

PARENT PANDEMIC PULSE SURVEY FALL 2020

REPORT OF FINDINGS



Overview

This report prepared for the Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA) is based on the second of four surveys distributed during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Fall of 2020. It sought to capture the experiences and perceptions of parents and caregivers of K-12 students during the first few weeks of back to school in the 2020-2021 school year during the pandemic.

Methods

This is report 2 of 4 being released on ASCA's parent voices during COVID-19 surveys. A total of 26,773 parents responded to ASCA's second survey, the Parent Pandemic Pulse Survey, conducted from mid-October to mid-November of 2020. We are using pseudonyms to represent parent voices.

Key Findings

- 86%** of parents reported that their children were back to learning face-to-face only.
- 77%** were happy with their children going back to school.
- 16%** found it more difficult than expected to be back in classrooms.
- 57%** of students were in a cohort model at school in Fall 2020.

-Nicola: "Teachers are stressed and I fear it's making school no longer fun and manageable for kids."

-Shaun: "Class size is so big and even bigger before COVID, don't know how to keep 2 meters distance for so many kids in one classroom"

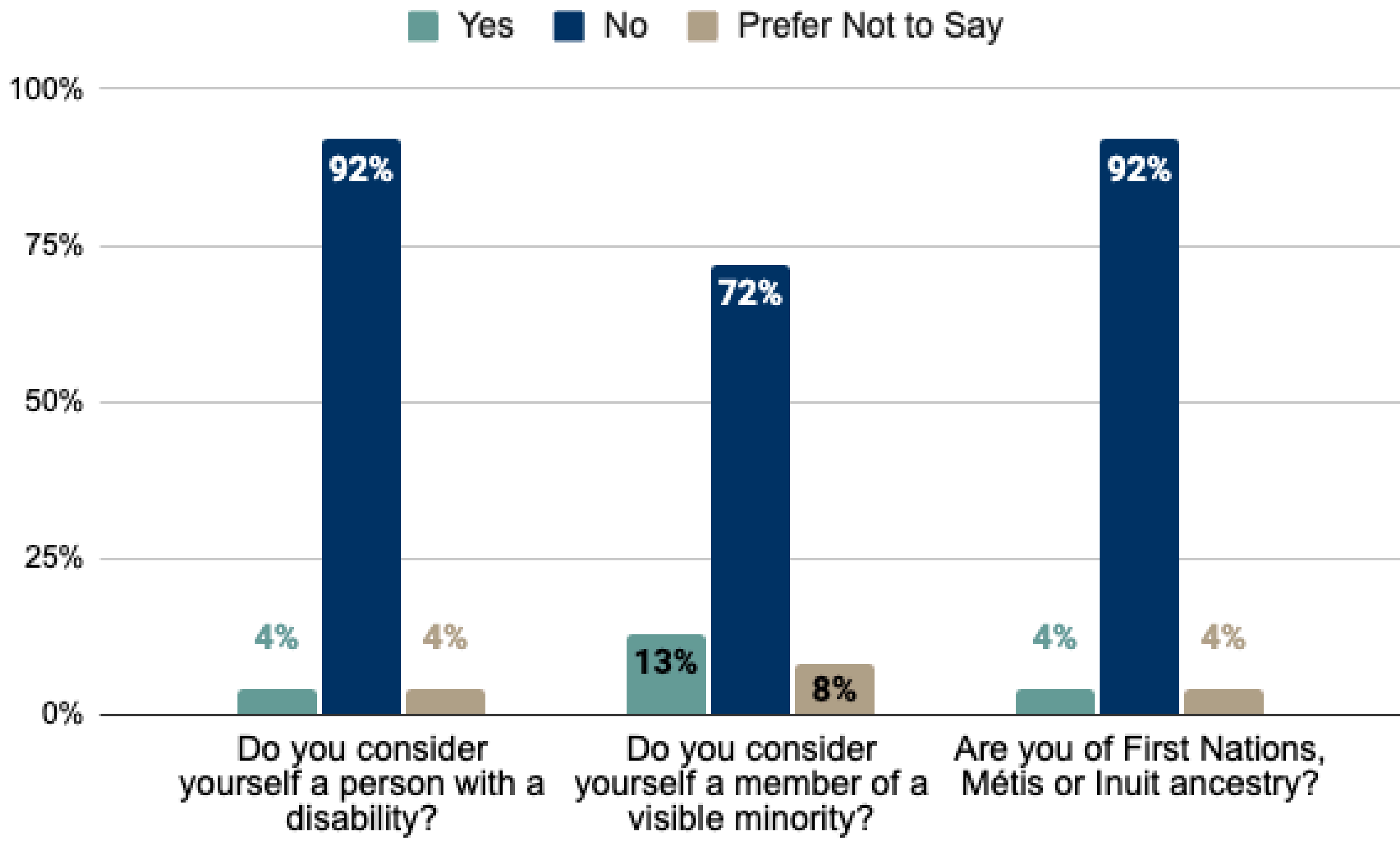
-Elizabeth: "All students (including IB, AP) should take online courses ASAP, before it is too late! Many schools keep losing teachers and students, so what is the point for keeping the school open???"

-Richard: "I think it is very important that we do all we can to ensure that students can remain in the classroom"

-Keith: "Should be face to face as online didn't work in the spring but their anxiety means they haven't actually made it to school yet"

-Melissa: "The fact that the students participate in extracurricular activities, mixing with others, does not give me a lot of confidence when it comes to preventing the spread of COVID-19."

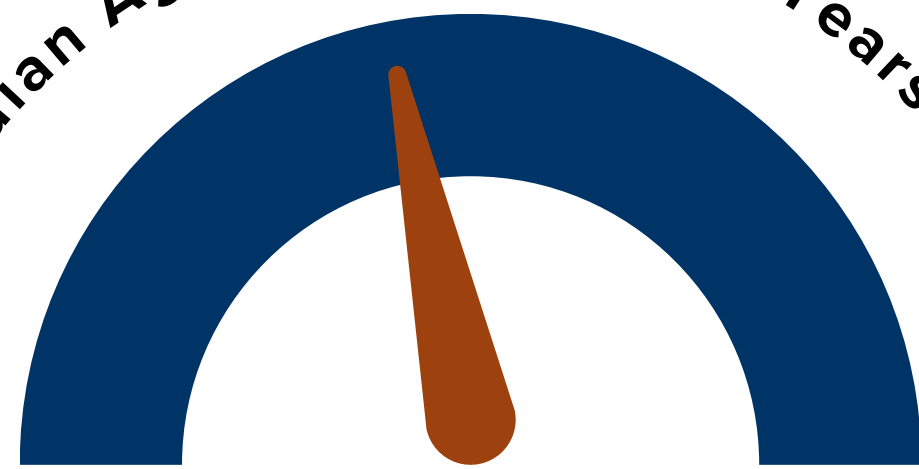
Demographics: Parents and Caregivers



**Average Household Income:
\$80,000-89,999**



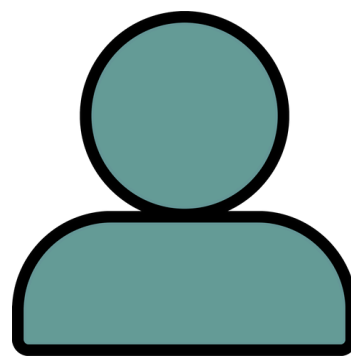
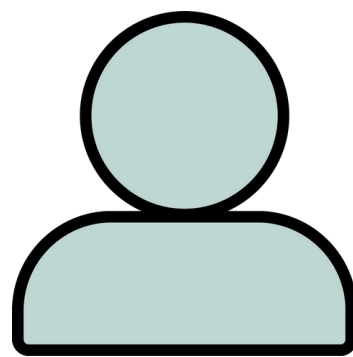
Median Age: Between 41-45 Years Old



How Do You Identify?

