

STUDENT WELLNESS DURING COVID-19

What Role Do Universities Play in Supporting their Students?

A Course Hero & NASPA Study powered by College Pulse



October 2020

STUDENT WELLNESS DURING COVID-19

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About COLLEGE PULSE

College Pulse is a survey research and analytics company dedicated to understanding the attitudes, preferences and behaviors of today's college students. College Pulse offers custom data-driven marketing and research solutions, utilizing its unique American College Student Panel™ that includes over 450,000 undergraduate college student respondents from more than 1,000 four-year colleges and universities in all 50 states.

For more information, visit <https://collegepulse.com> or College Pulse's official Twitter account @CollegeInsights.

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Course Hero is an online learning platform where you can access over 40 million course-specific study resources contributed by a community of students and educators. You'll find practice problems, study guides, videos, class notes, and step-by-step explanations for every subject you're studying — from economics to literature, biology to history, accounting to psychology, and everything in between. We help you quickly find what you need so you can learn deeply.

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NASPA is the leading association for the advancement, health, and sustainability of the student affairs profession. Our work provides high-quality professional development, advocacy, and research for 15,000 members in all 50 states, 25 countries, and 8 U.S. territories.

The authors wish to thank Hollie Chessman of the American Council on Education for her careful review of this study.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COVID-19 has upended the college experience. To date, we have experienced three distinct phases of the pandemic: the onset in March 2020, as colleges shifted to remote learning and largely sent their students away from campus; the summer, as colleges evaluated new information about the severity and the future of the pandemic and decided whether to bring students back to campus; and Fall 2020, as colleges and are now evaluating their decision about on-campus vs. remote learning. For those campuses who have brought students back to campus, there are rising numbers of cases of the student population who tested positive for COVID-19, and colleges need to navigate isolation and safety concerns for their students. For colleges that have taken an exclusively distance learning approach, colleges have had to navigate the delivery of remote learning, from implementing technology, and bringing professors up to speed on delivering instruction remotely.

Studies launched earlier this summer have found that students are encountering mental health challenges during COVID-19 (Healthy Minds Network for Research on Adolescent and Young Adult Mental Health and the American College Health Association, Psychiatry Research, ActiveMinds) and are facing anxiety about the future (News-Medical). However, we know less about students' social and emotional support during these unique times, and specifically how colleges are intervening to provide resources to their students and what difference it makes.

Course Hero and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators commissioned College Pulse to administer a survey of college students' experiences with COVID-19, their return to campus, and the support they are receiving from their college. Conducted from September 28th to October 5th, 2020, findings from *Student Wellness During COVID-19: What Role Do Universities Play in Supporting their Students?* represent a sample of 3,500 full-time students currently enrolled in four-year degree programs surveyed via the College Pulse mobile app and web portal, and weighted to be nationally representative of four-year college students.

Key findings include:

- **Nearly 1 in 5 students report that they are "constantly" anxious about the pandemic.** Students are experiencing significant anxiety around COVID-19 this fall, with more than half (56%) of all students reporting their anxiety level as at least "somewhat anxious," a number that is higher for female students (64%) than for male students (43%). One in six students (17%) reported that they had no anxiety around the pandemic.
- **Students are spending more time on their coursework.** 55% of students report spending more time on homework and assignments compared to the spring semester, and half have also increased their time on social media (50%). Students also report spending less time sleeping (37%) and exercising (44%) now compared to spring.

- **Students' chief concern during the pandemic is about how to stay engaged while learning remotely.** More than 70% of students identify engagement with their coursework as a primary challenge. Closely following are maintaining relationships with their friends (63%) and their mental health (61%). Almost half (48%) worry about getting a job after they graduate.
- **61% of students approve of their college's decision regarding how Fall 2020 instruction was offered.** More than half (56%) of students are attending their college exclusively remotely, compared to 42% of students who are attending college hybridly, both online and in person. Regardless of how students are attending their courses, they are equally likely to approve of their college's response.
- **Students overwhelmingly trust their professors (90%) and friends (89%) to do the right thing when it comes to decisions about COVID-19.** Students are less likely to put trust in their administrators and fellow classmates to make the right decisions in regard to the coronavirus, with 44% of students expressing distrust in their peers and 25% expressing distrust in their college's administrators.
- **More than three-quarters of students haven't used any support from their college to combat their stress or anxiety during this period.** 77% of students report that they haven't used tele-health, tele-counseling, grief counseling, support groups or emergency services during this time. Instead, students are more likely to report turning to friends (64%), parents (45%) and significant others (30%) for emotional support.
- **Despite the current challenges of this time, students are optimistic about their future.** 69% of students report that they are optimistic about their future, and even more agree that they lead a purposeful and meaningful life (74%). Despite the challenges of not being able to engage in activities as usual, students report having supportive relationships in their lives (76%) and believe in themselves (78%), suggesting that while students are experiencing significant stress in this moment, it has not shaken their core sense of worth and their ability to have a meaningful impact in the world.

There are four key sections of this report. The first section gives insight into students' current stress and anxiety levels, and how they are feeling about the coronavirus pandemic. Section two examines students' perception of their university's response to COVID-19, specifically to understand how the support a college or university does or does not offer impacts students' well-being. Section three reveals how students are coping with the uncertainty of COVID-19, and the last section closes with an examination of students who, despite the challenges and uncertainties of this time, are in fact thriving.

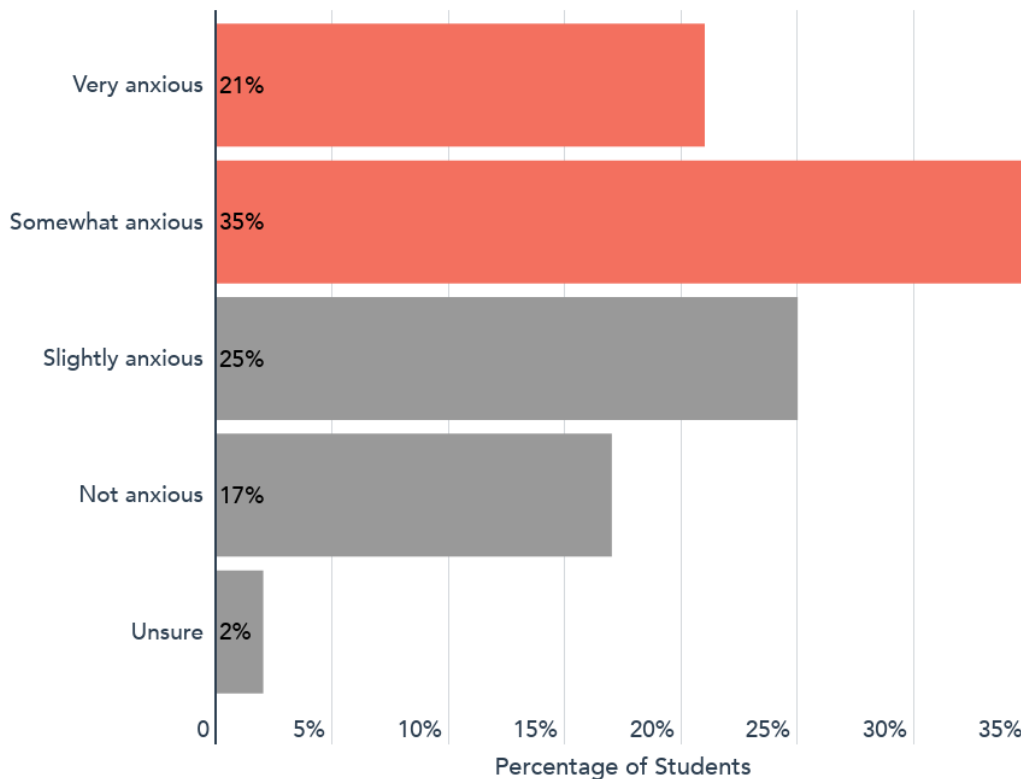
I. STUDENT SENTIMENT AMID THE PANDEMIC

How do students feel about COVID-19?

Results from the survey show a mixed portrait of student anxiety when it comes to COVID-19. When asked what their anxiety level regarding the coronavirus pandemic, over half (56%) of students report that they are at least somewhat anxious, with 20% of these students reporting that they're very anxious. Less than 1 in 5 students report that they are not at all anxious.

