contracting coronavirus/ Covid-19 if they attend in-person instruction.
  - 36% of parents are extremely/very worried about their child's emotional wellbeing if school's not open for full-time instruction

# Overall, six in 10 parents report that their child has experienced mental or emotional health challenges in the past month.

## Most commonly social isolation/loneliness, anxiety, and trouble concentrating.

Five percent of parents report that their child has had suicidal thoughts in the past month. Eight percent of parents of 9-12 year-olds report that their child has had suicidal thoughts in the past month, the highest level among the age groups.

### Mental or Emotional Challenges Child Experienced in Past Month



Q25. Which of the following mental or emotional challenges would you say your child has experienced in the past month? Please select all that apply. (Base: All qualified parents)

# Parents of the youngest and oldest children are the least likely to report that their children have experienced any mental or emotional health challenges in the past month.

- 46% of parents of 2-4 year-olds and 55% of parents of 16-18 year-olds say their child has experienced such challenges, compared to more than six in 10 of parents of 5-15 year-olds.
- Eight percent of parents of 9-12 year-olds report that their child has had suicidal thoughts in the past month, the highest level among the age groups.
- Children who experience mental or emotional challenges are more likely than others to have also experience with the following: a family member or friend having COVID (72% vs. 45%) or a parent has lost a job or had salary reduced due to the pandemic (72% vs. 47%).

	Age of Child				
	2-4 years	5-8 years	9-12 years	13-15 years	16-18 years
	250	375	376	564	250
<b>Any challenges [NET]</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>55%</b>
• Social isolation or loneliness	18%	21%	21%	27%	21%
• Anxiety	12%	20%	21%	27%	25%
• Trouble concentrating	12%	20%	21%	22%	22%
• Difficulty handling emotions	13%	21%	21%	19%	14%
• Depression	8%	8%	11%	14%	16%
• Difficulty coping with stress in a healthy way	8%	13%	9%	15%	12%
• Unhealthy social media use	6%	13%	12%	13%	12%
• Lack of family stability or support at home	7%	11%	8%	6%	4%
• Harassment or bullying	8%	7%	7%	7%	6%
• Self-harm	7%	9%	7%	6%	3%
• Substance use issues	5%	8%	7%	6%	4%
• Suicidal thoughts	5%	6%	8%	3%	4%
<b>None of these</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>44%</b>

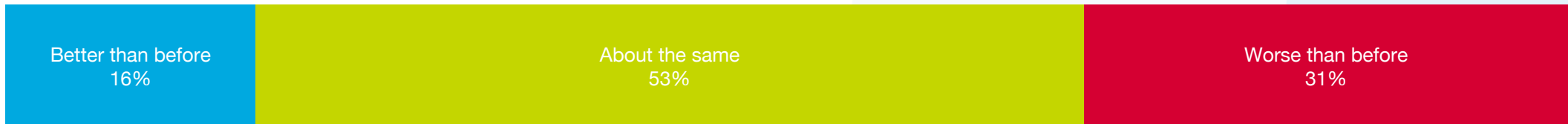
Q25. Which of the following mental or emotional challenges would you say your child has experienced in the past month? Please select all that apply. (Base: All qualified parents)



# Three in 10 parents report that their child's emotional or mental health has been worse since the onset of the pandemic, compared to 53% who say that it is about the same.

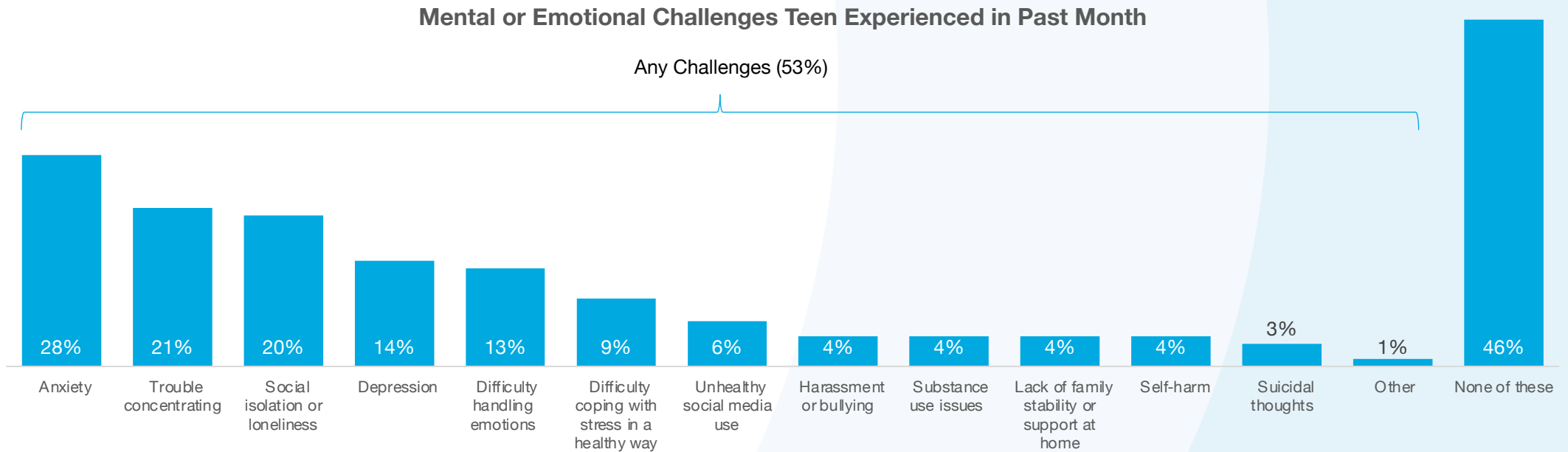
Parents of 13-15 year-olds are the most likely to report that their child's emotional/mental health is worse compared to before the outbreak (36%), while parents of 2-4 year-olds are the least likely to report that their child's emotional/mental health is worse (24%).