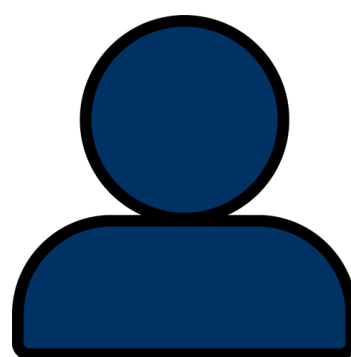
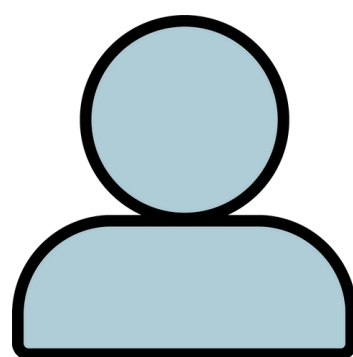
79% Female

18% Male



3% Prefer Not To Say

0.1% Transgender



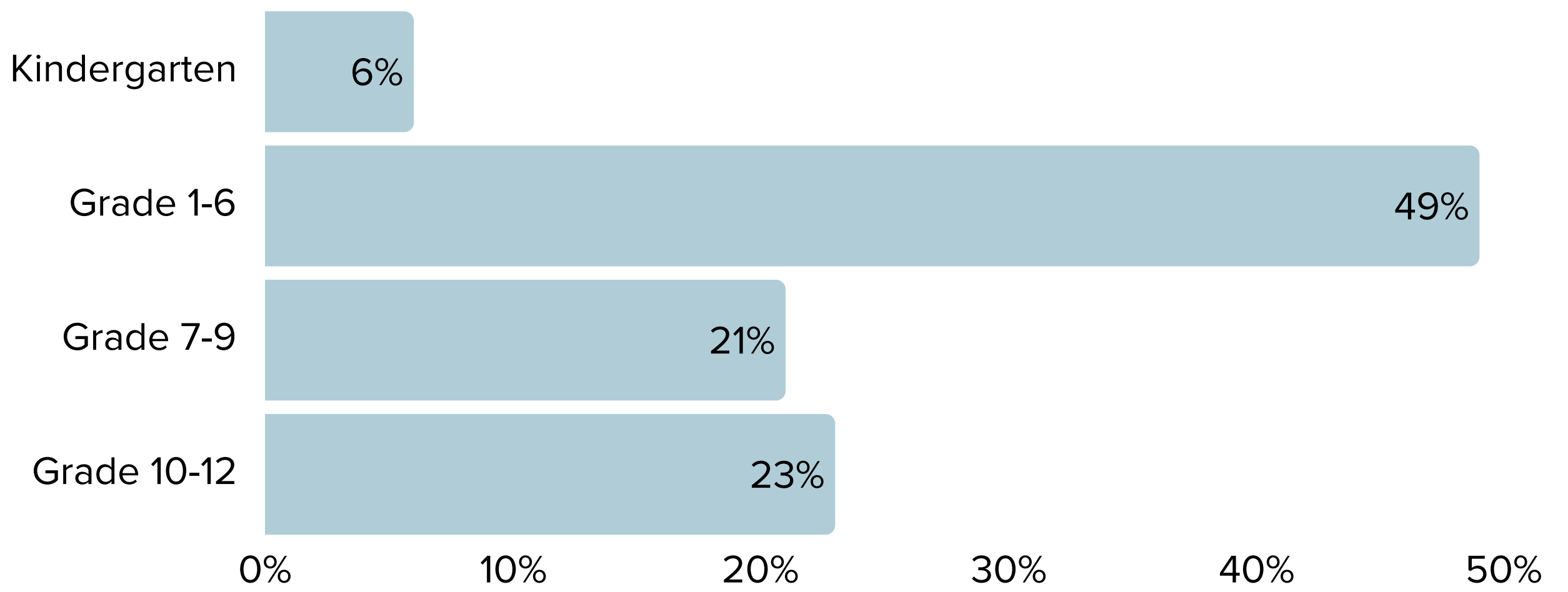
Location



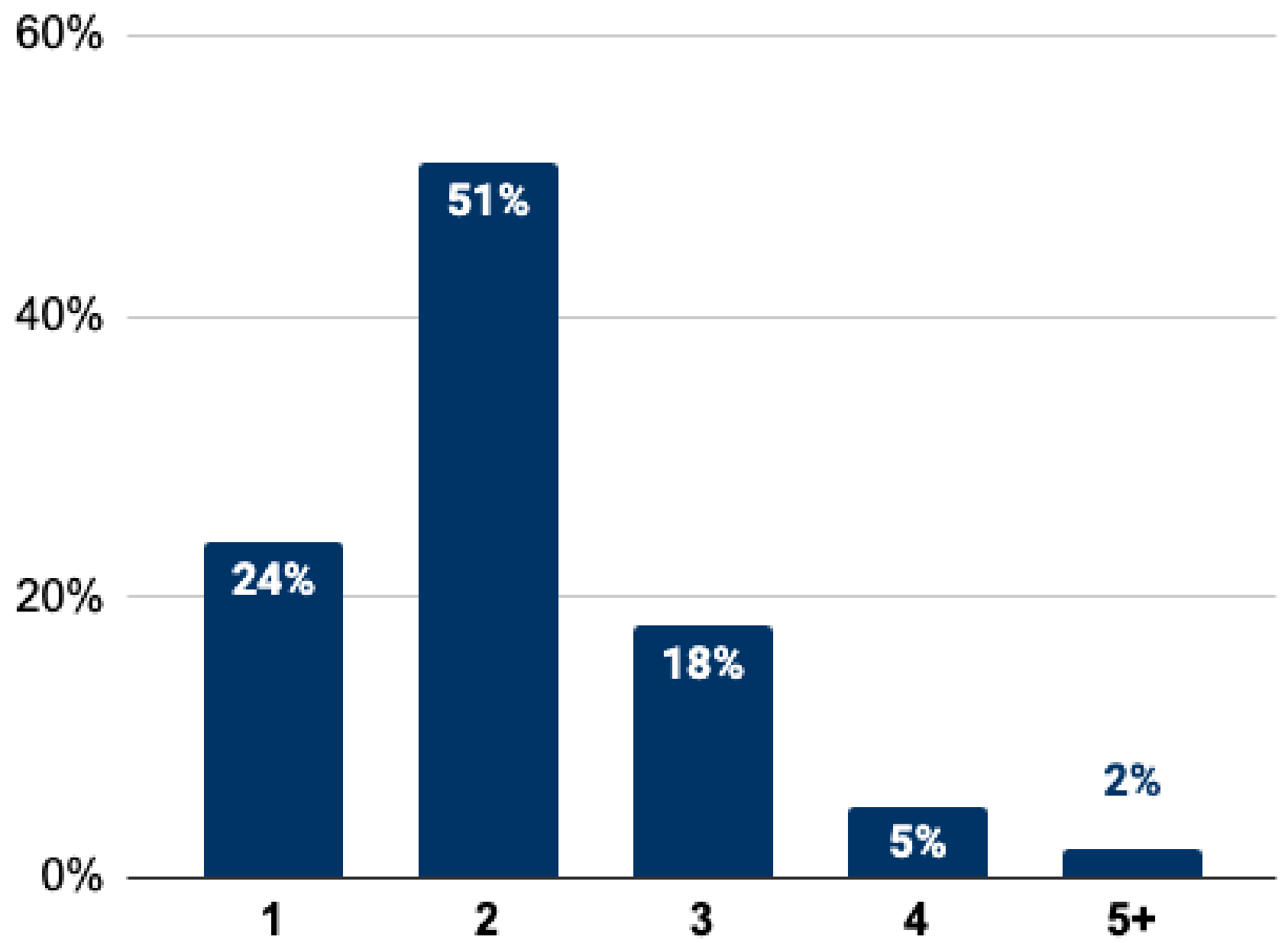
81% City
10% Town
9% Rural Area

Demographics: Students

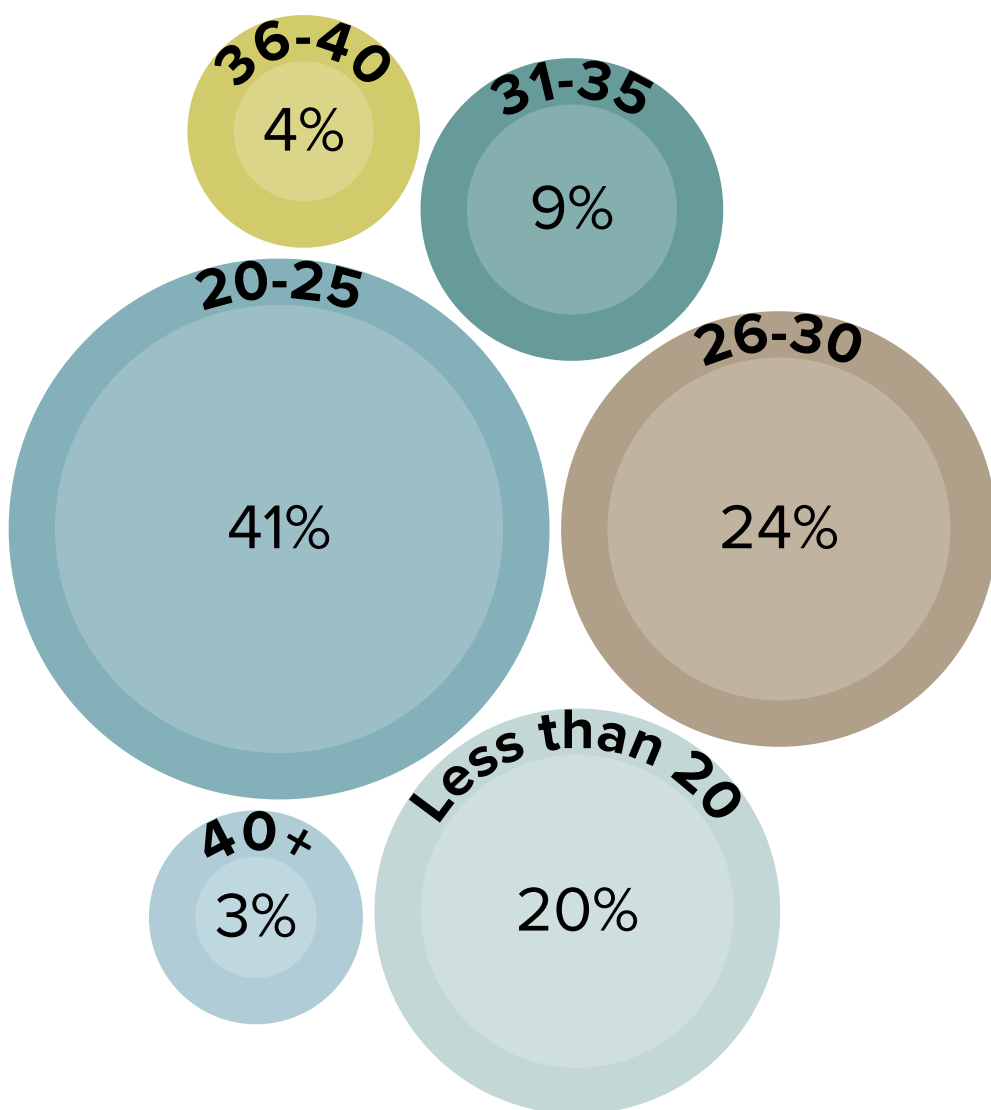
Child's Grade Level



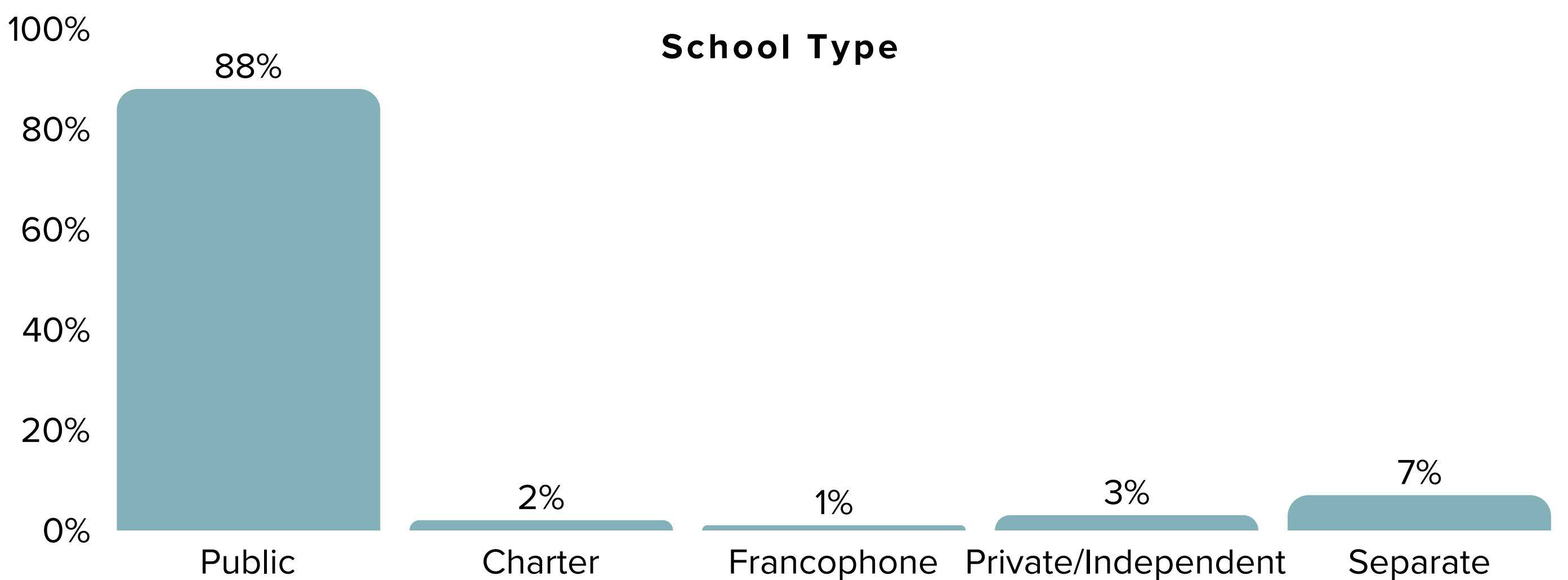
Number of Children in Household



Classroom Size

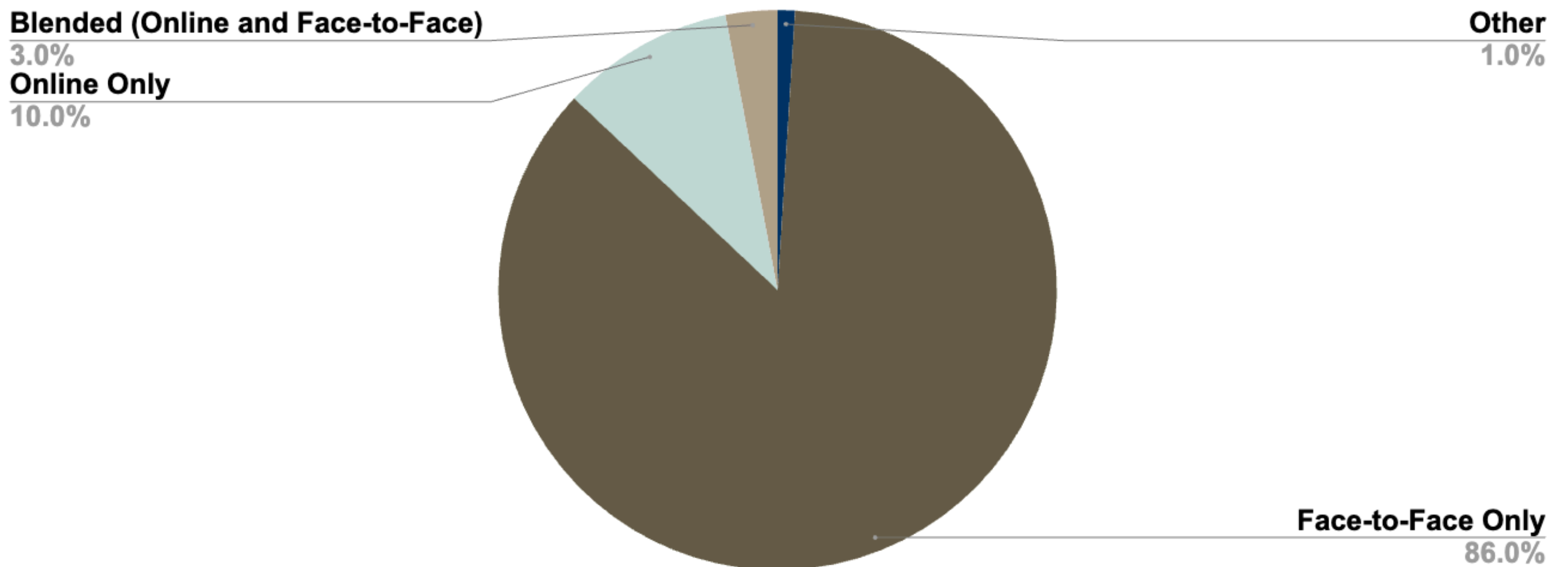


School Type



School Delivery Methods and Academics

