



School Reopening 2020

A Study of Massachusetts Voters

August 11, 2020



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- Sample

- **Population:** Likely voters living in Massachusetts
- **Size:** 600
- **Structure:** Quotas were used to ensure that the sample matched the profile of likely voters. Statistical weighting was used to make final adjustments.
- **Frame:** Online consumer panel

- Data Collection

- Respondents completed their questionnaires online
- Data was collected from July 24 to July 29, 2020
- Quality control procedures were used to remove respondents from the sample if indicators showed they were not sufficiently engaged in answering the questions.

Demographic Profile of the Sample

The demographic profile of the sample matches the characteristics of the Massachusetts electorate

Gender	
Female	53%
Male	47%
Age	
18-24	8%
25-34	13%
35-44	18%
45-54	17%
55-64	19%
65-74	16%
75 +	9%

Education	
High school or less	22%
Some College/2 yr. College	25%
4 yr. College/Grad Degree	53%
Race	
Hispanic	7%
Black	7%
White	82%
Other	4%

Party	
Democrat	36%
Republican	16%
Independent/Unenrolled	49%
Income	
Less than \$25,000	10%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	16%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	38%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	22%
\$150,000 or higher	14%

Summary of Findings

The Landscape in the Summer of 2020

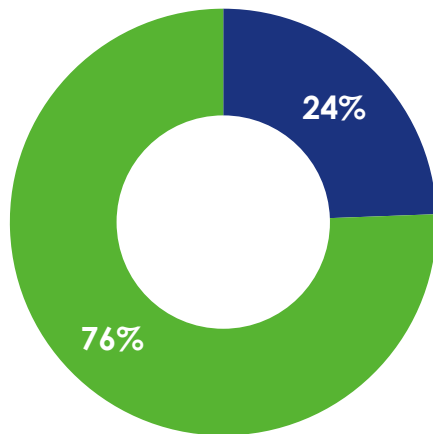
The Landscape

- Voters have deep concerns about where the country is headed but are far more optimistic about the state (note that the research was conducted before the current uptick in coronavirus cases).
- Most voters are concerned about their household's finances. Fear is acute among lower-income households.
- Black Lives Matter has had a strong impact in Massachusetts. Voters of all races agree that schools should include a curriculum addressing issues raised by the movement, including systemic racism.

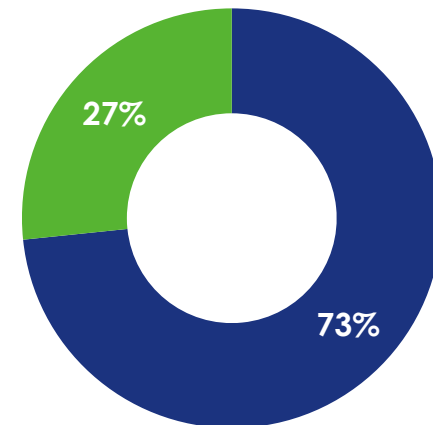
Voters overwhelmingly agree that the country is headed in wrong direction, but MA is on track