More than half of students are at least somewhat anxious about COVID-19

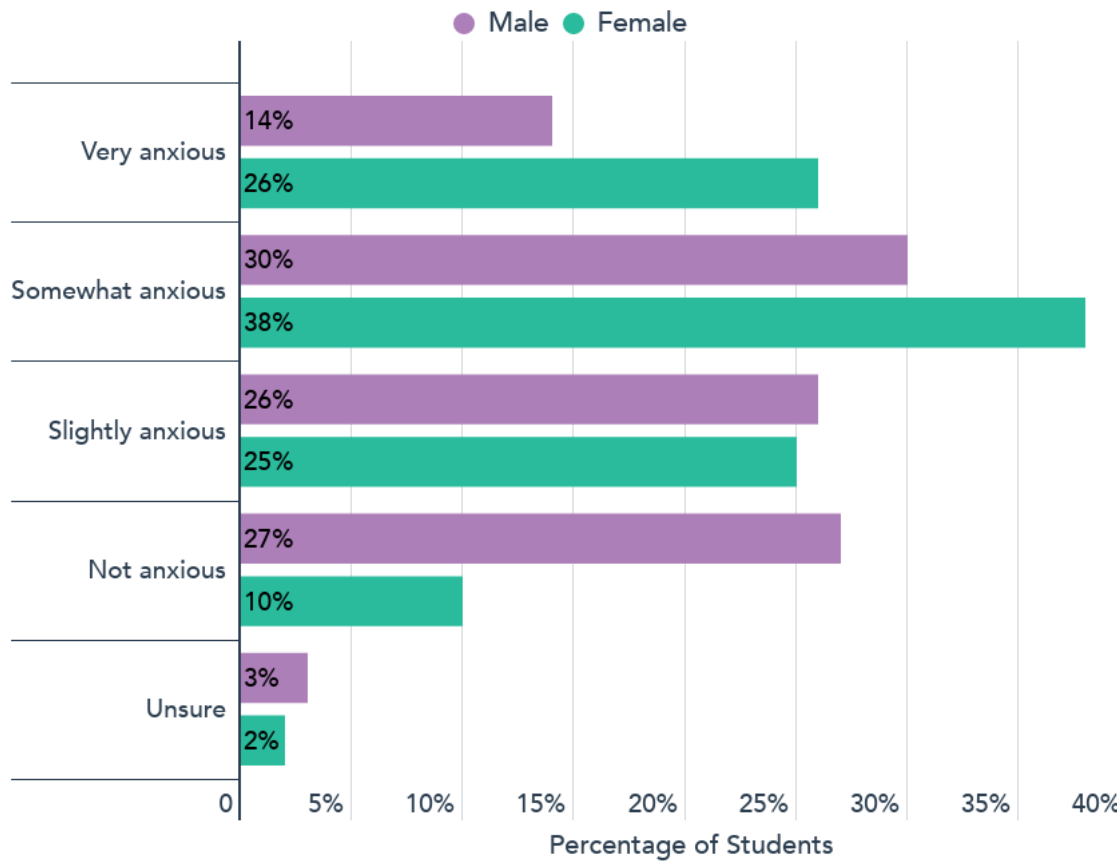
Which of the following best describes your anxiety level regarding COVID-19?



Female students are more likely than male students to be concerned about COVID-19. While 64% of females are at least somewhat anxious, only 44% of male students feel the same. In fact, a quarter of male students agree that they are not at all anxious about COVID-19. While the number of nonbinary students in this sample are low, those who identify as such experience the most anxiety around COVID-19, with 75% agreeing that they are at least somewhat anxious about the pandemic.

6 in 10 female students report being at least somewhat anxious

Which of the following best describes your anxiety level regarding COVID-19?

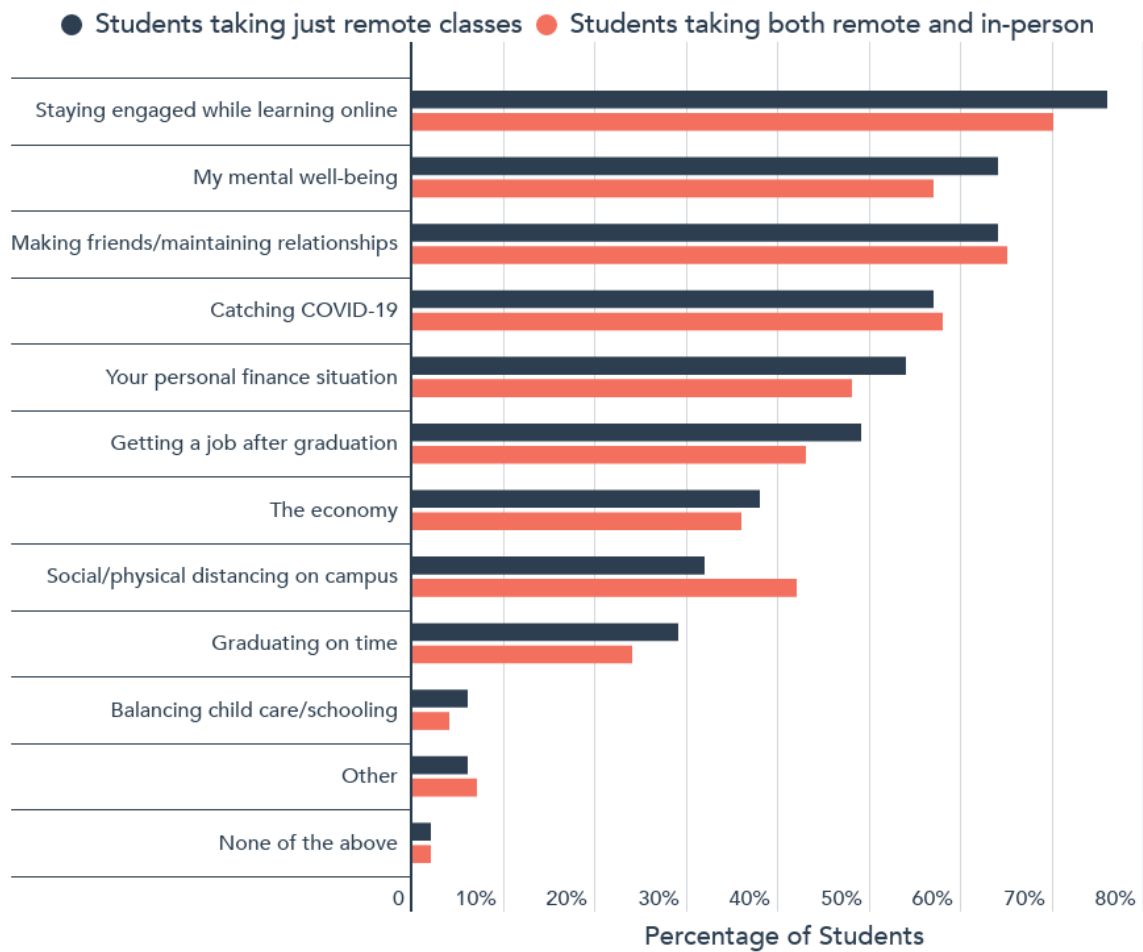


Female students are also far more likely than male students to report that they are “constantly” worried about what is going on in their life when asked to consider their anxiety level over the past six months (22% for female students, compared to 11% for male students). Male students are much more likely to agree that they have only been anxious “a few times” (37%) in the past few months, compared to female students (26%).

Specific concerns regarding COVID-19 are varied. All students, regardless of gender, are most likely to report that they are concerned about staying engaged while learning remotely (72%). Sixty-three percent of students report concerns about maintaining their friendships and social relationships, and a full 61% of students report worrying about their mental health — the third most important challenge students are facing now.

Students attending remote-only and hybrid both struggle to stay engaged while learning remotely

What, if anything, are you concerned about as it relates to COVID-19?



While a significant number of students report worry and anxiety regarding COVID-19, the pandemic is only one of the challenges that students are trying to navigate. Students are trying to balance their academic coursework, paid work, relationships and their mental and physical health. It's clear that COVID-19 is taking a toll for a majority of students in this study. Says one student at Seattle University:

Students my age already have so many things to be scared about (e.g., systemic injustice, climate change, natural disasters, environmental degradation) that COVID-19 just seems like a huge cherry on top of the already awful sundae. It feels like we can't trust the government to respect us and do what's right for us, and that healthcare workers have taken a backseat to a hasty opening. I feel anxious all the time because if my parents catch it, they could die (my mom has asthma). It just feels like a Kafka-esque hellscape that gets worse every day, with tiny improvements that feel ill-advised.

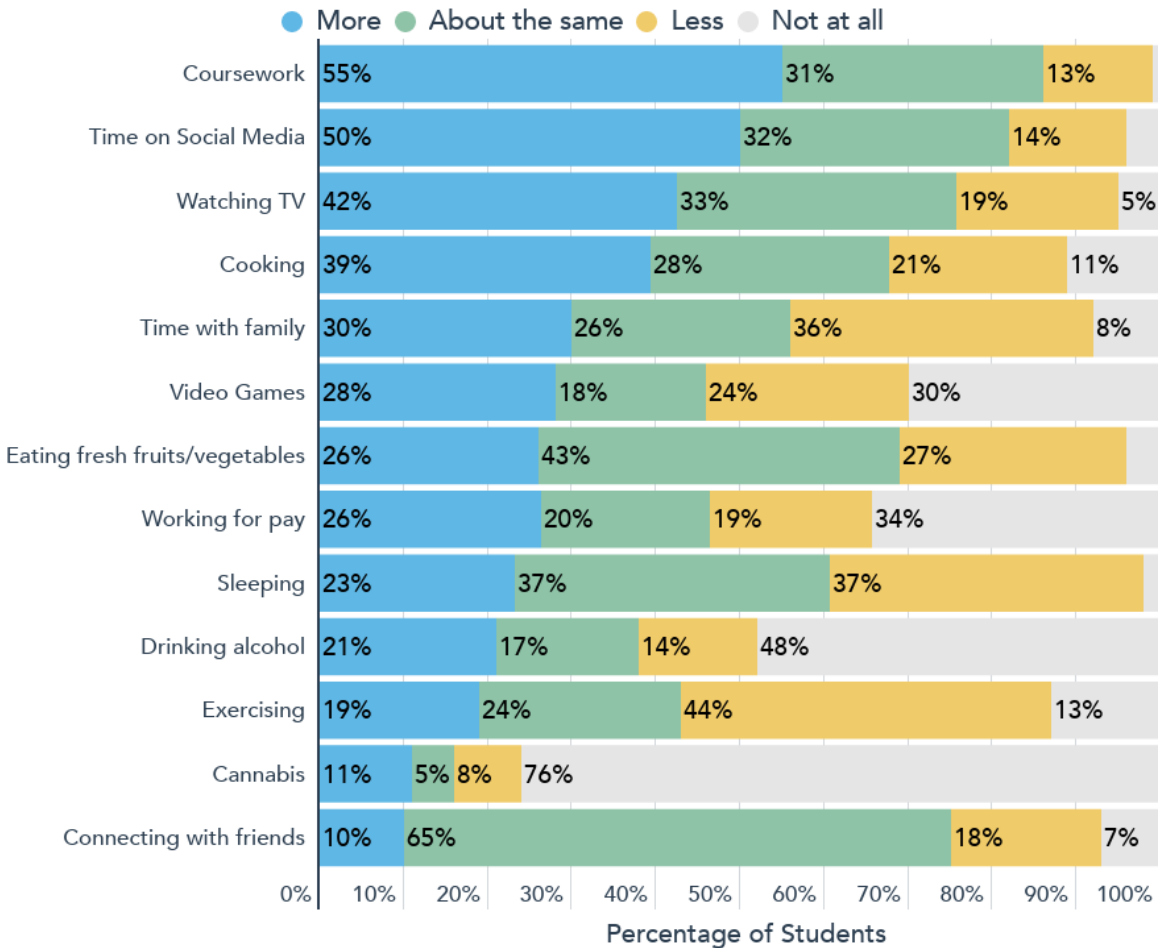
What does COVID-19 life look like?

