CENTER FOR
DEMOCRACY
& TECHNOLOGY

Student Data and Information Privacy

A Survey of Parents of K-12 Students

September 2020

About the Survey

Research Objectives
The goal of this research is to understand how parents of K-12 students view, react to, and classify issues associated with student data privacy and information security.

Methodology
An online survey of parents of K-12 students was fielded from May 19 to June 1, 2020. Samples were conducted among a U.S. representative sample and Hispanic and African-American oversamples:

U.S.	1227
Hispanic	530
African-American	522

The average survey length was 22 minutes.

Throughout the report, ↑↓ indicate significant differences between subgroups at the 95% confidence level.

Highlights from the U.S. Sample:

School level of child referenced throughout survey:	
ES (K-5th grades)	46%
MS (6-8th grades)	23%
HS (9-12th grades)	31%
Gender of child	57% boy / 43% girl
Gender of parent surveyed	49% male / 51% female
Suburban area	46%
Urban area	31%
Rural area	23%
White/Caucasian	75%
African-American	13%
Asian	7%
Hispanic (not exclusive)	20%

Key Findings

- **Parent Concerns:** Student data privacy and information security are mid- to low-level concerns of parents, outranked by concerns about overall well-being of the student (quality education, school safety, stress, and mental health). Concern increases as parents are exposed to more information about student data privacy and security in the survey. COVID-19 has amplified tech concerns.

- **Parent's Role:** Parents place themselves at the top of the list of those responsible for their child's data privacy and security (along with school administrators). However, parents self-report low awareness and involvement in their school's data privacy plan or the way information about their child is collected by the school, largely trusting in the school to use student data appropriately.

- **Tech/Digital Disparities:** African-American parents and parents in lower-income households report slightly lower student access to technology and less variety in interactions between student and teacher.

- **Tech in the Home:** 3 in 4 students have home internet access for schoolwork. The majority of parents take steps at home to monitor or restrict their child's access to technology, including restricting screen time, having access to the child's email or social media, and/or controlling access to content.

Key Findings

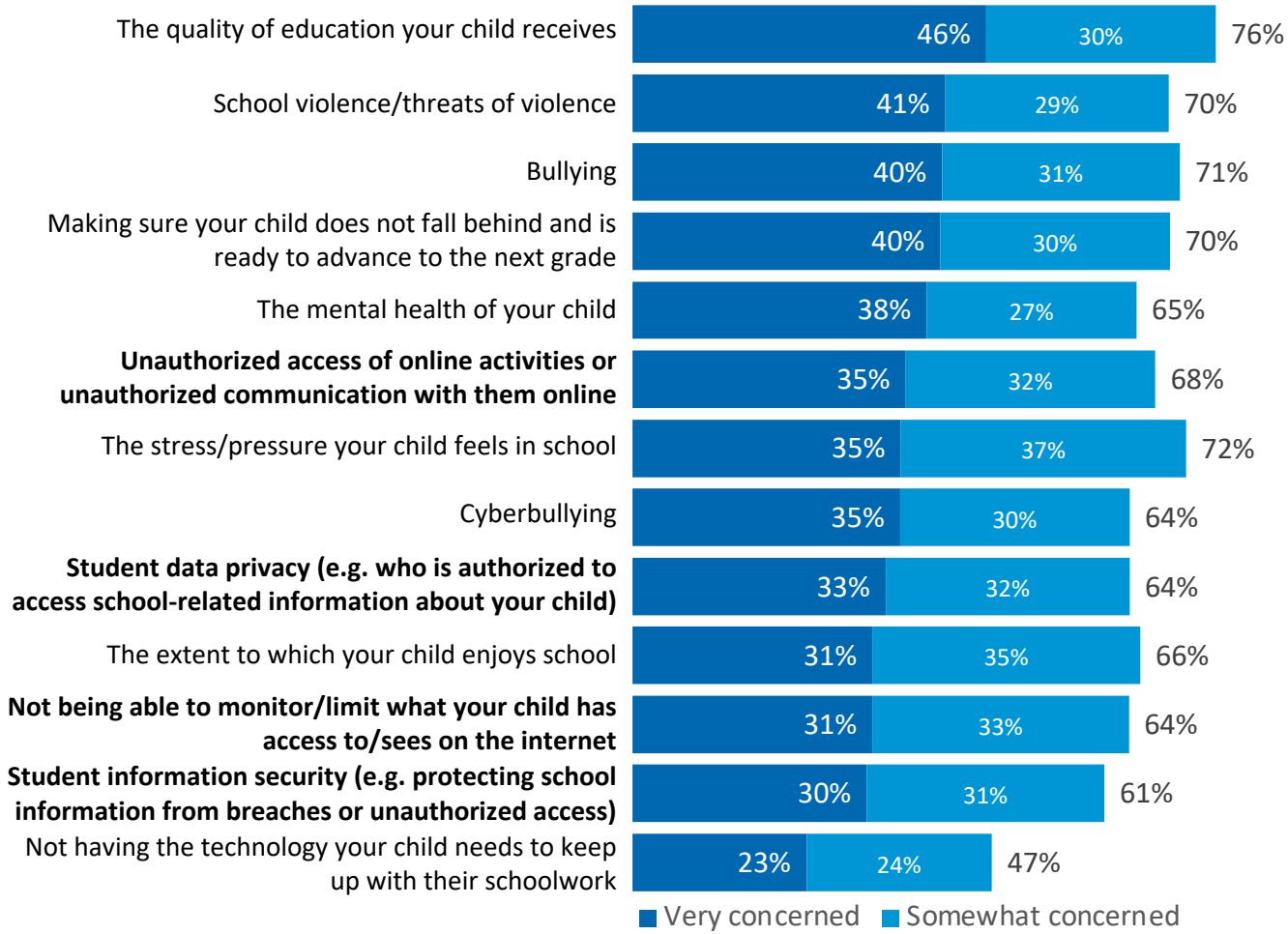
- **Ed Tech Benefits:** Clear and timely communication is a top priority for parents in their child's education experience and is viewed as strongly supported by technology and remote learning. Learning continuity is also seen as an area where tech can fill the gap. Majorities believe technology is at least somewhat "worth the risk" to deliver key education benefits.