Right Direction vs. Wrong Track

Our Country



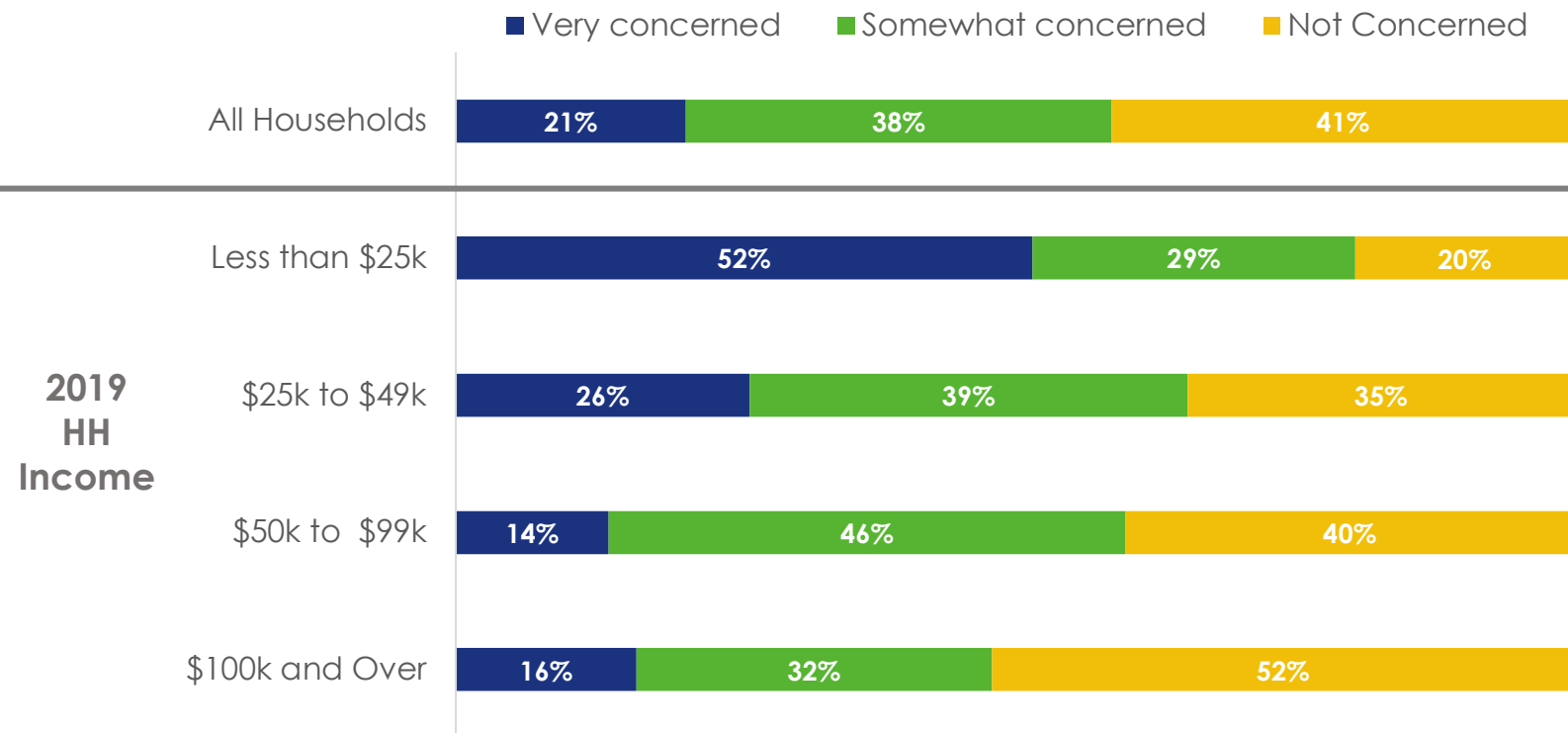
Massachusetts



- Right direction
- Wrong direction

Do you think things in our country are moving in the right direction or do you feel things are pretty seriously off on the wrong track?
Do you think things in Massachusetts are moving in the right direction or do you feel things are pretty seriously off on the wrong track?

Most are concerned about their financial situation, especially low-income households



How concerned are you about your household's financial situation?



Covid19: School Openings and Fear of Contagion

School Openings and Fear of Contagion

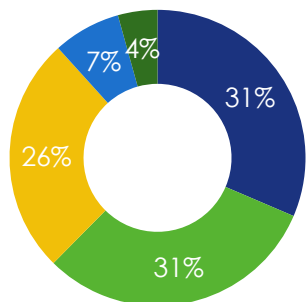
- Fear of students and teachers/educators catching and spreading the coronavirus is almost universal among parents of both K-12 students and non-parents if schools reopen in the fall.
 - Indeed, two-thirds are either extremely or very concerned.
- This fear extends to the state's college and university students, should higher ed institutions open in the fall.
- Given these fears, it is not surprising that both parents and non-parents are not confident about having the schools reopen on schedule. Almost all support a flexible approach.
- In keeping with voters' desire for flexibility, few support maintaining the school day or the MCAS requirements this year.