Colleges and universities in the United States were forced to confront difficult decisions about students’ health and well-being during the onset of COVID-19. One critical decision was whether students should remain on campus, return home, or otherwise relocate off campus. Results show that more than half (53%) of college students remained in their same location during the pandemic. Roughly one-third (36%) of students moved to their family’s home.

One way to better understand how students are doing in this environment is to understand how they are spending their time. We asked students, “Compared to the spring semester, since you have resumed your courses, for each of the following, are you doing them more, less, the same, or not at all?” The data paints an interesting division of how students are spending their time.

Students are spending more time cooking and less time consuming alcohol

Compared to the Spring 2020 semester, since you have resumed your courses, for each of the following, are you doing them more, less, about the same, or not at all?



Results show that students have significantly increased the time that they spend on their coursework. Over half (55%) of students report spending more time on their coursework compared to the spring. Regardless of whether students are attending their courses on campus or remotely, results show that students are spending more time on homework in comparison to spring semester. While students majoring in laboratory science programs specifically noted the difficulty translating their lab work to remote learning in their open ended comments (as in the comment below), there was also no difference by major in this increase in time spent on coursework.

*I have received more coursework than before. Teachers seem to think that they need to give us twice the amount of material to look at/listen to. All of my classes are doing this and I have been falling behind because of the amount of material I have to look over. –
University of Arkansas, Animal Sciences major*

It is difficult to know what is driving this increase in spending time on coursework — whether remote work is more difficult to complete, professors are giving more assignments, or students have less opportunities to socialize and are spending more time on homework. Yet, this is the clearest difference in time spent between spring and fall.

Students also report spending more time on social media and watching television (50% and 42%, respectively), and less time sleeping (38%) and exercising (44%). Many students specifically reported their inability to sleep or exercise in the survey's open text response.

*It's been more stressful than I've ever, especially with being at home and not having the best support groups, such as better access to my friends and on campus therapy and the gym. I definitely feel discouraged some days to do work. Sometimes it takes me a whole day to just do one 40-page reading because of how much I zone out or feel randomly sleepy or can't concentrate or get distracted. Then it's easy not to confront any mental or physical problems. –**Loyola University, Criminology major***

However, this study also reveals a few positive outcomes in how students are using their time. Many students report less time drinking alcohol or using cannabis, and many students report not using alcohol (48%) or cannabis (76%) at all. Many students also report that they are spending more time cooking (40%) and exercising (19%).

II. WEIGHING THE UNIVERSITY'S RESPONSE

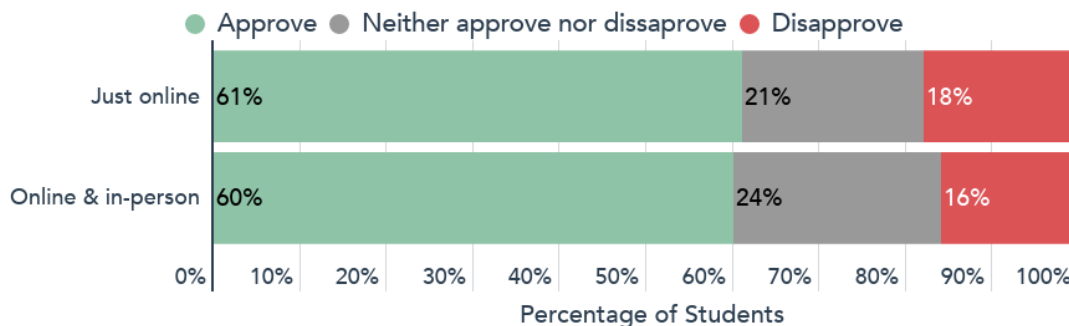
Students approve of their college's decision about Fall 2020 instruction

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, colleges across the United States were forced to discontinue on-campus activities and classes and move to a remote-only framework. Given the lack of clear national direction, colleges needed to decide for themselves whether or not it was safe to resume in-person classes, and to what extent. While a few colleges did choose to resume some level of on-campus activity, outbreaks of COVID-19 cases started to occur soon after classes began. Shortly after, many of the few in-person colleges reverted back to remote-only classes.

As of October 2020, 56% of students report that they are attending their classes exclusively remotely, while 42% say that they are attending classes in a hybrid style, with a combination of in-person and remote. Regardless of how students report attending their courses, a majority (61%) of students say that they agree with their university's response this fall.

Regardless of how students report attending their courses, a majority say they agree with their university's response to instruction this fall

I _____ of how my college decided to offer classes this fall, whether they are on campus or online



During the Spring 2020 semester I was quite unmotivated and felt isolated and bored and disengaged. My summer, as restrictions changed, was very different than I had planned, in good and also disappointing ways. I was able to participate in new opportunities I had not expected, but I felt much more myself. This fall semester with COVID restrictions on campus has been a strange transition and somewhat frustrating, but I am glad to be on campus and in person and resuming similar campus activities/lifestyle. –Wheaton College, Nursing major

Some demographic differences emerge between students regarding their approval of their college's response to reopening for Fall 2020. Results show that students who identify as strong Republicans are more likely to disagree with their college's stance compared to students who

identify as strong Democrats (32% vs. 19%). Varsity student athletes are more likely to approve of their college's decision than non-athletes (78% compared to 57%).

It's been stressful and disheartening to see our country so divided over something that never should have become political. Everyday feels like bad news, personally and in the world; I don't know if I've ever lived through a more distressing time. School is not what it used to be. While I appreciate the efforts of my professors, sometimes I feel so deflated and exhausted that I have to force myself just to log in. –New York University

While students express a preference to be in person, some students write that they appreciate the difficult decisions their college made. Says one student at University of California, Santa Cruz:

I don't really like online classes, but I still think it's better that my college prioritized safety.

Differences emerge between students in remote-only settings and hybrid environments in their stress levels and the support that they are receiving. We asked students, "In the last 6 months, could you have used more emotional support than you received?" Over half (53%) of students report that they could have used more support than they received. About one in five students (22%) report that they did not need additional support.

More than half of students report needing more help than they received

In the last 6 months, could you have used more emotional support than you received?

