



## National Parents Union: Coronavirus Impact Survey Findings Week #4: May 18–20, 2020

### **Children's education and general wellbeing continue to be top concerns for parents of public school K-12 students.**

- Six in 10 parents (60%) worry a lot or some about their children staying on track in school for the next grade, and 57% worry a lot or some about school closures having a negative impact on their children's education. Consistent with previous weeks, concerns about children missing important social interactions (59%) and someone in their family getting the coronavirus (57%) are also among the most commonly shared.
- Help keeping children engaged in good activities continues to top the list of things parents say would be most helpful to have in order to cope with the coronavirus crisis, with 52% giving that response.
- While other issues rank higher, economic anxiety continues to affect a substantial share of parents. Forty-six percent worry a lot or some about being able to make ends meet, and 14% say that losing a job or income is one of the greatest hardships they have faced due to the coronavirus outbreak. Forty-two percent say having more money to spend on necessities would be one of the most helpful things for them to have while coping with the crisis, making it one of the top responses to that question.

### **For parents, concerns about children missing social interactions and being affected emotionally compete with concerns about the risks of exposure to COVID-19.**

- More than seven in 10 (72%) parents say their children have been less time with friends as a result of the coronavirus situation, including 60% who say their children have been spending a lot less time with friends.
- When asked which concerns them more thinking about the next couple of months, 42% say they worry more that their children missing important social interactions could negatively affect their emotional wellbeing, while 49% are more worried that allowing their children to hang out with friends could put them at risk of being exposed to the coronavirus.

### **Most parents have received a coronavirus relief payment. While parents say having more money would be helpful, when asked about how much Congress has been spending on economic relief efforts, as many parents say Congress has been spending the right amount as say Congress has been spending too little.**

- Only 18% of parents say they have not received a coronavirus relief payment, down from 34% at the end of April. In this week's survey, 6% say they are eligible and have not received a payment, and 12% say they are not eligible. The most common ways people have used their relief payment are buying groceries or household supplies (37%) and paying for utilities, phone bills, or internet service (34%).

- Thinking about the situation in their local community, 38% of parents think Congress is spending too little on economic relief efforts, but 38% say Congress is spending about the right amount. Twelve percent say Congress is spending too much.
  - Democrats are somewhat more likely than Republicans to say Congress is spending too little (44% vs. 32%).

**Most parents continue to express confidence in their own ability to help their children continue learning and rate their schools positively, even while a plurality say their children are learning less while at home. Safety remains a higher priority for parents than getting children back to school.**

- About eight in 10 (81%) parents say they feel very or somewhat confident about being able to help their child continue learning while their school is closed, and seven in 10 (70%) say their school is doing an excellent or good job. While positive school ratings have wavered slightly in the four surveys conducted thus far, the four-week average stands at around 70% rating their school positively.
- More than four in 10 (46%) parents with a child whose school is closed say their child has been learning less while at home. A plurality have given that response the past four weeks.
- Sixty-four percent of parents say schools should remain closed until they are certain there is no health risk, even if it means students fall farther behind. Thinking about schools reopening, most parents (62%) say schools should be focused on rethinking how we educate students and coming up with new ways to teach students rather than trying to get back to the way things were before COVID-19.

**Nearly half of parents worry a lot or some about how the situation is affecting their children's mental health and emotional wellbeing, and substantial shares report negative effects on their children's emotions.**

- Forty-nine percent worry a lot or some about how the coronavirus situation is affecting their children's mental health and emotional wellbeing, and an additional 26% say they worry a little.
- When asked if their children have experienced various negative reactions to the coronavirus situation, around three in 10 say their children have felt lonely (31%) or anxious (28%), and 18% say their children have felt scared. Sixteen percent report their children have misbehaved, and 13% that their children have acted out of character or behaved unusually. Twelve percent say their children have experienced depression, and 3% say their children have had suicidal thoughts. Only 35% say their children have not reacted in any of these ways.

**Nearly half of parents worry a lot or some about their children's screen time, but more feel their children's use of technology during this time has had positive effects than feel it has had negative effects.**

- Nearly half of parents say they worry a lot or some about their children spending too much time on screens as a result of the coronavirus situation (49%), and 41% worry a lot or some about their children being exposed to the negative risks of online social interaction, such as cyberbullying.
  - Parents of younger and older students alike share similar levels of concern about screen time and the negative risks of online social interaction. Fifty-one percent of parents with children in kindergarten or elementary school say they worry a lot or some about their children spending

too much time on screens, as do 55% of parents of junior high students and 47% of parents of high school students. Forty-three percent of parents of kindergarten to elementary students, 44% of parents of junior high students, and 39% of parents of high school students worry a lot or some about their children being exposed to negative risks such as cyberbullying.

- Majorities of parents say their children have been spending more time using a computer or device to do schoolwork (73%), watching television, movies, or shows online (67%), spending more time playing video games or online games (63%), and spending more time communicating with friends online or using a smartphone (53%). Forty-eight percent say their children have been spending more time on social media.
- However, despite concerns about screen time and broad reports of their children spending increased time online and using technology, more parents perceive the effects of technology and the internet as positive than negative. Pluralities of parents say technology and the internet have had a positive effect on their children's quality of education (49%), mental health and emotional wellbeing (48%), and social connections with friends (45%).