- **Trust in Institutions:** The survey found that while elementary school parents are more concerned about student data privacy and security than parents of older students, they have significantly higher trust in institutions like schools and the government to protect student data.

General Concerns and Access to Technology at Home

Student Data Privacy & Security Relative to Other Concerns

- Quality of education is parents' #1 concern, regardless of race or grade level of the child.
- Student data privacy and information security register as mid- to low-level concerns by parents.
- Hispanic and African-American parents share more concerns on most issues than the general U.S. population.



	Hispanic (n=530)	African-American (n=522)	ES (n=570)	MS (n=282)	HS (n=375)
The quality of education your child receives	48%	**55%↑***	**49%↑**	45%	42%
School violence/threats of violence	**48%***	45%	**46%↑**	40%	33%
Bullying	**47%***	45%	**46%↑**	**41%↑**	31%
Making sure your child does not fall behind and is ready to advance to the next grade	44%	**53%↑***	**43%↑**	**43%↑**	33%
The mental health of your child	42%	**43%***	41%	37%	35%
Unauthorized access of online activities or unauthorized communication with them online	**40%***	**43%***	37%	34%	34%
The stress/pressure your child feels in school	37%	**40%↑**	36%	38%	31%
Cyberbullying	**41%***	39%	**38%↑**	35%	30%
Student data privacy (e.g. who is authorized to access school-related information about your child)	**39%***	**41%***	35%	33%	30%
The extent to which your child enjoys school	32%	**36%↑**	34%	30%	29%
Not being able to monitor/limit what your child has access to/sees on the internet	35%	**39%↑**	**34%↑**	**34%↑**	26%
Student information security (e.g. protecting school information from breaches or unauthorized access)	**36%***	**41%↑***	31%	33%	27%
Not having the technology your child needs to keep up with their schoolwork	26%	**35%↑**	24%	23%	19%

% 'Very concerned'

Q16: When thinking about your child's education, how concerned are you about each of the following?