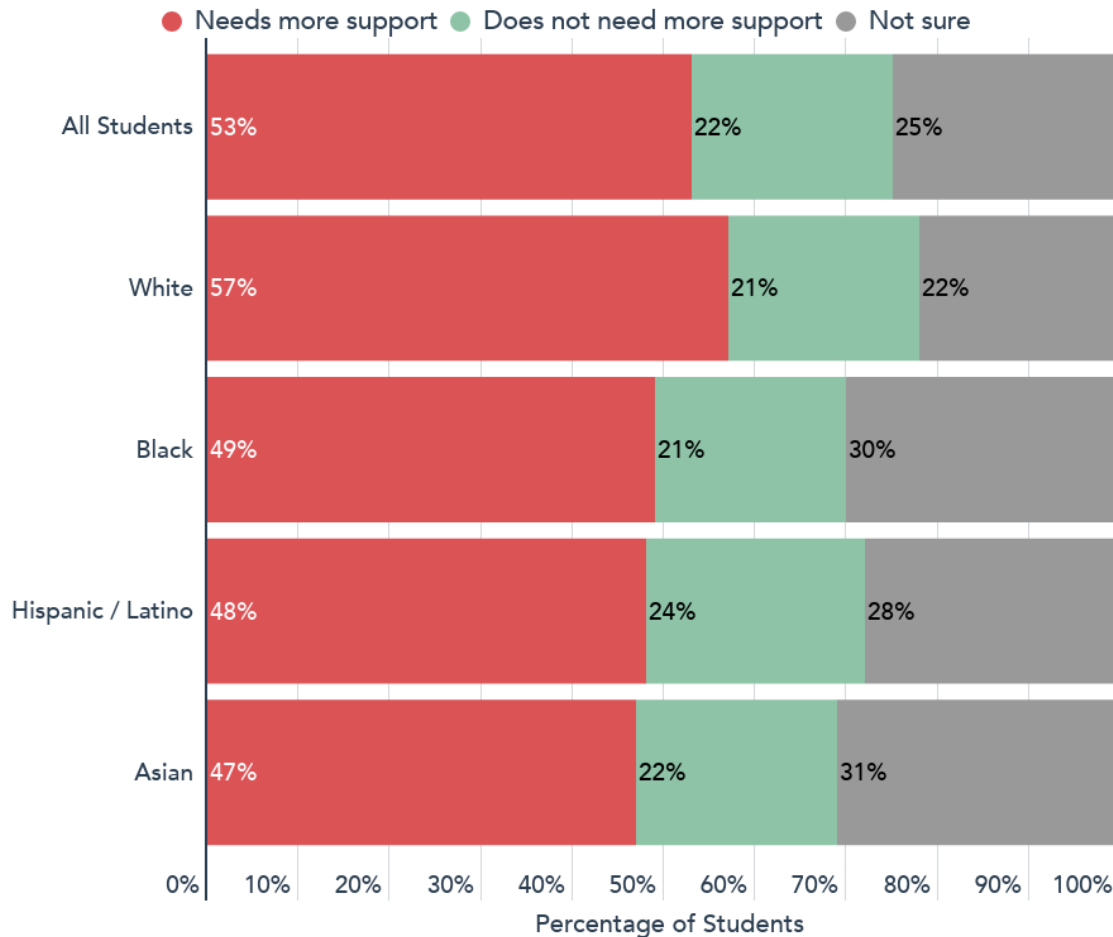
● Needs more support ● Does not need more support ● Not sure



This study also reveals slight differences by race. More than half of white (57%) and Black (49%) students report that they could have used additional support in the past six months, compared to 48% of Hispanic and 47% of Asian students.

White students most likely to report needing additional help

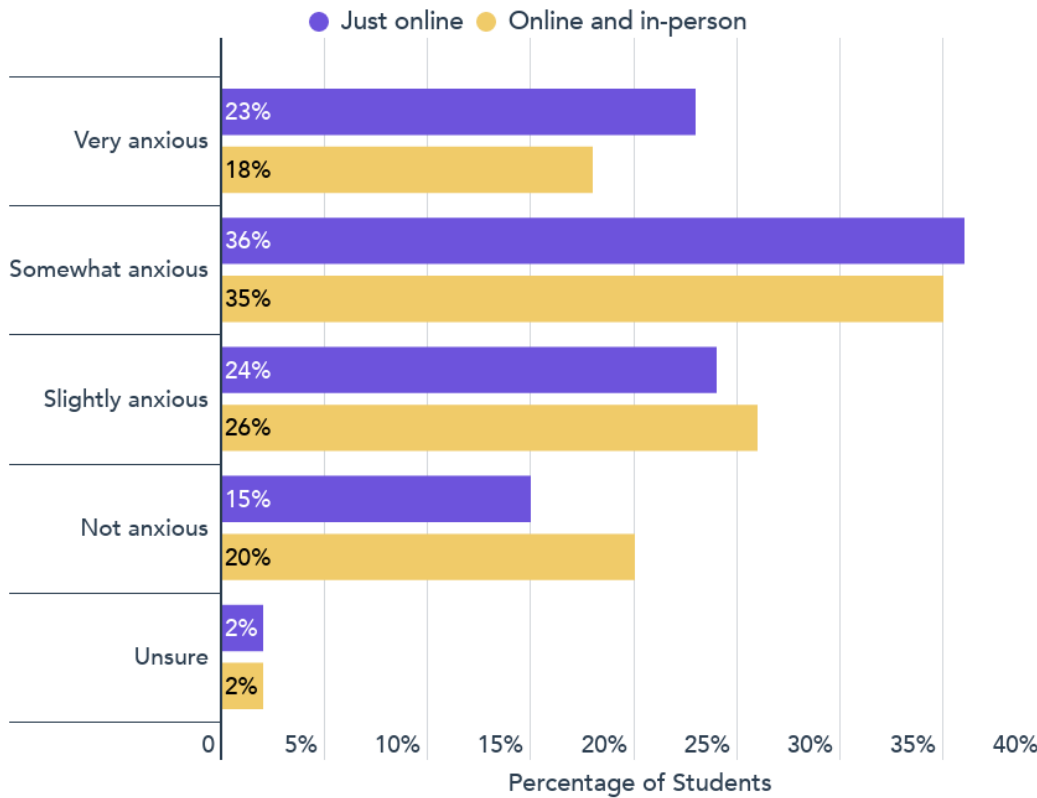
In the last 6 months, could you have used more emotional support than you received?



More specifically, 83% of students attending remote classes only report experiencing some level of anxiety regarding COVID-19. In comparison to those who are attending classes in a hybrid style, 79% of students report experiencing some level of anxiety, and 1 in 5 students (20%) aren't anxious at all about the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, 1 out of 5 (19%) students who are attending remote-only classes report experiencing constant stress or fear about what is going on in their life, while 1 out of 4 (26%) say they experience it often. Compared to students who are taking a blend of in-person and remote courses, 15% say they constantly experience stress, and 27% report feeling stressed often.

Students attending remote-only more likely to be very anxious about COVID-19

Which of the following best describes your anxiety level regarding COVID-19?



In particular, students who are concerned about COVID-19 could have used more support than they received. For example, for students who identified themselves as “very” or “somewhat” anxious about COVID-19, 70% reported that they could have used more support than they received — more than twice the number for students who were not as anxious about COVID-19. While catching COVID-19 was not the top concern among students (see Chart 3), it ranked as a top three concern. Says one student:

[I'm] extremely anxious. My school is not handling COVID well, and even though everyone I know tries to stay safe. I've had a COVID scare over 4 times now. My roommate is quarantined, a kid at my school has died, and our active cases skyrocket every day. I'm scared to go to my classes, I'm scared to touch handles using my bare hands, and I'm scared of unknowingly getting it and giving to the people I love. I'm scared to be here. —Appalachian State University, Archeology major

III. SUPPORTING THE STUDENT

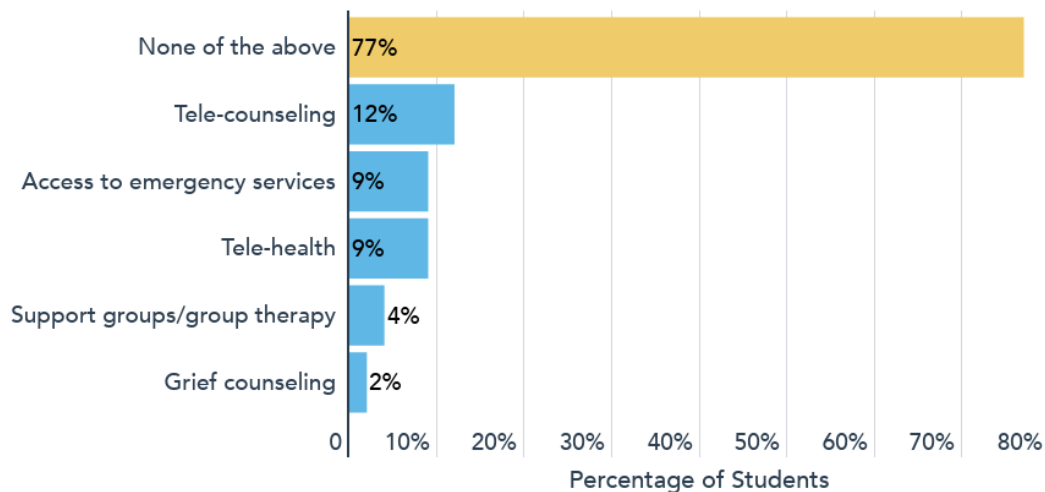
Universities play an important role in student support, but many students report not getting the resources they need

Recently, colleges have taken initiatives to help students manage their stress and anxiety. For example, Loyola University Maryland has established an online peer-to-peer mental health community that is moderated by health professionals and is available 24/7. Despite many colleges' efforts to support students, the vast majority (77%) of students in this study report that they have not used the resources their colleges have offered. Among the services students have used, the most popular are tele-counseling (12%) and tele-health (9%) services. Usage of such services are the same between students attending their colleges exclusively remotely and both in person and remotely.

Resources appear to be reaching students who report experiencing more anxiety. Of the students that used tele-health and tele-counseling services, these students are also more likely to report being anxious about COVID-19 than those who didn't use them. Specifically, 26% of students who used tele-counseling report being very anxious, while 20% of students who did not use tele-counseling felt the same. Similarly, 23% of students who utilized tele-counseling "constantly" felt anxious or worried about what is going on in their life, compared to 17% of students who did not use tele-counseling and are constantly anxious.

Vast majority of students have not used any resources offered by colleges

Have you used any of the following resources from your college to support you during COVID-19?