64% of all parents have family members who are over sixty and 28% of them visit their older family members on a regular basis.

There is widespread fear among parents and non-parents alike that school openings will spread the virus

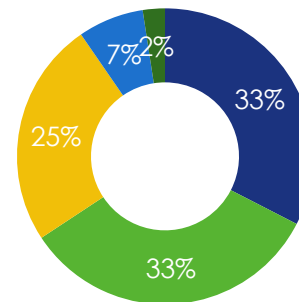
Parents' concern with children/family members catching the virus if schools reopen

Child/Children



How concerned are you about your child/children catching the coronavirus if schools reopen in the fall? (Asked only of parents of K-12 students).

Family Members

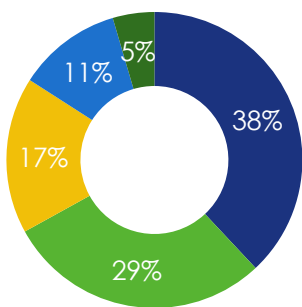


How concerned are you about you and/or other family members catching the coronavirus if schools reopen in the fall? (Asked only of parents of K-12 students).

- Extremely
- Very
- Somewhat
- Only slightly
- Not

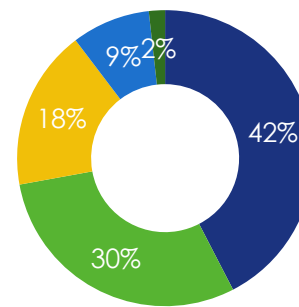
Non-parents' concern with children and educators catching/spreading the virus if schools reopen

Children



If schools fully reopen in the fall, how concerned are you about children catching and spreading the coronavirus? (Asked of those without a child/children attending K-12 schools).

Teachers/Educators



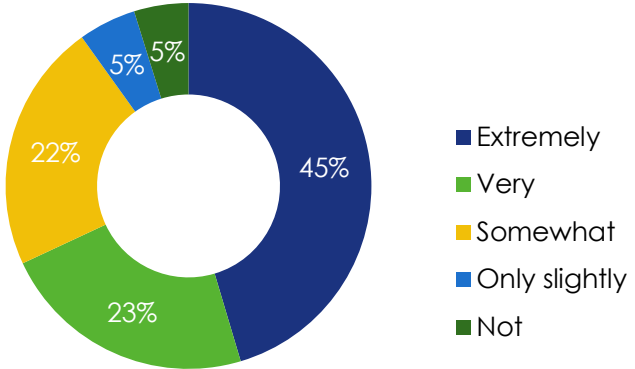
If schools fully reopen in the fall, how concerned are you about teachers/educators catching and spreading the coronavirus? (Asked of those without a child/children attending K-12 schools).

- Extremely
- Very
- Somewhat
- Only slightly
- Not

Parents and non-parents are also fearful of the consequences of colleges/universities opening in the fall

Parents

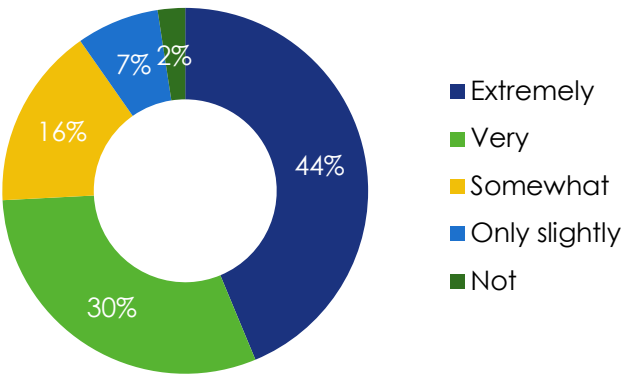
Concern with child/children catching the virus if colleges/universities reopen with students on campus in the fall



How concerned are you about your child/children catching the coronavirus if colleges/universities reopen with students on campus in the fall? (Asked only of parents of college/university students).