* Hispanic or Afr-Amer: significantly higher than U.S. base sample

Student Technology & Internet Access in the Home

- 3 in 4 students have home internet access for schoolwork; African-American students are less likely to have consistent internet access or a printer at home.
- Two-thirds have dedicated access to a computer or tablet; HS students are more likely to have their own device, a printer, and internet access.
- More students in higher-income households have access to a wider variety of technology in the home than in lower-income households.

Student Technology and Internet Access in the Home for Schoolwork

	U.S. (n=1227)	Race/Ethnicity: Hispanic (n=530)	Race/Ethnicity: African-American (n=522)
Consistent reliable access to the internet	74%	73%	68%*
Computer or tablet used only by your child (not shared)	68%	66%	68%
Television with access to network TV	60%	56%	62%
A printer to print school materials or schoolwork	56%	54%	48%*
Computer or tablet shared with others	52%	54%	53%

Subsidized Internet Access Offered

	U.S. (n=1227)	$100K+ (n=304)	Urban (n=378)
Distributed internet-enabled devices, e.g. tablets or laptops, to students without internet access	34%	**39%↑**	**47%↑**
WiFi signals from school buildings	21%	25%	**30%↑**
Distributed mobile hotspots to students in homes without internet access	20%	**24%↑**	**25%↑**
Subsidized mobile or home internet costs	19%	21%	**29%↑**
WiFi signals on vehicles, e.g. school buses parked in neighborhoods	16%	**23%↑**	**24%↑**
Other	2%	1%	3%
None of these have been provided	16%	11%	12%
Not sure/Not aware of this	25%	25%	16%

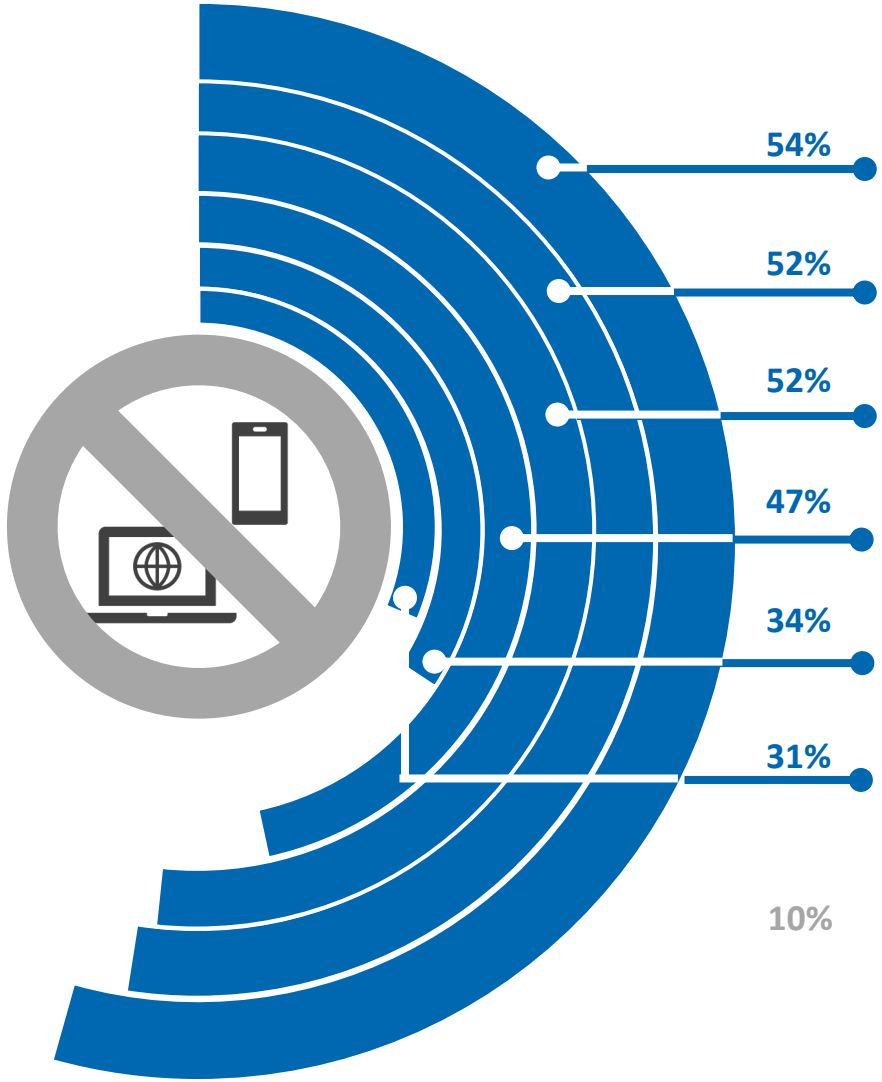
Q18: Which of the following does your child have access to at home for schoolwork?