Despite many students not using the support their college provided during this time, utilization rates of tele-counseling and tele-health are similar across races. Nonwhite students are equally likely to use services from their college for support when compared to their white counterparts. However, students of color, more specifically Black students are more likely to report using emergency services like food and housing than white students (13% compared to 7%). Male students are among the least likely to use any of the resources provided by their college, with 79% saying they did not use any of the resources. Similarly, female students are much more likely to report using services (20%) than their male counterparts (13%)

Colleges need to do more

Almost half (46%) of the students experiencing high levels of anxiety and stress about COVID-19 reported being extremely dissatisfied with their college’s offering of mental health services, signaling that what universities are offering isn’t enough. For students who are extremely satisfied with their university’s mental health services, almost a quarter (24%) report no anxiety at all regarding COVID-19. Data from this survey shows that many students are struggling with anxiety and stress, and many of those students are dissatisfied with the mental and emotional health services their college has to offer.

Majority of students aren't aware of resources their college has to offer

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your college's offering of the following services?

		All Students	Remote Only	Remote and In Person
Mental Health Services	<i>Extremely satisfied</i>	13%	13%	15%
	<i>Somewhat satisfied</i>	27%	27%	29%
	<i>Somewhat dissatisfied</i>	17%	17%	15%
	<i>Extremely dissatisfied</i>	7%	7%	6%
	<i>I'm not sure</i>	33%	33%	33%
	<i>My college did not provide this</i>	3%	3%	1%
Emotional Well-Being Resources	<i>Extremely satisfied</i>	13%	13%	14%
	<i>Somewhat satisfied</i>	29%	29%	29%
	<i>Somewhat dissatisfied</i>	19%	20%	18%
	<i>Extremely dissatisfied</i>	7%	7%	6%
	<i>I'm not sure</i>	28%	27%	28%
	<i>My college did not provide this</i>	3%	4%	5%
Health and Wellness Resources	<i>Extremely satisfied</i>	15%	14%	16%
	<i>Somewhat satisfied</i>	30%	29%	32%
	<i>Somewhat dissatisfied</i>	20%	18%	20%
	<i>Extremely dissatisfied</i>	8%	8%	8%
	<i>I'm not sure</i>	23%	25%	21%
	<i>My college did not provide this</i>	5%	5%	3%

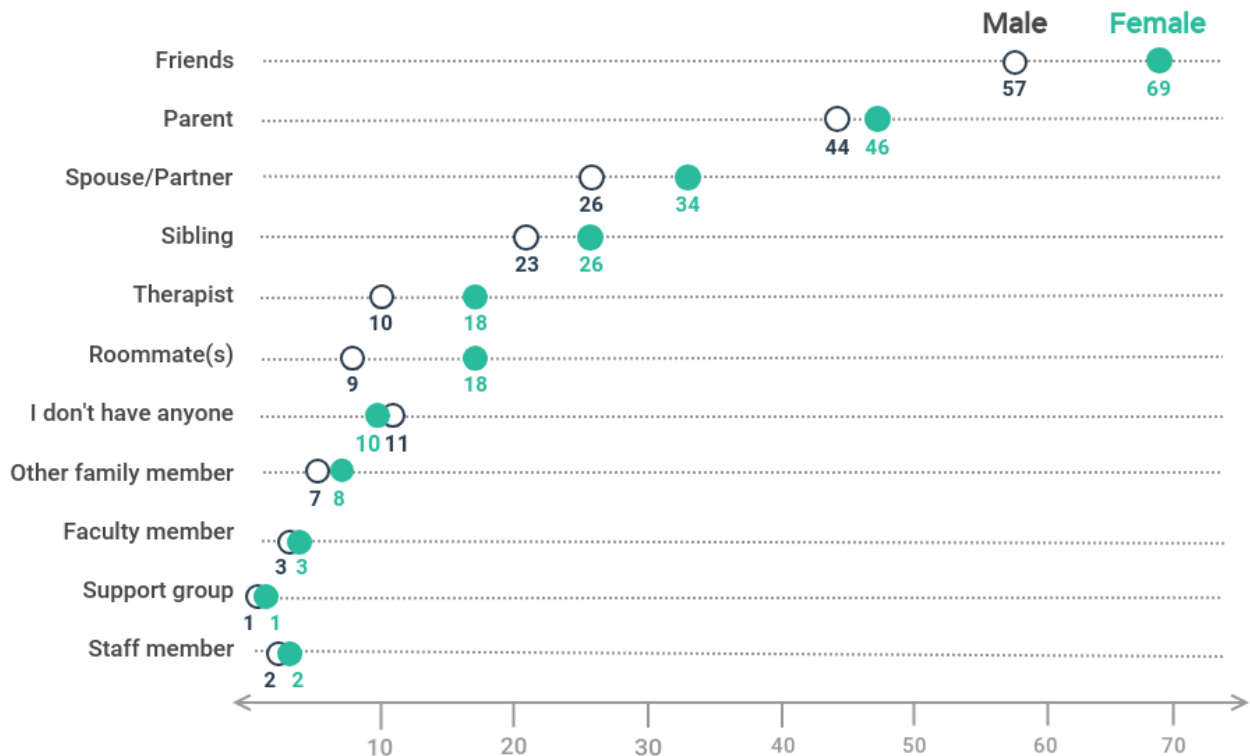
Potentially, one issue is that colleges aren't showcasing the resources that they do have to offer. Roughly one-third of students report being unaware of any initiative their college has offered to support them during this time, whether it is mental health services (33%), emotional well-being services (28%), or health and wellness resources (23%). There are no differences between students who were attending their courses exclusively remotely, or in a hybrid environment, so this suggests that campuses could do more to promote their offerings on their websites, by email or through push notifications, or launch new programs to address these needs.

A gap between males and females in the support they need and receive

Female students in this study reveal a support gap. Female students were much more likely than their male counterparts to say that they could have used additional support (58% compared to 45%) during the past six months. Moreover, we see this same contrast in the ways that male students and female students are getting support. Female students are much more likely to say that they reached out to get support when they were going through challenging times. For example, 64% of female students report talking to a friend or family member, while only 37% of male students did the same. Male students are much more likely than their female counterparts to report that they did not do anything for additional support, with a third of them reporting so (35%).

Women more likely to turn to friends and mental health professionals

Generally speaking, who do you turn to for emotional support?

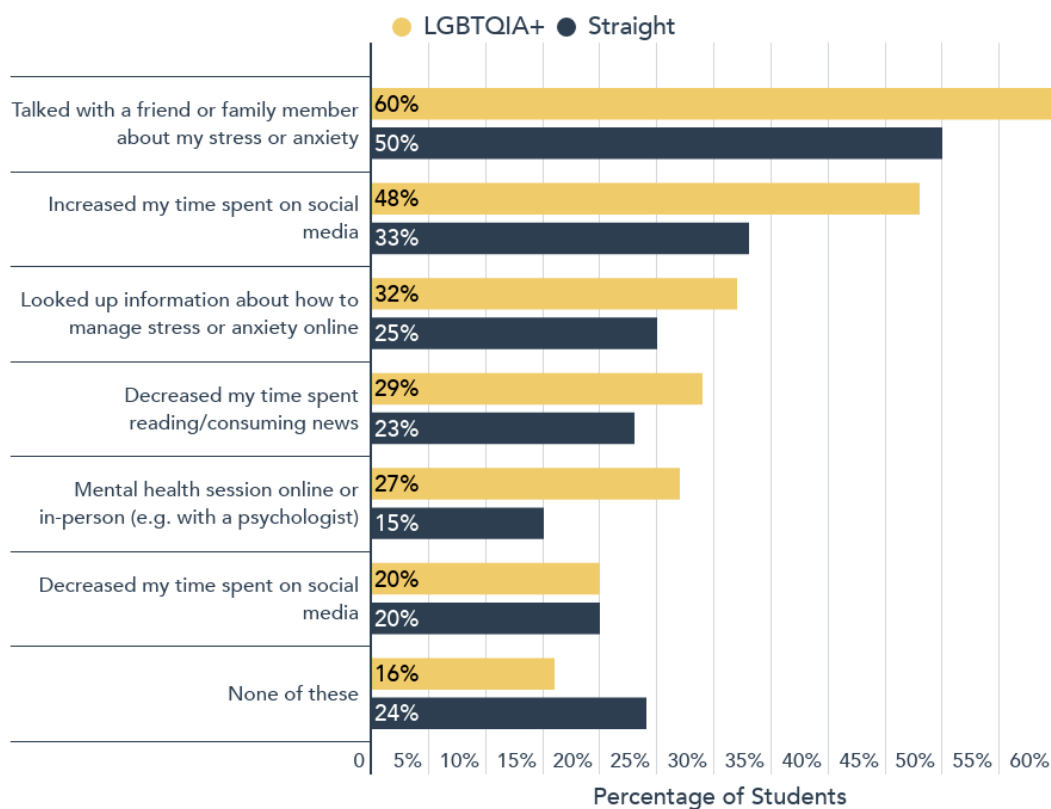


How are students getting the support they need?

When it comes to getting support during stressful periods, most students turn to their family and friends. Overall, 53% of students reported talking with a friend or family member when they need help, while nearly 1 in 4 (38%) students increased their time on social media. One-quarter (27%) of students look up information on how they could better manage their anxiety online. Only 1 in 6 (17%) students report turning to a mental health session when they need support, while on the whole, 22% of students report not taking any action when they might need support.

Students identifying as LGBTQIA+ are more likely to report getting support

Have you done any of the following when you have felt stress or anxiety related to COVID?