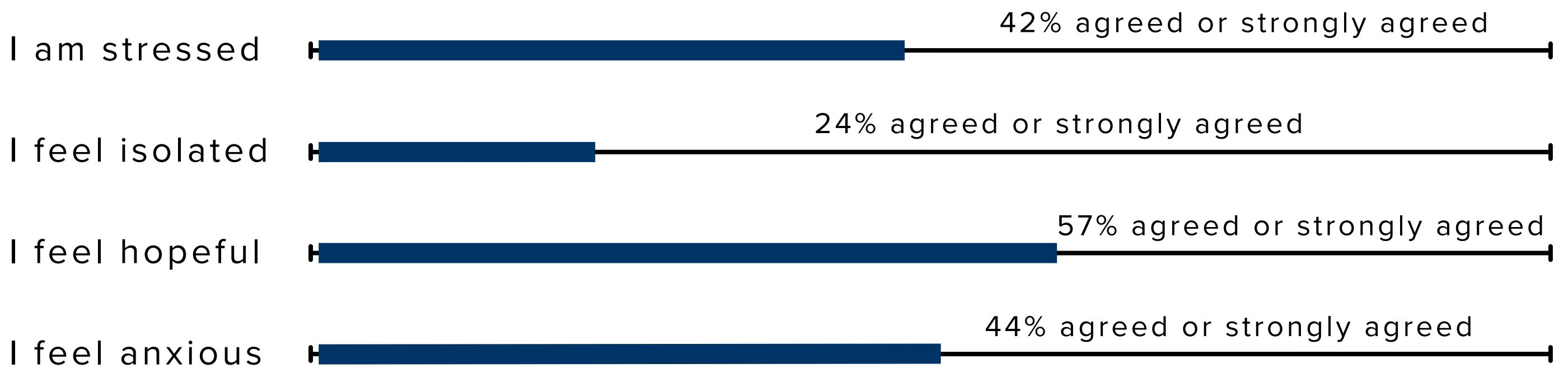
How is your child learning in school at this time?



	Yes	No	Unsure	Not Applicable
Does your child's school use a cohorting model with students?	57%	12%	25%	7%
Is your child's school implementing a cohorting model where your child is interacting only with the same people within their group (and not switching daily contacts or randomly interacting with others outside this cohort group) throughout the school day?	56%	11%	32%	1%
Do you have confidence that the cohorting model in place at your child's school will prevent or contain COVID-19 infection(s)?	33%	32%	35%	