## Child's Current Emotional/Mental Health Compared to Before the COVID-19 Outbreak



Overall, half of teens report that they have experienced mental or emotional health challenges in the past month, most commonly anxiety, trouble concentration and social isolation/loneliness.

Three percent of teens report that they have had suicidal thoughts in the past month.

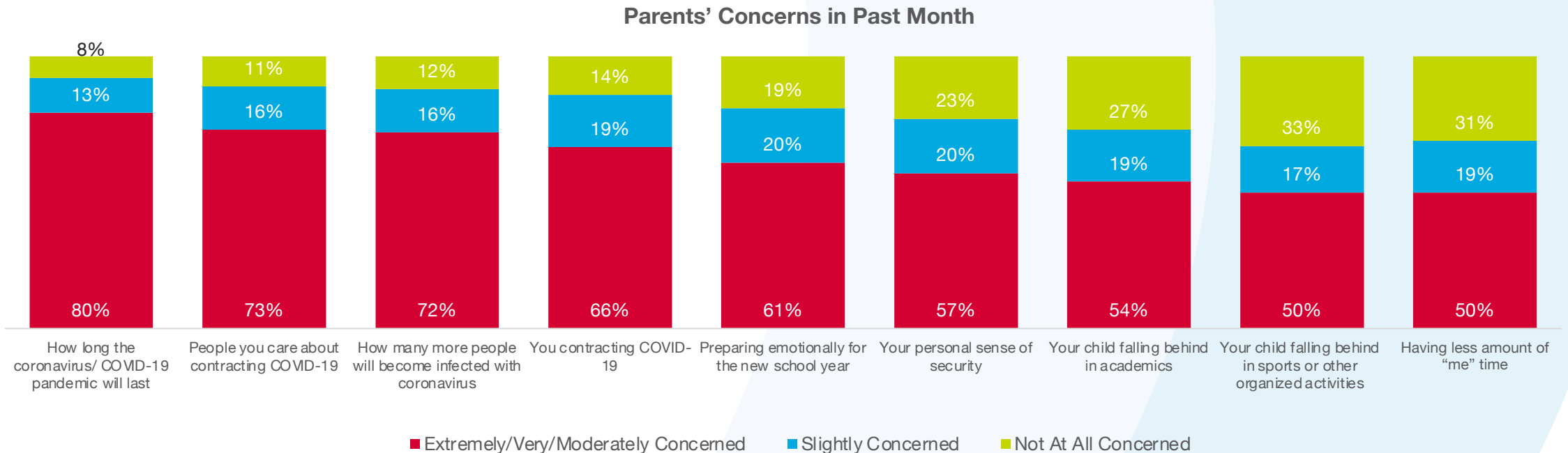


Q110. Which of the following mental or emotional challenges have you experienced in the past month? Please select all that apply. (Base: All qualified teens)



# Parents' top concerns are how long the pandemic will last, people they care about contracting COVID-19, and how many more people will become infected with the coronavirus.

More parents are concerned about preparing emotionally for the new school year than are concerned about their child falling behind in academics (61% vs. 54% at least moderately concerned)