Students who identify as non-straight (LGBTQIA+) report not only experiencing more stress and anxiety in the last several months compared to students who identify as straight, but are also more likely to report getting support. LGBTQIA+ students are more likely than their straight peers to have used all sources of support we asked about, with the exception of decreasing their time spent on social media (tied at 20%). Notably, these students are more likely to reach out and schedule a mental health counseling session. While LGBTQIA+ students report feeling more stress and anxiety in this period, they are also getting the help that they need, although we should not be too quick to assume that this gap is entirely closed.

Several students noted in their open comments that they were not able to get the professional health support that they needed.

I miss my friends and have a very busy semester with classes, three jobs, law school applications and a senior thesis, and I've run out of free sessions for counseling and so have to be careful budgeting for that when I feel like I need to talk to a therapist. –
Harvard University, Sociology major

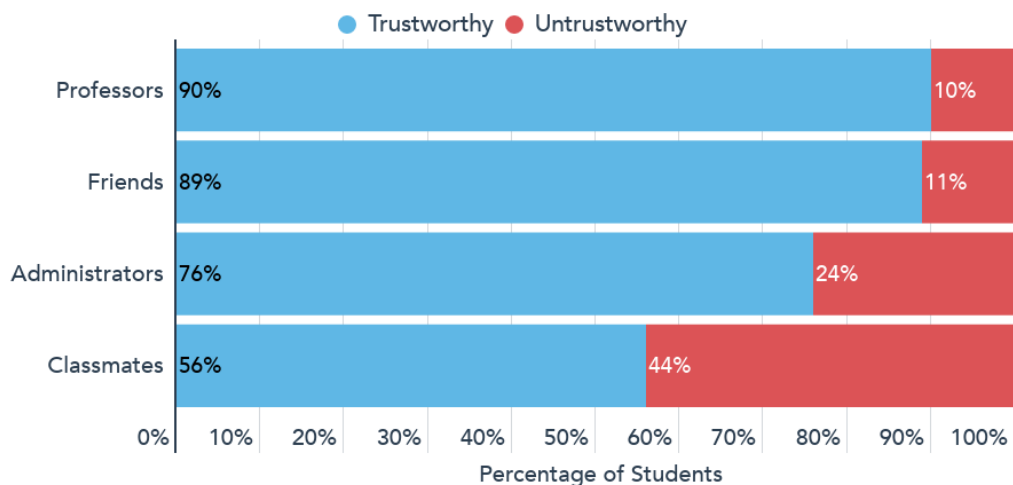
Friends are most trusted form of support

Turning to a close friend or family member is the natural place that students go to for support in periods of stress. When asked who students are most likely to turn to, a majority (64%) turn to friends, and just under half (45%) confer with their parents. Students are less likely to report turning to a spouse, sibling or other family member. Female students in this study were more likely to report reaching out to a mental health professional (18%) than their fellow male students (10%). Less than 2% of students report turning to a faculty or staff member on their campus for support.

The trust students place in their friends extends to assuming their friends will do what is right on campus in regard to decisions related to COVID-19. While students are highly trusting of their friends (89%), their confidence does not extend to the wider student body to make good decisions related to COVID-19.

Students find their classmates least trustworthy

How trustworthy are _____ to do the right thing for your college as it relates to COVID-19?



Results also show that students place high trust in their professors to do the right thing related to COVID-19, the highest of any group asked about. An overwhelming majority of students trust their professors (90%) and friends (89%) when it comes to doing the right thing during COVID-19. But

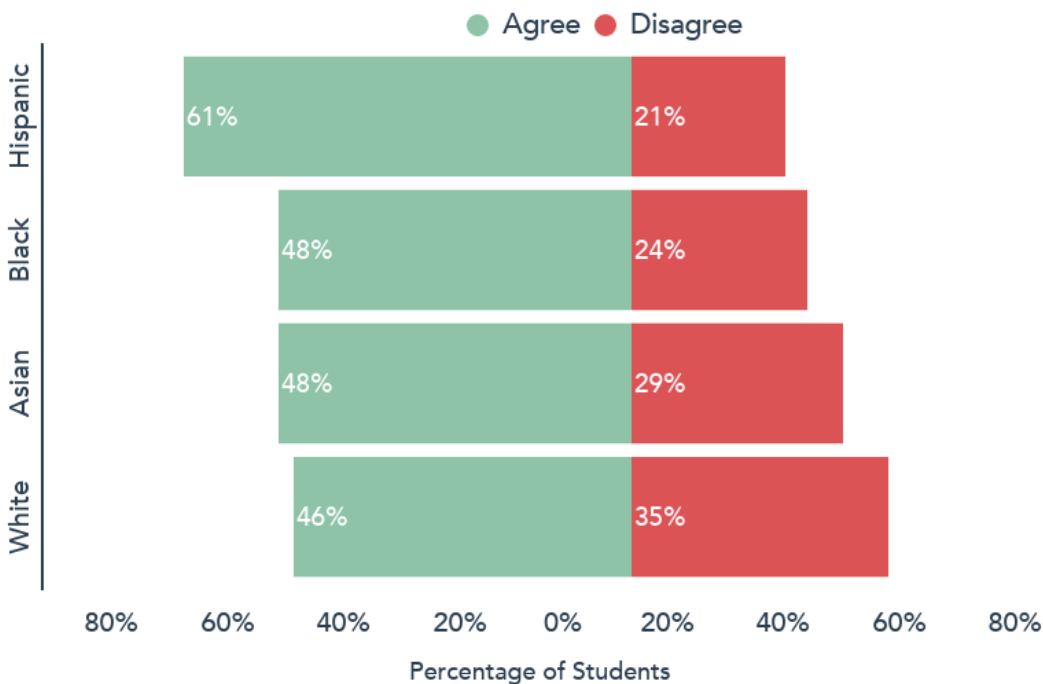
this is in stark contrast to the trust that students place in their fellow classmates, with only 56% of students trusting their peers to do the right thing. Many open-ended responses reveal that students are wary of their fellow students attending large gatherings or parties, and report feeling unsafe and vulnerable as a result of their actions. Says one student:

The last seven months have been a lot. When I was at home it was great. Not too many concerns but we were still safe. Then I came to campus and it became terrible. Two of my roommates caught COVID, all of them still don't follow any of the guidelines, they don't sanitize our living space. I'm not comfortable around them and I can't trust them.
–University of Dayton, Chemistry major

We asked students whether or not they believed that their universities cared about them as a person. Overall, nearly half (49%) of students agree that their university cares about them, while almost 1 in 3 (30%) disagreed with that statement. There are no differences between male students and female students in this assessment; however, a different story emerges between racial groups. Hispanic students are the most likely to agree (60%) that their university cares about them as a person (Strongly, somewhat or slightly agree responses combined), while white students are least likely to agree that their university cared about them, with 35% of white students slightly, somewhat or strongly disagree with this statement. Students attending private schools (56%) are more likely to believe that their school cares about them, compared to 45% of students attending public universities feeling the same.

Hispanic students most likely to agree that their college cares about them

Do you agree or disagree with the following: "My college cares about me as a person"?



IV: THRIVING IN A COVID-ERA

While COVID-19 is wreaking havoc on college campuses, the coronavirus pandemic is not even the issue that students are most concerned about. When asked what issue they are following most closely, almost half (45%) of students report the 2020 election as their top concern. The coronavirus pandemic ranks second (21%), but is only just ahead of students' third concern, racial justice and policing issues in America (19%).

Students are facing overwhelming stress. These results show that students have used very few of the resources their college has offered to help them mitigate the challenges they are facing now (e.g., less than 12% have used tele-health offerings from their university). While it is clear that the university is meeting the needs of a portion of its students, most report that when it comes to getting support that they turn to friends and family, rather than their college.

However, this survey also reveals that there are a subset of students who are thriving. Whether spending more time with family, drinking less, or being in touch with their own mental health, it should not be overlooked that there are students who are coping, and coping well. Says one student at the University of Texas, Austin:

My mental health immediately improved once school went online. I felt a huge sense of relief and my entire nervous system relaxed and healed. I was able to engage more with my family and friends. I was able to enjoy online zoom classes, outdoors in my own backyard. Neighbors were out walking- I was able to connect with them. Traffic was gone, people seemed calmer. Almost like there was a different purpose and people pulled together to fulfill that. Yes, the masks were weird and standing in line to grocery shop was bizarre. But there were more strengths than weaknesses and I fully believe the world needed to be forced to "chill out" for a little while. Families got closer. I wouldn't be surprised if mental health didn't improve across the board in spite of the stress and fear of COVID-19. I hope school can remain online and work for others can remain optional online as well. It would be awesome if after COVID was a thing of the past, the lessons of relaxing and staying home more, remained intact.