* Hispanic or Afr-Amer: significantly higher or lower than U.S. base sample

Q23: Some school districts, local and state governments, together with some internet service providers around the country, are providing internet access to students who may not have access at home. To the best of your knowledge, has your school district, local/state authorities, or local internet service providers provided access to students using any of the following?

Actions Taken at Home to Control or Monitor Child's Access

- 9 in 10 parents report taking some action at home to monitor or restrict their child's access to technology, including withholding technology when rules are broken, capping screen time, or parental oversight to online platforms used by the child.
- Parents of younger students are more likely to be monitoring and restricting access in these ways.



		Hispanic (n=530)	African-American (n=522)	ES (n=570)	MS (n=282)	HS (n=375)
54%	Withhold or take away technology when rules are broken	50%	51%	57%↑	59%↑	47%
52%	House rules on number of hours of screen time	55%	51%	57%↑	52%	45%
52%	Parental access to email, social media, and other applications	57%*	52%	55%↑	57%↑	42%
47%	Controls in place that restrict access to certain websites and content	48%	44%	56%↑	43%↑	35%
34%	Ability to monitor child's location using location-based technology	38%	38%	34%	37%	34%
31%	Software or apps on computer or mobile devices that track child's activities	35%	31%	33%	34%	27%
10%	None/Do not restrict access	6%	10%↑	4%	8%↑	21%↑

* Hispanic or Afr-Amer: significantly higher than U.S. base sample

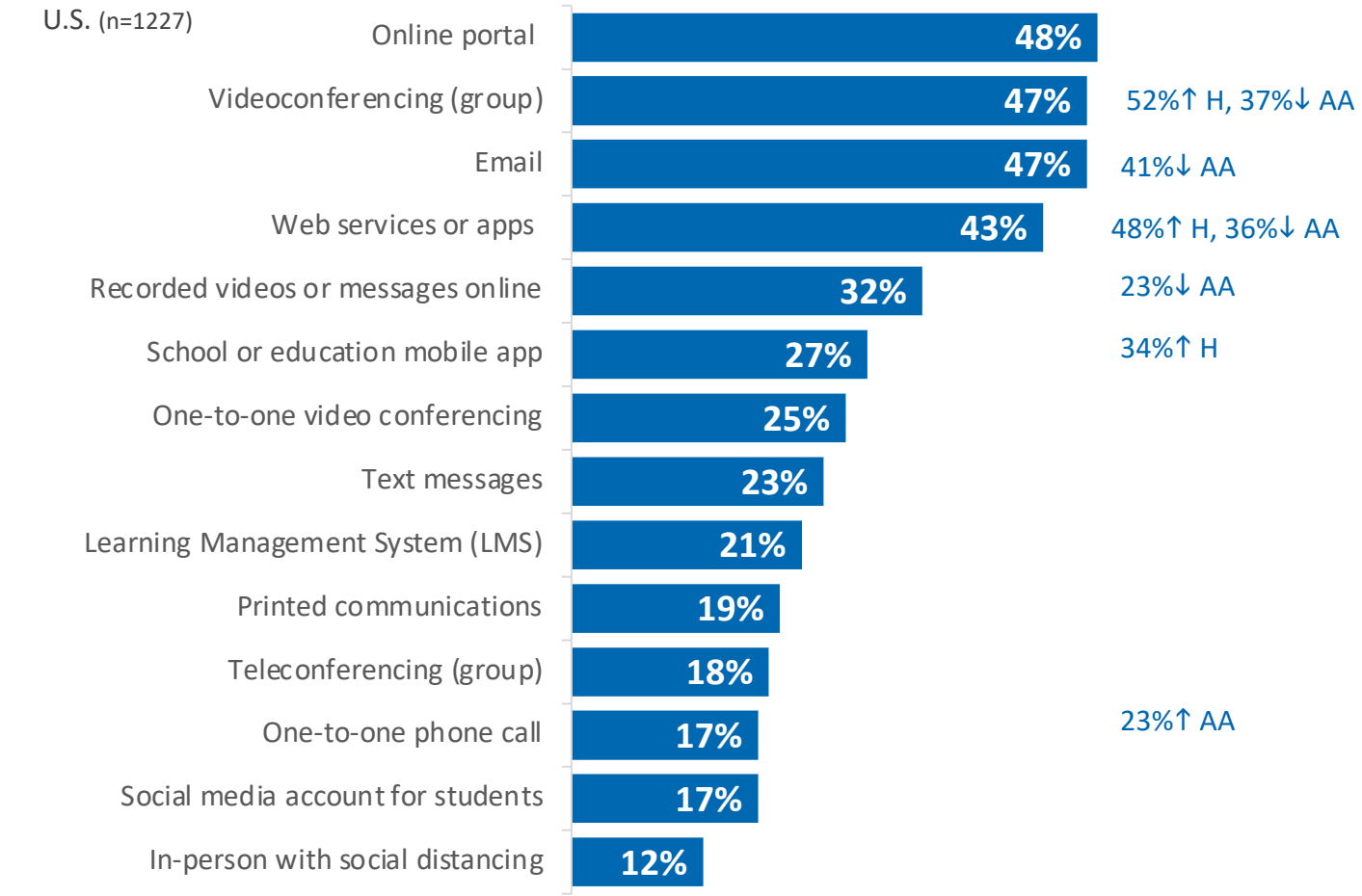
Q19: What are the ways, if any, that you currently monitor, allow, or restrict your child's access to technology today?