Non-Parents

Concern with students catching/spreading the virus if colleges and universities reopen with students on campus in the fall



If colleges and universities reopen in the fall with students on campus, how concerned are you about students catching and spreading the coronavirus? (Asked of those whose children are not college/university students).

These fears lead voters to conclude that we should not be confident opening the schools for all students in the fall

Which of these statements do you most agree with?

We should be confident opening the schools for all students in the fall. Several studies have shown that coronavirus transmission is low among students in school and symptoms are not severe among young people even if they catch the disease.

We should not be confident opening the schools for all students in the fall. We do not fully understand the disease, and while some studies suggest that transmission is low in schools, newer studies show children of a certain age may be as likely as adults to spread the virus.



Part of the debate about how schools should reopen centers on the risk of students catching and spreading the disease. With this in mind, which of these views do you most agree with? (See statements above the bar).

Given voters' lack of confidence in opening schools, it is not surprising that they overwhelmingly prefer a "flexible approach"

Should all students return on schedule, or should there be a flexible approach?

Have **all students return to school on schedule**, which would require relaxing safety guidelines such as reducing social distancing from 6 to 3 feet and not having children below grade 2 wear masks. This would let parents return to work and allow students to get back on track with their education.

Have a **flexible approach** in which remote learning is improved and applied in the beginning of the school year. Then, some students are moved back into schools if coronavirus cases remain low and as health and safety standards are put in place.



As you know, schools were closed last spring to help stop the spread of the coronavirus. The closure protected children and their families and helped contain the virus. However, this came at a cost: Supervising and helping with lessons was difficult or impossible for working parents, and many people experienced difficulties with remote learning. These difficulties set students back.

There is now discussion about how to handle the upcoming school year. Some believe that all schools should open for all students on schedule. Others think this is dangerous and we must find another solution.

When schools reopen this fall, which of these approaches would you most support? (See statements above the bar). How strongly do you support this approach?

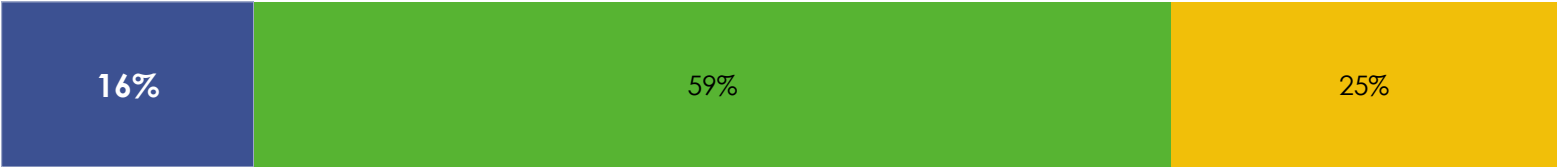
Most support a “phased” approach to opening schools

Which of these approaches do you most agree with?

Public schools should open on schedule with all students at their schools

Public schools should open with a “phased” approach using remote teaching, then slowly introducing in-person classes as we learn more

Public schools should remain closed and students should continue with remote learning



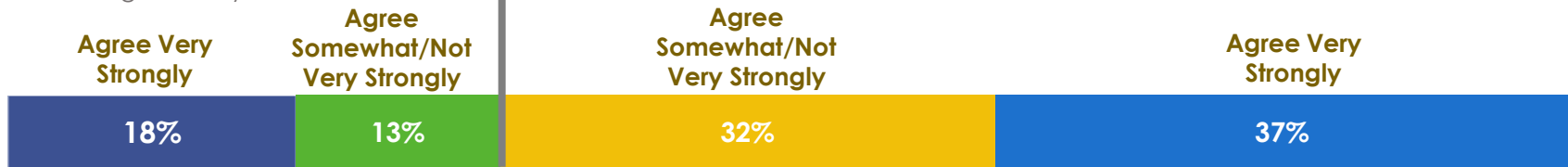
As you know, there is discussion about how the public schools should open in the fall. Which of these approaches do you most agree with? If you are not sure, give us your best guess.