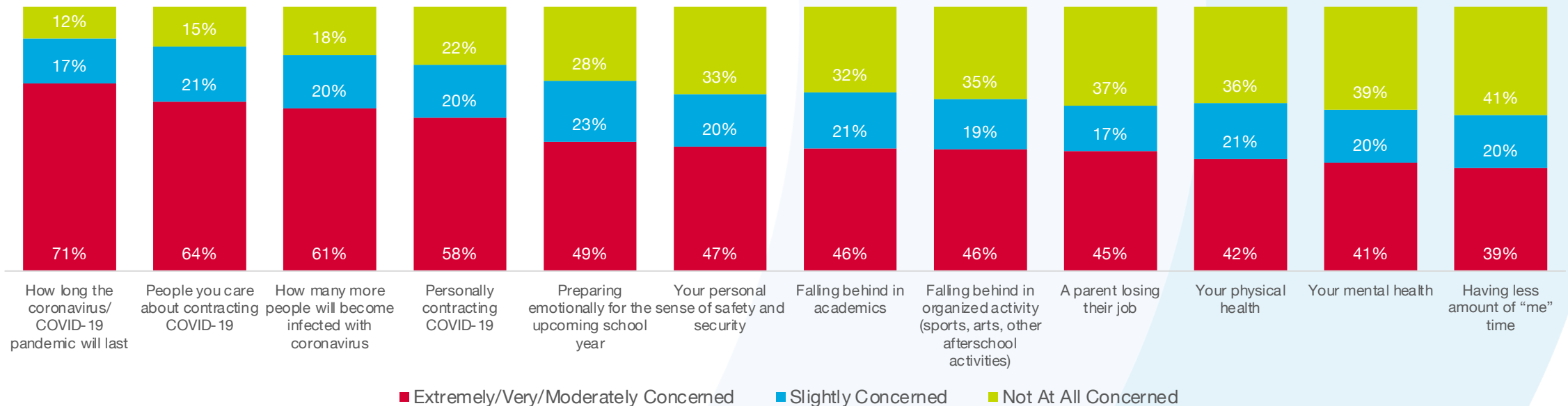


Q27. How much have you been concerned with the following in the past 30 days? 5-point scale (Base: All qualified parents)

# Teens' top concerns are how long the pandemic will last, with 71% at least moderately concerned.

The majority are also at least moderately concerned about people they care about contracting COVID, how many people will become infected and personally contracting COVID. Four in 10 teens are **not at all concerned** about their mental health.

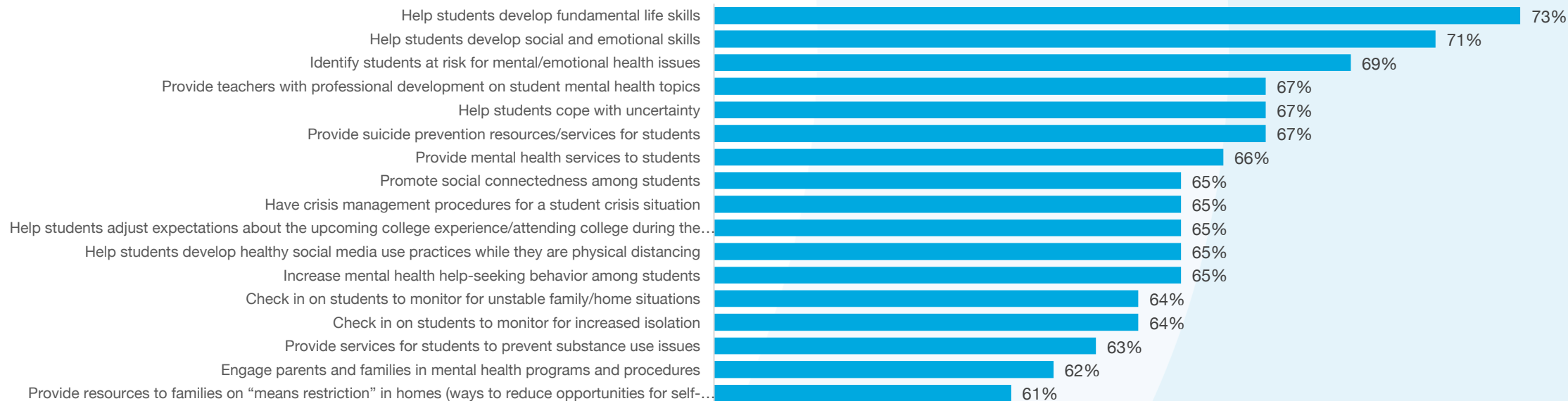
Teens' Concerns in Past Month



Q111. How much have you been concerned with the following in the past 30 days? 5-point scale (Base: All qualified teens)

Parents are most likely to say that it is absolutely essential or extremely important for schools to help students develop fundamental life skills, to develop social and emotional skills and to identify students at risk for mental/emotional health issues.

**Importance of School Efforts Related to Mental and Emotional Health  
(% Absolutely Essential/ Very Important)**



Q60. How important do you think it is for schools to do each of the following this school year? 5-point scale (Base: All qualified parents)



F L U E N T  
R E S E A R C H

Fluent is a consulting firm specializing in research that informs the development of public policy, educational programs, media and technology focused on children's education, health and wellbeing. We have applied rigorous and innovative research solutions in service of promoting children's access to and quality of education, and gender equality in the U.S. and in over 70 countries around the world.

Fluent Research  
845 Third Avenue, Sixth Floor  
New York, New York, 10022  
[www.fluentresearch.com](http://www.fluentresearch.com)

Research Lead  
Nellie Gregorian  
+1.646.701.2955  
[ngregorian@fluentresearch.com](mailto:ngregorian@fluentresearch.com)