Technology’s Role in Student-Teacher Interactions

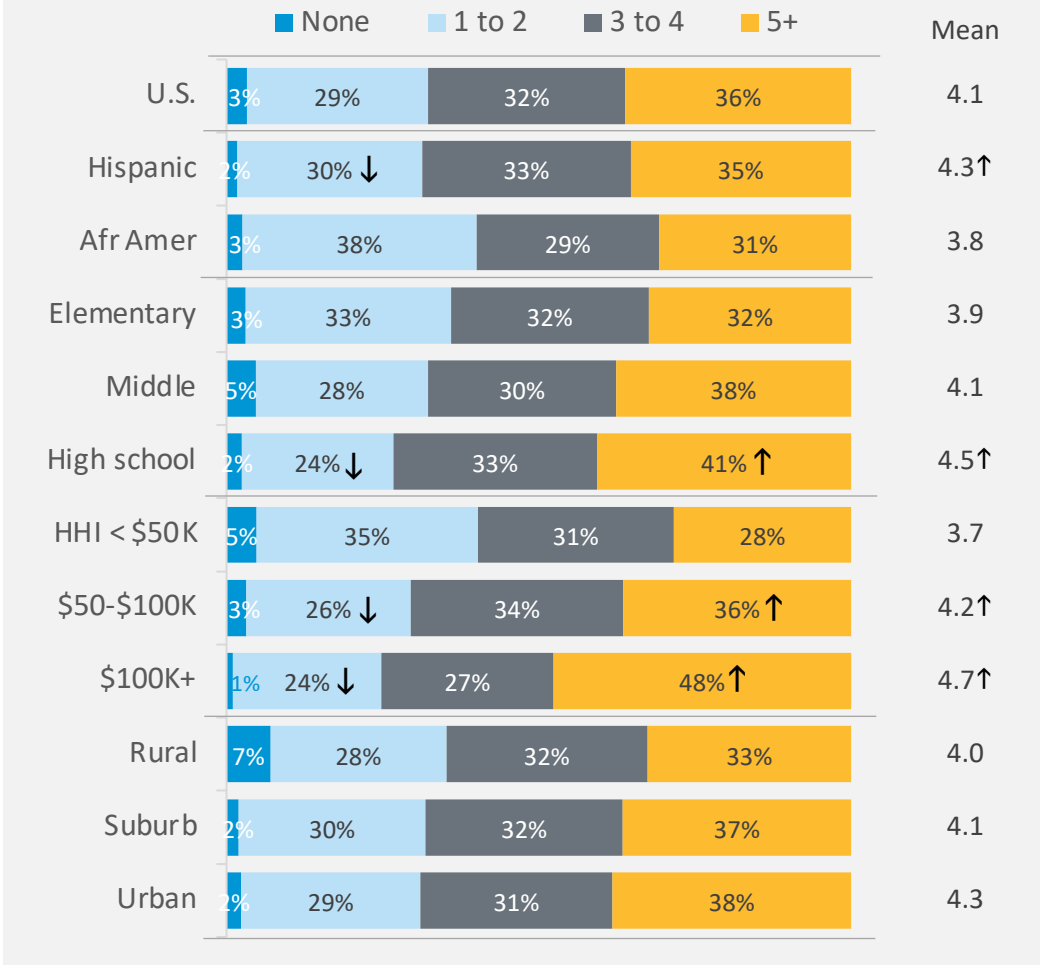
Student-Teacher Interactions

- Parents report that online portals, group videoconferencing, email, and web services/apps are the top ways that students and teachers interacted during remote schooling.
- African-American parents and parents in lower-income households report fewer types of interactions between students and teachers.