Parents and non-parents alike strongly support flexibility with both the 180-school-day and MCAS requirements

180-School-Day Requirement

We should still require 180 days of schooling, because now it is more important than ever to ensure that students get a full year of education.

We should be flexible with the 180-school-day requirement, because even though students might get fewer school days, educators need the flexibility to respond to keep students safe as conditions change.



Another issue that schools are facing is the number of school days. As you may know, there are state regulations that specify that students must have about 180-school-days during the year. With that in mind, which of these statements do you most agree with? How strongly do you agree with this statement?

MCAS Requirement

MCAS testing should be continued. It ensures that all students in the state achieve a minimally adequate level of knowledge before graduating. This is especially important now, given the disruptions and loss of learning caused by the pandemic.

MCAS testing should be stopped for 1 year. The curriculum needs to be adapted to be flexible and take into account issues around trauma and the pandemic. We should not use valuable learning time to prepare for the test, which will just show that students are behind.



As you may know, all public school students in grades 3-8 and 10 are required to take a standardized test called the MCAS. The test is used to evaluate students' progress, and they must get a passing grade to graduate from high school. Schools are also ranked on the MCAS scores. Teachers generally spend a lot of class time preparing students to take the test. With this in mind, which of these statements is closest to your opinion? (See text above bar). How strongly do you hold this view?

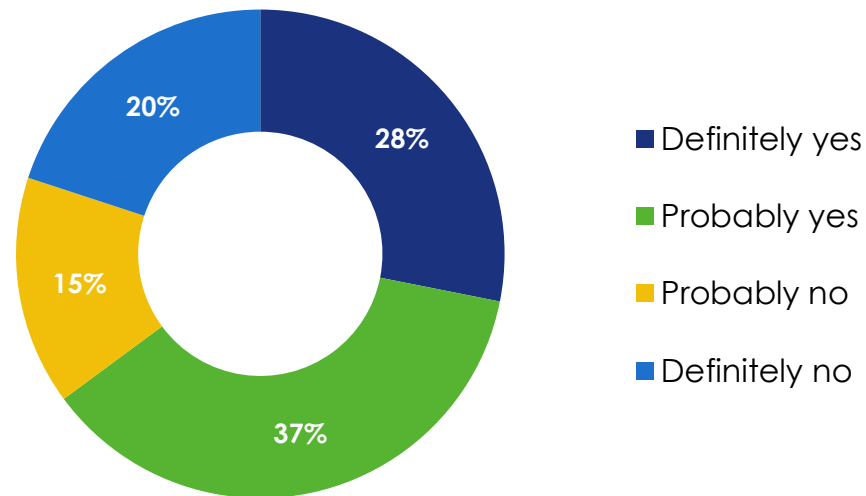
Other Findings of Note

The Black Lives Matter movement and the public schools

- The Black Lives Matter movement has had a strong impact in Massachusetts. Voters of all races agree that schools should include a curriculum addressing issues raised by the movement, including systemic racism.

Voters firmly support a curriculum addressing issues raised by the Black Lives Matter movement, including systemic racism

Do you think our public schools should include a curriculum addressing issues raised by the Black Lives Matter movement, including systemic racism?



Note that voters of all races support this curriculum, although with different levels of intensity, as would be expected.

- Among white voters, 62% support this curriculum, including 25% who strongly support it.
- Three-quarters of Hispanic voters support the curriculum, including strong support from 39%.
- The curriculum has near unanimous support among Black voters, with 64% expressing strong support.

Do you think our public schools should include a curriculum addressing issues raised by the Black Lives Matter movement, including systemic racism?