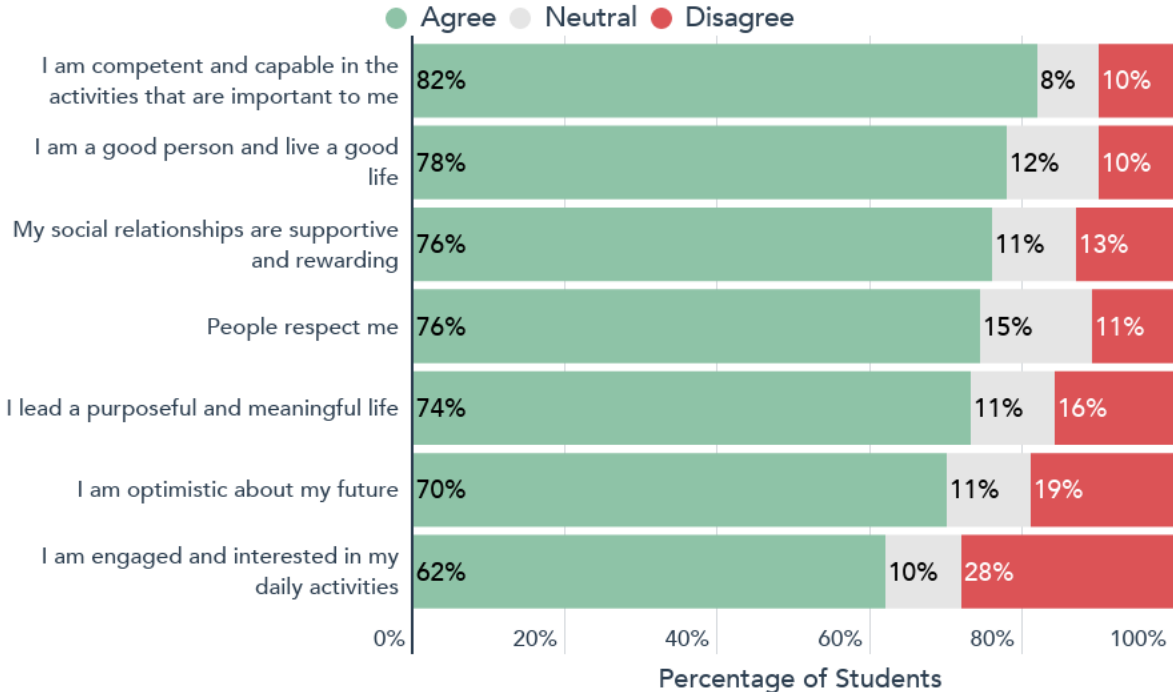
University of Texas, Austin

Gen Z has been characterized as one of the most optimistic generations in history, and while students are facing stress and anxiety in this moment, they are also overwhelmingly optimistic. When asked, 69% of students agree that they are optimistic about the future. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of students agree that they lead a purposeful and meaningful life, and even more (82%) agree that they are competent in activities that are important to them. While a significant number of students disagree that they are engaged in their daily activities, the restrictions that

COVID-19 places on daily living make this figure hardly surprising. Seeing that most students are still engaged in their relationships, their own purpose, and have strong belief in their future suggests that this moment, like for the rest of the world, is temporary, and that students will recover and thrive.

Student Optimism in Selves and Future

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



CONCLUSION

Like all Americans, college students faced significant stress and anxiety at the onset of COVID-19. The results from a study of 3,500 college students reveals that nearly half (44%) have faced anxiety “always” or “often” over the past six months. They have a variety of concerns: from maintaining their relationships with their friends (63%), to their mental health (61%), to catching COVID-19 (57%). But the most pressing concern that students report navigating through is staying engaged in their coursework while learning remotely (72%).

More than half of students (56%) are currently learning exclusively remotely, and the rest (42%) are learning both in person and remotely. Both groups are challenged to maintain their same levels of engagement in their coursework compared to spring, but while they struggle to maintain their enthusiasm, they also report that compared to the spring, they are spending more time on their studies (55%).

While students are facing challenges in their mental health, they also report that they are overwhelmingly not using the resources provided by their university. The results from this study show that only about 10% of students have used remote health services such as counseling or health care resources. Almost no students (less than 5%) report using grief counseling or support groups, suggesting that there is either a gap in what colleges have to offer, a gap in making such services known to students, or that students would not turn to their college for support when facing challenges related to stress surrounding COVID-19.

While students report notable stress in this survey, they also write about the positive aspects that COVID-19 have brought about in their lives. In fact, many write that they spend time better learning how to care for themselves during the pandemic and see the bright side of an otherwise very stressful situation.

Earlier in the pandemic, I felt a lot of grief due to losing my old life. I moved home with my parents, had to leave most of my friends, and spent two months doing school online where I couldn't really see a lot of people when I needed that emotional support. However, now, I think I am more in touch with myself and the people I love, spending more time that helps me relax, and I have a little more time to do the things and spend time with the people I love. While I am still anxious about the world, and about catching COVID-19 (because our federal government has offered us little guidance and therefore it is genuinely dangerous in most places). I also feel like I have more control over my mental health than previously. –Chatham University

We see similar optimism reflected in the survey. While students note that their regular engagement in their daily activities is limited, they are overwhelmingly optimistic about their future, have positive relationships in their lives and that they are competent and capable in their daily lives. Students, like most Americans, are experiencing challenges brought on by the pandemic, but also seem to have confidence that this too shall pass.

METHODOLOGY

The survey was designed and conducted by College Pulse and made possible through funding from Course Hero and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. The survey was fielded September 28th - October 5th and come from a sample of 3,500 undergraduates who are currently enrolled full-time in four-year degree programs in the U.S. There are 196 universities represented in this sample. The margin of error for the U.S. undergraduate population is +/- 1 percentage points, and the margin of error for college student sub-demographics range from 2-5 percentage points.

The initial sample was drawn from College Pulse's American College Student Panel™ that includes more than 450,000 verified undergraduate students representing more than 1,000 different two- and four- year colleges and universities in all 50 states. Panel members are recruited by a number of methods to help ensure student diversity in the panel population, including web advertising, permission-based email campaigns, and partnerships with university-affiliated organizations. To ensure the panel reflects the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the American college population, we recruit panelists from a wide variety of different institutions. The panel includes students attending large public universities, small private colleges, online universities, historically black colleges like Howard University and religiously-affiliated schools such as Brigham Young University.

College Pulse uses a two-stage validation process to ensure that all its surveys include only students currently enrolled in four-year colleges or universities. Students are required to provide an .edu email address to join the panel and verify that they are currently enrolled either part-time or full-time in a two- or four-year degree program. All invitations to complete surveys are sent using the student's .edu email address or through notification in the College Pulse App that is available on iOS and Android platforms.

We apply a post-stratification adjustment based on demographic distributions from multiple data sources, including the 2017 Current Population Survey (CPS), the 2016 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) and the 2017-18 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The post-stratification weight rebalances the sample based on a number of important benchmark attributes, such as race, gender, class year, voter registration status and financial aid status. The sample weighting is accomplished using an iterative proportional fitting (IFP) process that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables. Weights are trimmed to prevent individual interviews from having too much influence on the final results.

The use of these weights in statistical analysis ensures that the demographic characteristics of the sample closely approximate the demographic characteristics of the target populations. Even with these adjustments, surveys may be subject to error or bias due to question wording, context and order effects.

For more information on our methodology, please visit <https://collegepulse.com/methodology>.

SURVEY TOPLINE

COLLEGE PULSE
STUDENT WELLNESS STUDY
09/28/20-10/05/20
n=3,500 CURRENTLY ENROLLED, FULL-TIME, FOUR-YEAR UNDERGRADS

Q.1 Are you currently enrolled full-time at a college or university?

- 96% Yes, at a four year college or university
- <1% Yes, at a two year college [EXIT SURVEY]
- 1% I am not currently enrolled, but plan to enroll at some time in the future [EXIT SURVEY]
- 2% No, I am not currently enrolled [EXIT SURVEY]
- 1% Something else [EXIT SURVEY]
- 0% Refused [EXIT SURVEY]
- 100% Total

Q.2 As of today, how are you attending classes?

- 2% Just in person
- 56% Just online / remotely
- 42% A blend of online and in person learning
- 0% Refused
- 100% Total

Q.3 I _____ of how my college decided to offer classes this fall, whether they are on campus or online.

- 61% Approve
- 17% Disapprove
- 22% Neither approve nor disapprove
- 0% Refused
- 100% Total

Q.4 How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with how your college has offered:
Mental health services during COVID-19 (e.g., counseling)

13%	Extremely satisfied
27%	Somewhat satisfied
17%	Somewhat dissatisfied
7%	Extremely dissatisfied
3%	My college did not provide this
33%	I'm not sure
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.5 How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with how your college has offered:
Emotional well-being resources they have provided (e.g., resources about to deal with stress or manage your anxiety)

13%	Extremely satisfied
29%	Somewhat satisfied
19%	Somewhat dissatisfied
7%	Extremely dissatisfied
5%	My college did not provide this
28%	I'm not sure
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.6 How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with how your college has offered:
Resources to manage your health and wellness (e.g., healthy eating, meditation or exercise resources)

15%	Extremely satisfied
30%	Somewhat satisfied
20%	Somewhat dissatisfied
8%	Extremely dissatisfied
5%	My college did not provide this
23%	I'm not sure
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.7 Have you used any of the following resources from your college to support you during COVID-19? Select any that apply. [Select up to 6 options]

9%	Tele-health
12%	Tele-counseling
9%	Access to emergency services (e.g., food, internet, or emergency housing)
2%	Grief counseling
4%	Support groups / group therapy
77%	None of the above
0%	Refused

Q.8 From the list below, please select which of the following best describes your anxiety level regarding COVID-19?

21%	Very anxious
35%	Somewhat anxious
25%	Slightly anxious
17%	Not anxious
2%	Not applicable / Unsure
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.9 In the past 6 months, how often have you felt anxious, worried or scared about what is going on in your life?