Is the school council at your child's school an Alberta School Councils' Association Member?	27%	3%	69%	1%
Do you keep in contact with the school council at your child's school?	36%	59%		5%

Emotional Impact of COVID-19

Thinking about this past week with your child back in classrooms (face-to-face or online), identify your level of agreement with the following statements...

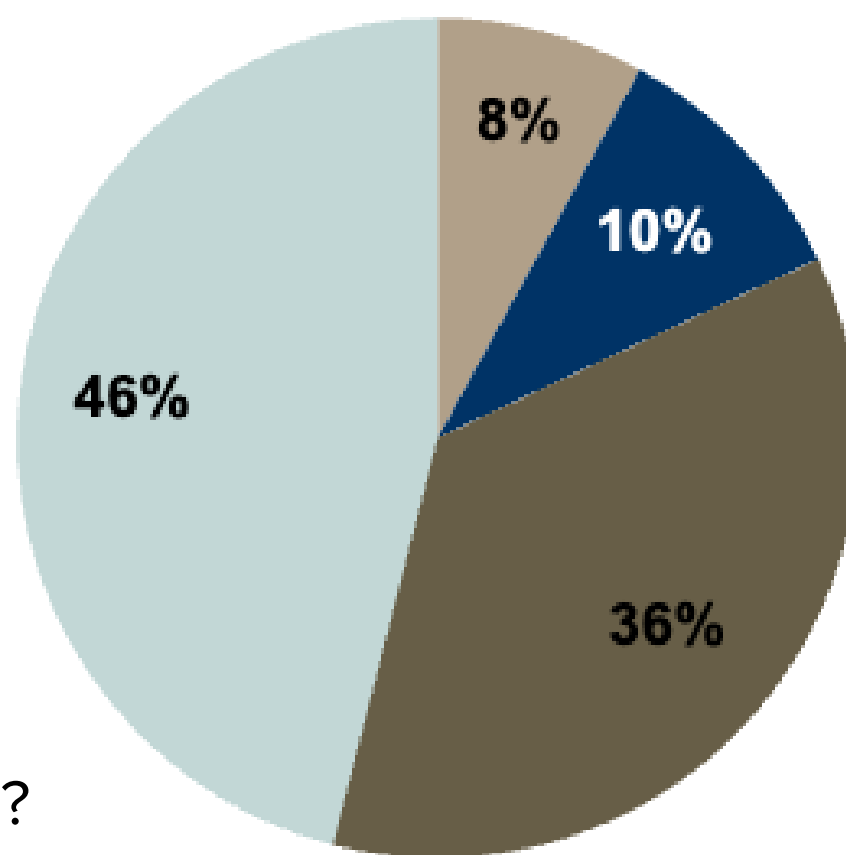
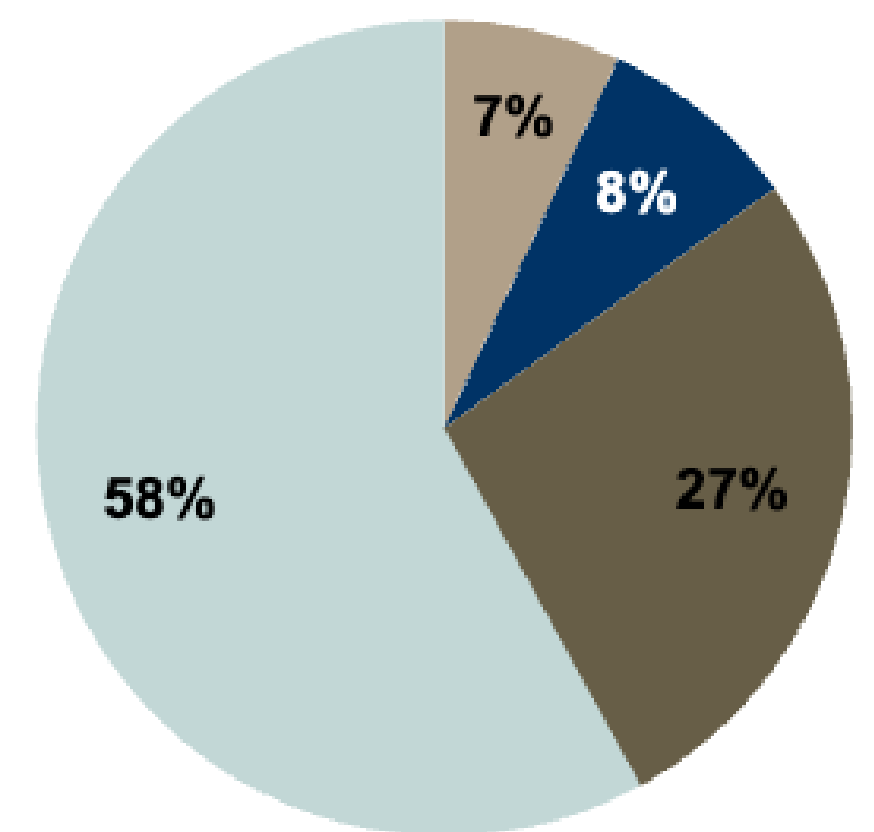


Over the last 7 days, how often have you been bothered by...