6%	Never
30%	A few times
21%	Sometimes
27%	Often
17%	Constantly
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.10 Which would you say is the issue you are most concerned about? From the list below, what, if anything are you concerned about as it relates to COVID-19? [Select up to 10 options]

72%	Staying engaged while learning online
28%	Graduating on time
57%	Catching COVID-19
61%	My mental well-being
37%	Social / physical distancing on campus
63%	Making friends / maintaining relationships
48%	Getting a job after graduation
51%	Your personal finance situation
5%	Balancing child care and home-schooling with my own work and academic demands
38%	The economy
7%	Something else
2%	None of the above
0%	Refused

Q.11 Which would you say is the issue you are most concerned about?

27%	Staying engaged while learning online
3%	Graduating on time
14%	Catching COVID-19
22%	My mental well-being
2%	Social / physical distancing on campus
10%	Getting a job after graduation
10%	Your personal finance situation
1%	Balancing child care and home-schooling with my own work and academic demands
1%	Something else
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.12 How trustworthy are the following groups to do the right thing for your college as it relates to COVID-19? **Administrators**

24%	Very trustworthy
52%	Somewhat trustworthy
17%	Somewhat untrustworthy
8%	Very untrustworthy
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.13 How trustworthy are the following groups to do the right thing for your college as it relates to COVID-19? **Professors**

41%	Very trustworthy
49%	Somewhat trustworthy
8%	Somewhat untrustworthy
3%	Very untrustworthy
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.14 How trustworthy are the following groups to do the right thing for your college as it relates to COVID-19? **Classmates**

12%	Very trustworthy
44%	Somewhat trustworthy
32%	Somewhat untrustworthy
12%	Very untrustworthy
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.15 How trustworthy are the following groups to do the right thing for your college as it relates to COVID-19?****Friends****

41%	Very trustworthy
48%	Somewhat trustworthy
10%	Somewhat untrustworthy
2%	Very untrustworthy
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.16 Compared to the Spring 2020 semester, since you have resumed your courses, for each of the following, are you doing them more, less, about the same, or not at all?****Sleeping****

23%	More
37%	Less
37%	About the same
2%	Not at all
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.17 Compared to the Spring 2020 semester, since you have resumed your courses, for each of the following, are you doing them more, less, about the same, or not at all?****Connecting with friends****

10%	More
65%	Less
18%	About the same
7%	Not at all
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.18 Compared to the Spring 2020 semester, since you have resumed your courses, for each of the following, are you doing them more, less, about the same, or not at all?****Exercising****

19%	More
44%	Less
24%	About the same
13%	Not at all
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.19 Compared to the Spring 2020 semester, since you have resumed your courses, for each of the following, are you doing them more, less, about the same, or not at all?****Playing video games****

28%	More
18%	Less
24%	About the same
30%	Not at all
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.20 Compared to the Spring 2020 semester, since you have resumed your courses, for each of the following, are you doing them more, less, about the same, or not at all?****Watching TV / Movies****

42%	More
19%	Less
33%	About the same
5%	Not at all
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.21 Compared to the Spring 2020 semester, since you have resumed your courses, for each of the following, are you doing them more, less, about the same, or not at all?****Spending time on social media****

50%	More
14%	Less
32%	About the same
4%	Not at all
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.22 Compared to the Spring 2020 semester, since you have resumed your courses, for each of the following, are you doing them more, less, about the same, or not at all?****Spending time with family****

30%	More
36%	Less
26%	About the same
8%	Not at all
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.23 Compared to the Spring 2020 semester, since you have resumed your courses, for each of the following, are you doing them more, less, about the same, or not at all?****Cooking****

39%	More
21%	Less
28%	About the same
11%	Not at all
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.24 Compared to the Spring 2020 semester, since you have resumed your courses, for each of the following, are you doing them more, less, about the same, or not at all?****Eating fresh fruits and vegetables****

26%	More
27%	Less
43%	About the same
4%	Not at all
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.25 Compared to the Spring 2020 semester, since you have resumed your courses, for each of the following, are you doing them more, less, about the same, or not at all?****Drinking alcohol****

21%	More
14%	Less
17%	About the same
48%	Not at all
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.26 Compared to the Spring 2020 semester, since you have resumed your courses, for each of the following, are you doing them more, less, about the same, or not at all?****Using cannabis / marijuana****

11%	More
5%	Less
8%	About the same
76%	Not at all
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.27 Compared to the Spring 2020 semester, since you have resumed your courses, for each of the following, are you doing them more, less, about the same, or not at all?****Working for pay****

26%	More
19%	Less
20%	About the same
34%	Not at all
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.28 Compared to the Spring 2020 semester, since you have resumed your courses, for each of the following, are you doing them more, less, about the same, or not at all?****Coursework****

55%	More
13%	Less
31%	About the same
1%	Not at all
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.29 Have you done any of the following when you have felt stress or anxiety related to COVID-19? [Select up to 7 options]

17%	Mental health session online or in-person (e.g. with a psychologist, counselor, social worker)
27%	Looked up information about how to manage stress or anxiety online
53%	Talked with a friend or family member about my stressor anxiety
38%	Increased my time spent on social media 20%
	Decreased my time spent on social media
22%	Decreased my time spent reading / consuming news

22% None of these
0% Refused

Q.1 In the last 6 months, could you have used more emotional support than you received?

53% Yes
22% No
25% I'm not sure
0% Refused
100% Total

Q.30 Concerning emotional support, would you say that you could have used:
[Question only shown to students who answered "Yes" to "In the last 6 months, could you have used more emotional support than you received?"]

38% A lot more
42% Some more
15% A little more
4% I'm not sure
0% Refused
100% Total

Q.31 Generally speaking, who do you turn to for emotional support? [Select up to 12 options]

45% Parent
24% Sibling
8% Other family member
64% Friends
30% Spouse / partner / boyfriend / girlfriend
15% Therapist or counselor
1% Support group
15% Roommate(s)
2% Faculty member on campus

- 1% Staff member on campus
- 11% I don't have a person I can talk to in my life right now
- 4% Something else
- 0% Refused

Q.32 At the onset of COVID-19 in the United States, did you:

- 53% Stay in your same location
- 36% Moved to your family's home
- 10% Moved to a different location
- 1% Something else
- 0% Refused
- 100% Total

Q.33 Is your current living situation:

- 23% An improvement since COVID-19
- 17% Worse since COVID-19
- 61% The same
- 0% Refused
- 100% Total

Q.34 How much do you agree or disagree:**I lead a purposeful and meaningful life**

- 18% Strongly agree
- 32% Agree
- 24% Slightly agree
- 11% Neither agree nor disagree
- 8% Slightly disagree
- 5% Disagree
- 3% Strongly disagree
- 0% Refused
- 100% Total

Q.35 How much do you agree or disagree:**My social relationships are supportive and rewarding**

15%	Strongly agree
38%	Agree
23%	Slightly agree
11%	Neither agree nor disagree
7%	Slightly disagree
4%	Disagree
2%	Strongly disagree
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.36 How much do you agree or disagree:**I am engaged and interested in my daily activities**

10%	Strongly agree
25%	Agree
27%	Slightly agree
10%	Neither agree nor disagree
15%	Slightly disagree
9%	Disagree
4%	Strongly disagree
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.37 How much do you agree or disagree:**I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others**

18%	Strongly agree
37%	Agree
24%	Slightly agree
13%	Neither agree nor disagree
5%	Slightly disagree
2%	Disagree
2%	Strongly disagree
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.38 How much do you agree or disagree:**I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me.**

21%	Strongly agree
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38%	Agree
23%	Slightly agree
8%	Neither agree nor disagree
5%	Slightly disagree
3%	Disagree
2%	Strongly disagree
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.39 How much do you agree or disagree:**I am a good person and live a good life**

22%	Strongly agree
36%	Agree
20%	Slightly agree
12%	Neither agree nor disagree
5%	Slightly disagree
3%	Disagree
2%	Strongly disagree
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.40 How much do you agree or disagree:**I am optimistic about my future**

21%	Strongly agree
27%	Agree
21%	Slightly agree
11%	Neither agree nor disagree
10%	Slightly disagree
5%	Disagree
4%	Strongly disagree
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.41 How much do you agree or disagree:**People respect me**

15%	Strongly agree
39%	Agree
22%	Slightly agree
15%	Neither agree nor disagree
6%	Slightly disagree
3%	Disagree
2%	Strongly disagree
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.42 How much do you agree or disagree:**My college cares about me as a person**

9%	Strongly agree
20%	Agree
20%	Slightly agree
20%	Neither agree nor disagree
13%	Slightly disagree
9%	Disagree
8%	Strongly disagree
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.43 Do you know anyone personally who has had COVID-19?

6%	Yes, myself
7%	Yes, someone in my household
56%	Yes, someone I know outside my household
30%	No, I don't know anyone who has had COVID-19
0%	Refused
100%	Total

Q.44 In a few words, would you please describe what the last several months of living during COVID-19 have been like for you?
[OPEN-RESPONSE]

Q.45 There are a lot of issues in the news right now. Which issue would you say that you are following most closely?

45%	The 2020 Election
21%	The COVID-19 Pandemic
19%	Racial justice and policing in America
2%	The gap between rich and poor
3%	Climate change
3%	The economy
1%	Immigration
5%	Something else
0%	Refused
100%	Total



COLLEGE PULSE

Headquarters

350 Brannan, Suite #340

San Francisco, CA 94107

t. +1 (415) 547-0791

www.collegepulse.com