45%
felt exhausted by the end of the day.

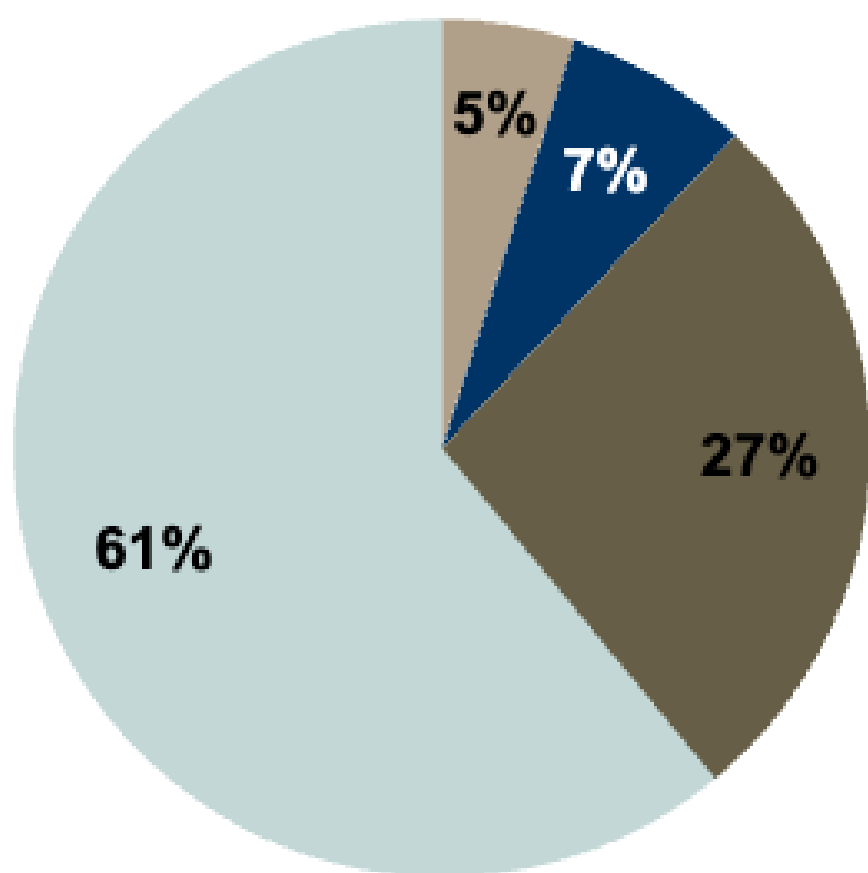
not being able to stop or control worrying?

feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge?

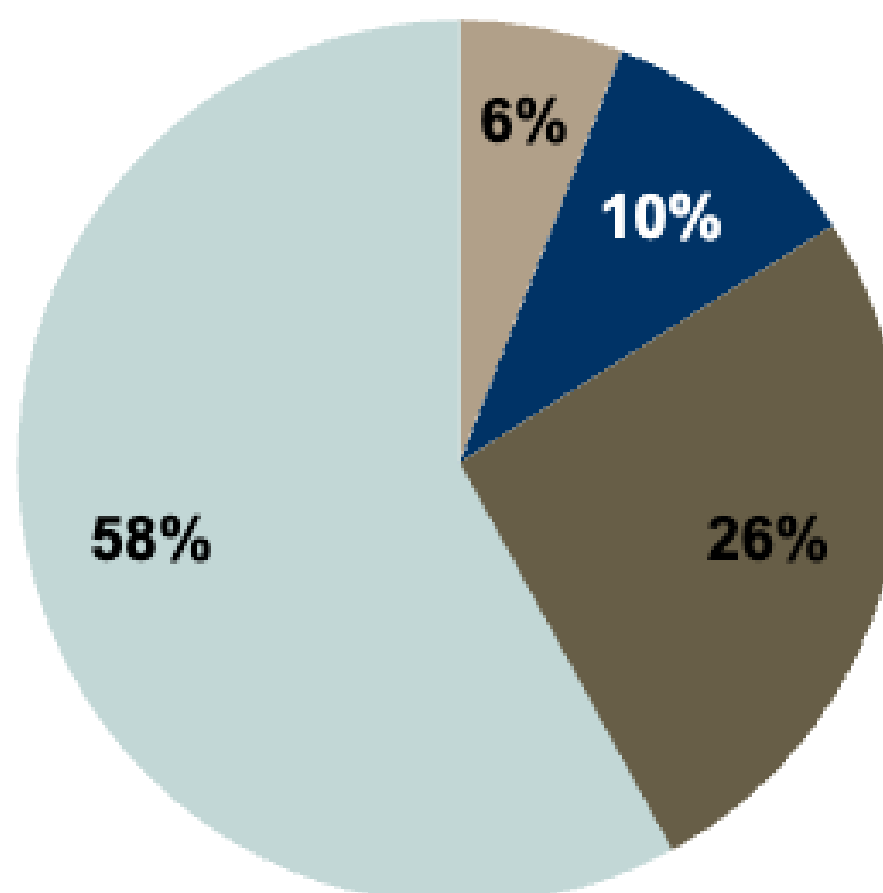


feeling down, depressed, or hopeless?

- Nearly everyday
- More than half the days
- Several days
- Not at all



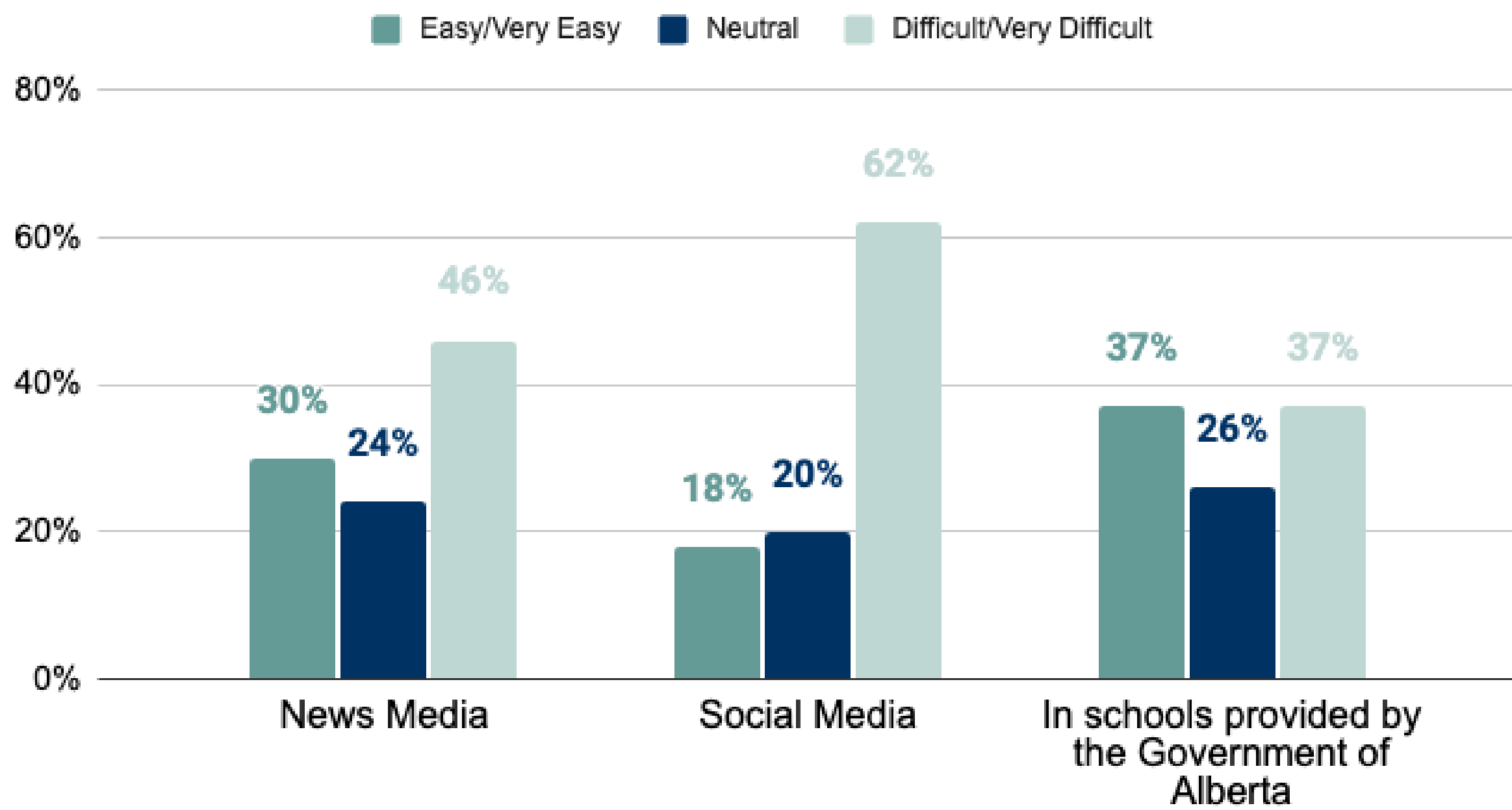
having little interest or pleasure in doing things?



45%
felt comfortable with new school routines related to COVID-19 prevention.

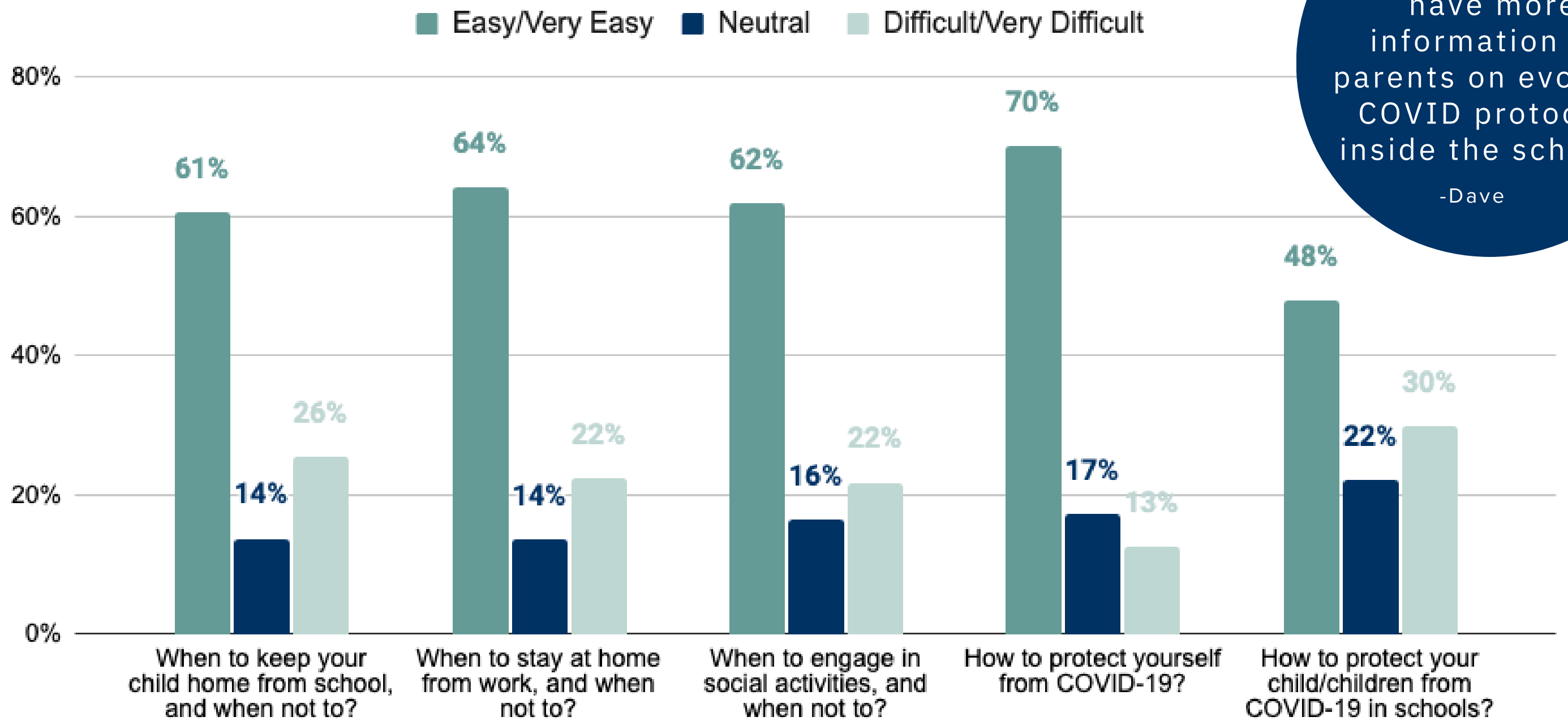
Understanding Information about COVID-19

How easy would you say it is to judge if information is reliable in...



“We currently have 2 active cases at our school - both children attended school and found out later about the positive test - the school still has not been able to notify parents - it has been 3 days.”
-Lisa

How easy would you say it is to understand Alberta Health Services recommendations for...



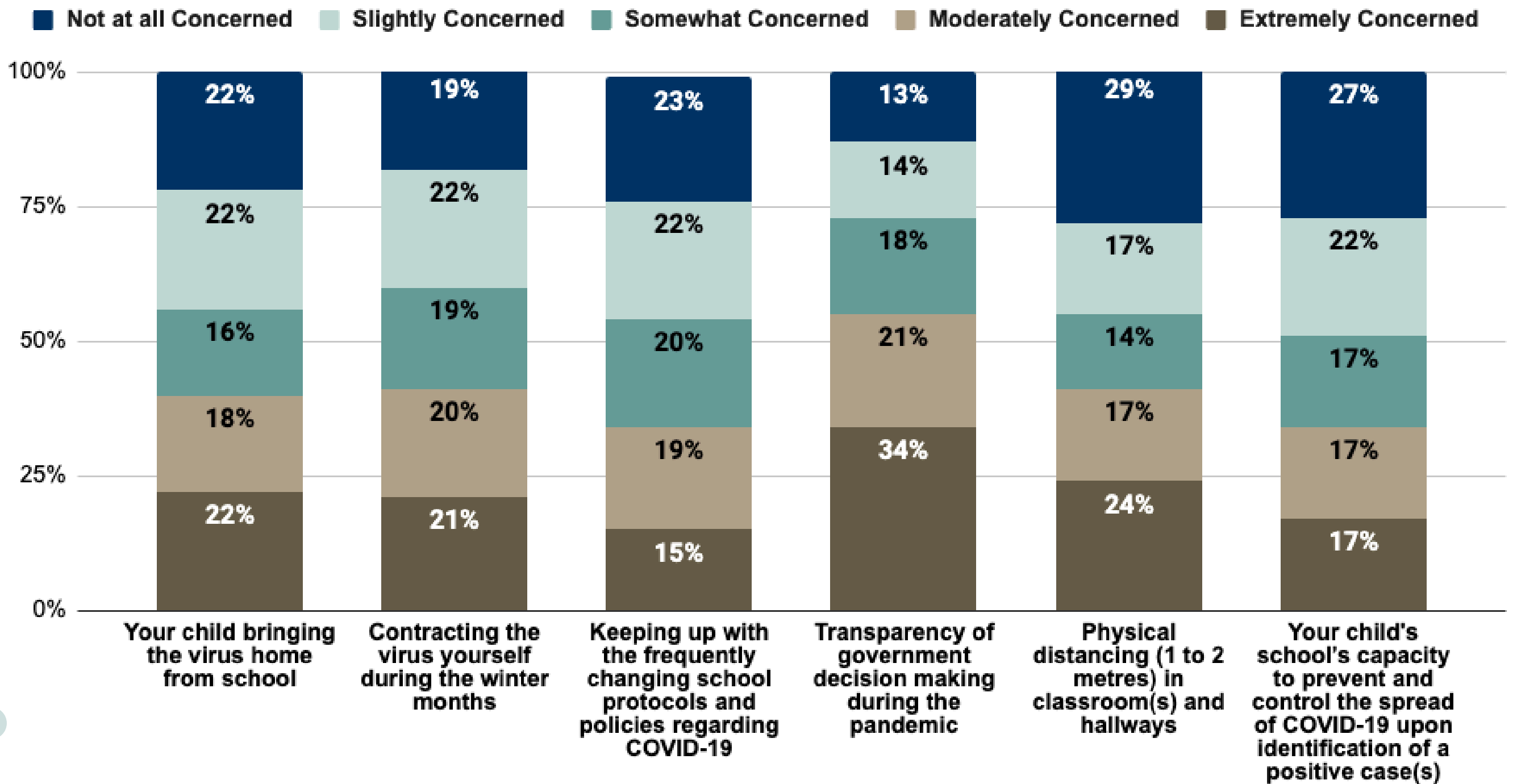
“Would be nice to have more information for parents on evolving COVID protocols inside the school.”
-Dave

“AHS is already overwhelmed, and schools have the contact info-let's have the schools do this, whether we hire admin to do.”
-Timothy

“I am deeply concerned about the length of time in between positive testing in the classroom and when that information gets relayed to me by the school and/or Alberta health.”
-Beth

COVID-19 Perceptions

Please identify your level of concern with the following:



Parents were asked to identify their level of agreement with various statements about COVID-19. Below shows the percentage of parents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements listed.

42%

COVID-19 FEELS CLOSE TO ME.

81%

COVID-19 IS STRESSFUL.

36%

COVID-19 FEELS LIKE IT IS SPREADING SLOWLY.

26%

COVID-19 IS **NOT** FEAR-INDUCING.

43%

COVID-19 IS MEDIA HYPED.

35%

COVID-19 IS SOMETHING THAT MAKES ME FEEL HELPLESS.

55%

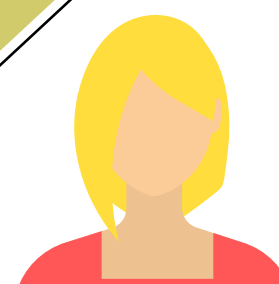
COVID-19 IS SOMETHING I THINK ABOUT ALL THE TIME.



-Damon

"I think the biggest challenge facing parents is when a child has a common cold. The child needs to stay home, be tested for COVID-19, and a parent needs to stay home from work. If I don't go to work, I don't get paid, so loss of income is relevant to our family. I was unable to work while schools were closed. Keeping schools open must be a priority, and if needed to manage the spread of COVID-19, other services should be closed first, such as restaurants, gyms, and bars."

"Please stop the unnecessary protocols for re-entry to schools. The stress far outweighs the benefits. Extracurriculars and normalcy need to return. Students need to feel safe and fear about COVID is unnecessary. We are not seeing any concerns with COVID infections in young populations. The seasonal flu has far more concerns than we see in COVID. Why are we continuing this nonsense?"

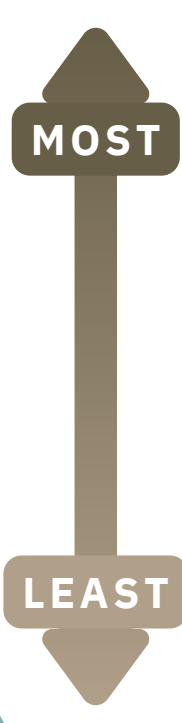


-Angelina

COVID-19 Protocols

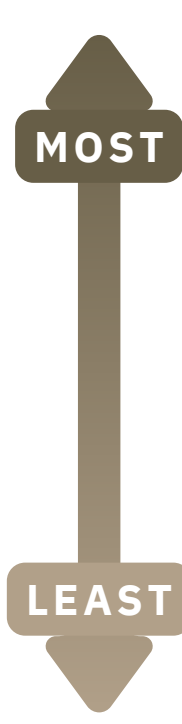
Parents were asked about the frequency of their COVID-19 prevention methods. From most often to least often, parents reported engaging in the following measures:

“During the last 7 days, which of the following measures have you taken to prevent infection from COVID-19?”

- 
- Frequently washed your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - Wore a mask in public.
 - Used disinfectants to clean your hands when soap and water were not available.
 - Ensured physical distancing in public.
 - Wore a mask in your workplace.
 - Avoided touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Disinfected surfaces in your home.
 - Avoided a social event you wanted to attend.
 - Stayed home from work.

“During the last 7 days, thinking about the one child in your family you are describing in this survey, which of the following measures have they taken to prevent infection from COVID-19?”

My child reports...

- 
- Wearing a mask while in the hallways at school.
 - Wearing a mask within the classroom/cohort when interacting with other students.
 - Using disinfectants to clean hands when soap and water were not available.
 - Washing their hands at school with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - Physically distancing (1 to 2 metres) while in public.
 - Disinfecting their desk or other classroom surface(s).
 - Avoided group gatherings outside their classroom (or cohort).
 - Avoided touching their eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Physically distancing (1 to 2 metres) while on playgrounds or outside.

77%

completed the daily COVID-19 screening checklist before their child entered their school.

“Within the school, the school is doing everything they can to keep students safe and they are using the cohorting model. Outside, students aren't great at social distancing and some won't wear their masks properly which puts my child at risk.”

-Tina

29%

agreed that the daily COVID-19 screening checklist was being completed by other parents before their children entered their school.

54%

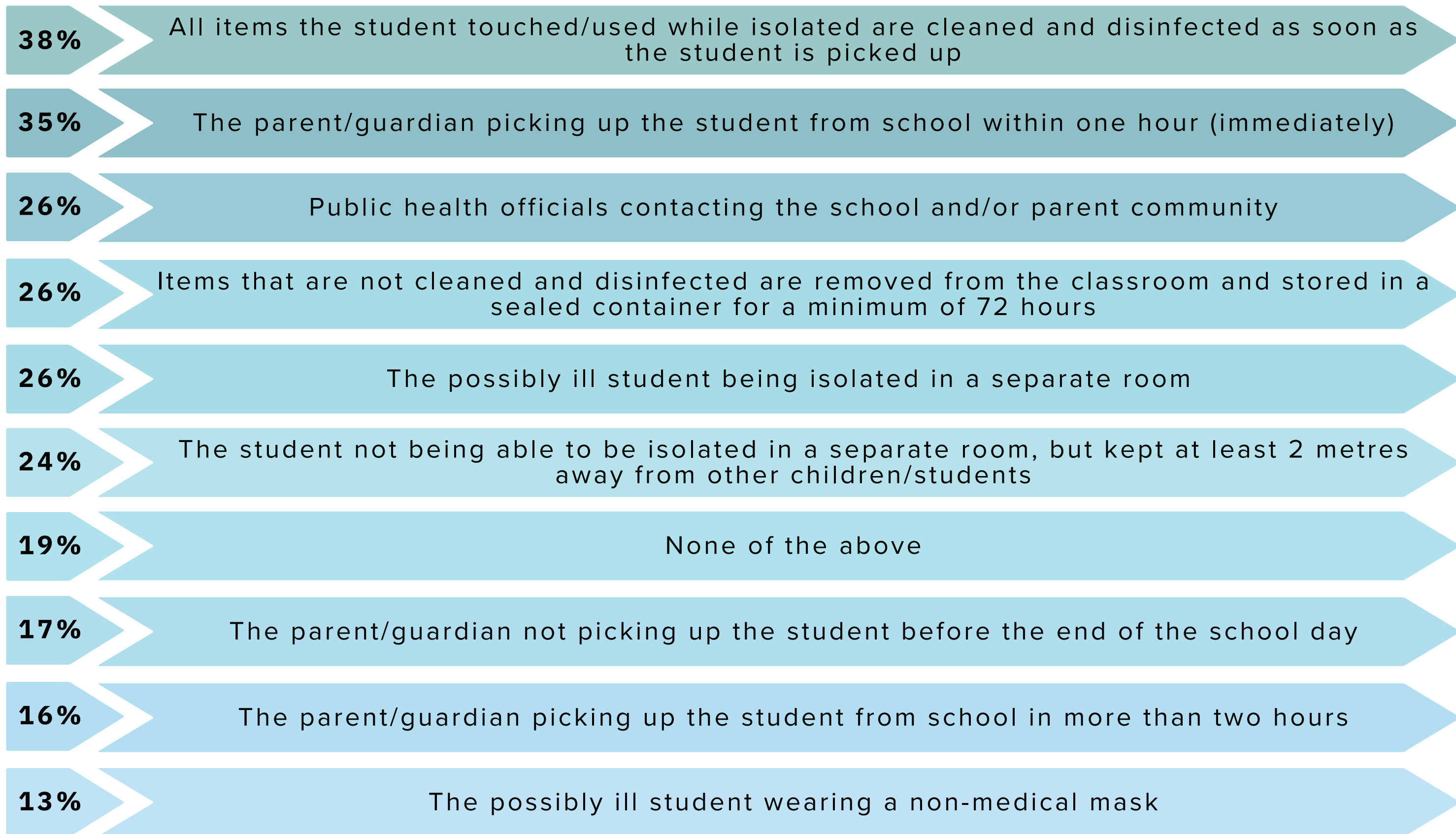
agreed that the daily COVID-19 screening checklist was being completed by staff before entering the school.

45%

agreed that the daily COVID-19 screening checklist was an effective tool to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission among students/staff in Alberta schools.

COVID-19 Protocols Continued

Parents were asked, “In the event of a presumptive (likely) student case of COVID-19, which of the following action(s) in the outbreak plan do you believe will be **challenging** for your child's classroom/school environment?” They were able to select all that applied to them. From most to least challenging, they selected:



“Send them to the office and have the parents pick them up, it shouldn't be complicated and you shouldn't make the child feel bad by isolating them in a room, it's flu season kids are going to be getting sick and it does not mean it's COVID.”

-James



“1) They are kids and spread germs incredibly fast. 2) My concern about [cohort models] is not in the schools but, in the homes. Families need to isolate together if 1 member is symptomatic. I have seen evidence that this is not always happening (ie. 1 brother/sister is sick but the other still goes in to school).”

-Nora



“We believe there was a case of COVID-19 at my child's school identified on Monday (the student had told classmates and teachers are aware) but no formal communication via email/letter has been sent to advise parents (it is Friday now, and the case was identified on Monday). Apparently, the principal is on leave.”

-Mya



“We had one case already and our school handled it amazingly. That is the only one we have had so they kept it to one child.”

-Jack



Educational Concerns

“Thinking about COVID-19, to what extent do you agree with each of the following statements related to your child getting what they need to be successful (equity).”

“The government should rework the budget and give more money to education and healthcare.”

-Sienna

41%

were concerned with their child's engagement and motivation in school (online or face to face).

63%

were concerned about curricular gaps for their child resulting from the coronavirus pandemic.

86%

reported that their child had access to a reliable internet connection and a computer/device to complete their assignments.

48%

stated that any loss of support staff and educational assistants negatively impacted their child's ability to learn at school or at a distance.

90%

said their child had a quiet/safe space to do their school work when they were at home.

77%

were concerned about supports for vulnerable populations, child poverty, and/or growing inequity.

49%

were concerned that online learning was creating new cost burdens for their child and/or other Alberta families.

47%

were concerned about getting their child what they need to be successful (equity) with online instruction.

19%

of parents and caregivers had hired a private tutor or paid for outside educational services/support for their child.

“I think my school is doing the best they can”

-Kevin

“I am concerned about the quality of online education if my child is sent home to isolate”

-Greg

“I know the school my children attend is working hard. The staff are doing the best they can with the resources they have and I feel confident in the school division.”

-Margaret

Parent Quotes

The part about school that makes me the most nervous is that I don't have control over what others are doing. There are guidelines and procedures, but not everyone is following them all the time. We were doing the very best we could and my son was still identified as a close contact of a positive case and made to isolate for 2 weeks. Because he attends school in person for most classes, there wasn't an "online option" for keeping up in class. If he had been in online classes, his school would have been the same but it was more like "Here is what you will miss for 2 weeks, work on your own." It was hard for him to stay in the house and isolate so my fear is that what happens when some other kid doesn't wash his hands or wear a mask or whatever, and it affects us again. Not even getting COVID has affected our ability to do things "normally".

Students have other activities after school, or their siblings attend those activities, such as team sports, and music. These are cross-neighbourhood assemblies. So cohorting model in school has no control over these contacts. If one case happens in one school cohort, it will spread to sport team members on the same day, and reach to another school cohort the next day.

My son has learning disabilities and is seriously struggling to catch up after the homeschooling from last year. I am extremely concerned about how this is impacting his school year.

I am happy with re-entry and am thankful for the wonderful teachers and support staff. I do wish the government would have been more helpful in terms of funding.

There is so much conflicting information out there and everyone seems to have an opinion. It is hard to figure out what is real and accurate, backed by science and what is just someone's opinion.

While I am happy that my children can attend school in person, school is about more than academics. I am concerned about all they are missing out on with no access to sports, option classes, arts or music. While this pandemic is ongoing with no clear end in sight, how can we raise healthy (both mind and body), and well-rounded children.

Class size remains a concern. The classes are large and that makes my son very anxious. He is also anxious about students who do not follow protocols while at school. For example, students who do not wear masks in hallways or common areas, or students whose masks do not cover their noses.

The school my child attends is making students wear masks even when in their cohort class, including gym. I have a student in grades 6 and 8 and both have been sick this school year and both with very different symptoms. I don't believe the mask wearing is doing any good and am against it. I believe it's making them sick to breathe in their own moist air all day. Please revise the mask wearing rules for the kids.

Please keep kids in school all year no matter the circumstances. It is the safer environment for most kids and online learning will just further put them behind in learning. Those who are worried about covid have the choice to pull kids from school but those who are not concerned need the option to keep them in. It's our right in my opinion. If covid gets out of hand in one certain school please don't make the choice to close all schools again due to outbreaks in some schools but not all. I hope they make the decisions based on a case-by-case situation instead of all Alberta schools as a whole.

My children are very happy to be back at school for in-person learning and are doing very well. They do not seem overly concerned or affected by the COVID restrictions that are in place. I hope that schools will not shut down again, regardless of what happens with the virus. Children need face-to-face learning.

"You have to bear with me, this is my first pandemic. This should be our mantra. I think everyone is doing the very best that they can - there is no playbook with this - we have to write it as we go."

Our kids are happy to be back in the classroom, surrounded by teachers, support staff and classmates. They are happier kids having in-classroom education even with wearing a mask! We appreciate and thank everyone that has made this happen and put the protocols together to be safe doing so. It's where our children need to be and learn best.

I agree fully with hand washing and extra cleaning of surfaces. 90% of the time I feel masks are not used appropriately and are more likely to cause the spread of illness than prevent it. This fiercely bothers me and it's adults as often as it's kids. The amount of times desks are wiped in schools is ridiculous and not necessary. This and sanitizing hands is being overdone. My kid's hands are cracked and bleeding and the weather is just getting cold. Staying home when sick is brilliant and very effective. Masks need to go and sanitizer needs to be toned down. Hand washing regularly and properly is the answer.

There have been several instances this year where my child has been expected to have technology with him to use in daily school activities, but he does not own that technology or have the means to purchase it. These requirements have never been directly communicated as necessary from the school, but he has been unable to participate without them.

I am concerned about the policy of quarantining an entire class if one case is identified within that group. If high school students are masking during class, don't punish the entire group for two weeks. It's ridiculous.

Returning to in-person school in the fall is going to depend on how our community transmission rates are and in school rates as well. This survey seemed to be geared more towards current mental health.

**Prepared by Samantha Mullin and Erica Fae Thomson
for the Alberta School Councils' Association**

January 2025