Student-Teacher Interactions in last two weeks



Variety of Student-Teacher Interactions

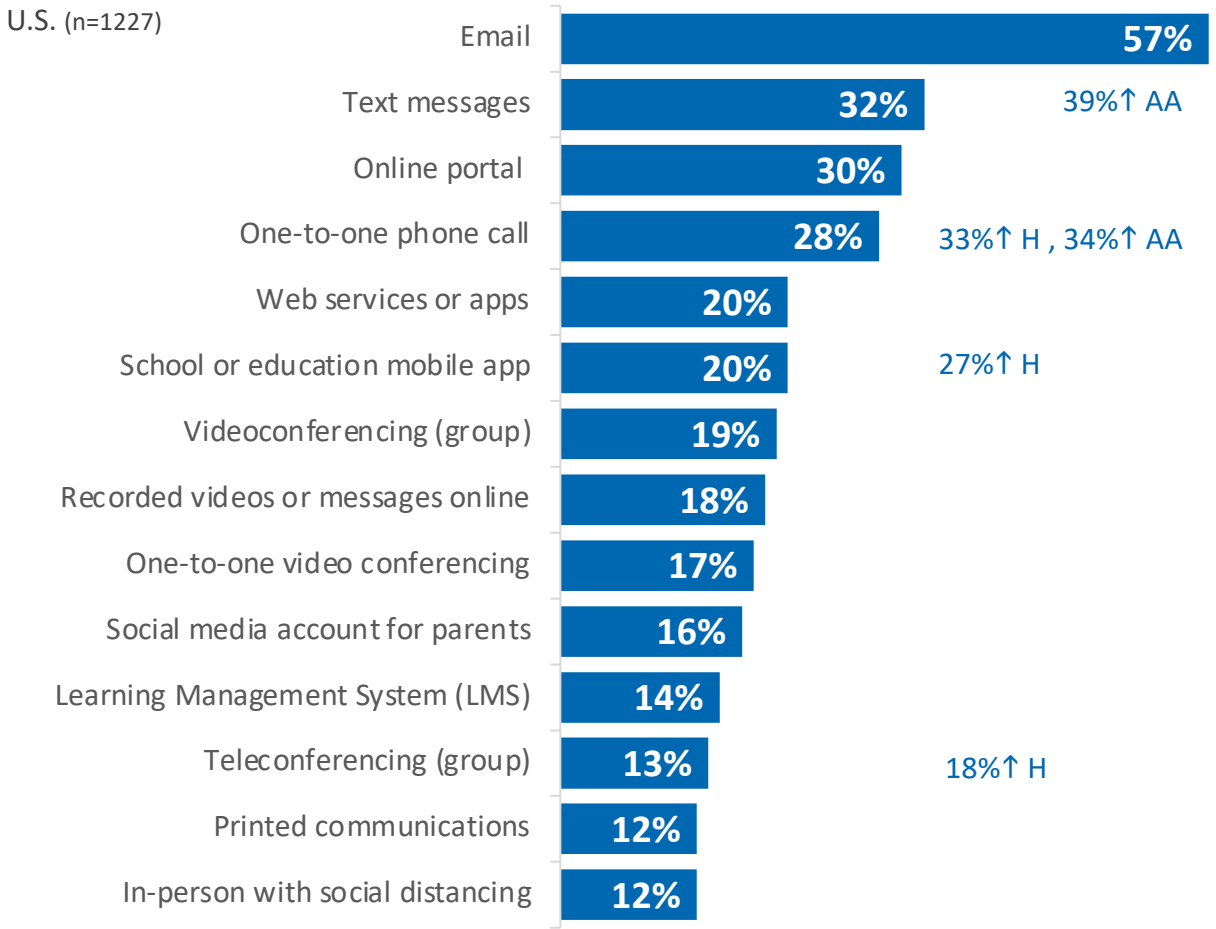


Q20: Which of the following ways has your child interacted with teacher(s) from their school within the last two weeks?

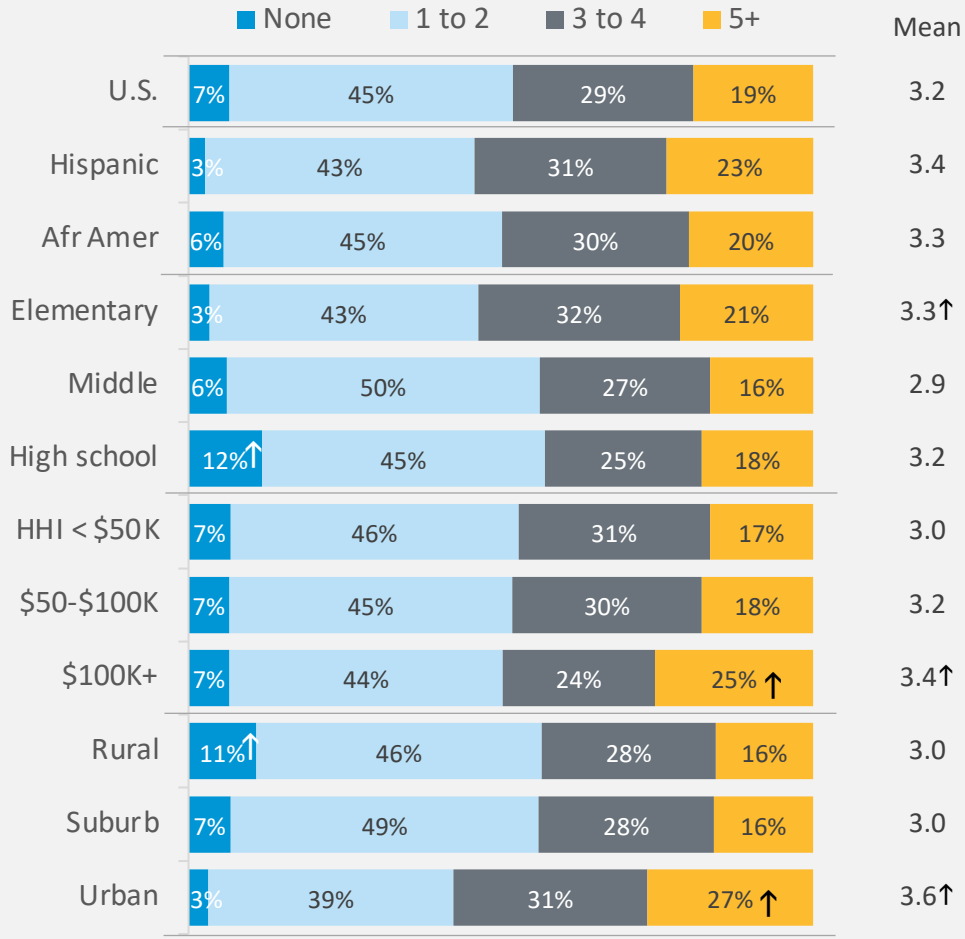
Parent-Teacher Interactions

- Parents and teachers interacted primarily by email.
- Hispanic and African-American audiences are slightly more likely to note phone interactions with teachers.

Parent-Teacher Interactions in last two weeks



Variety of Parent-Teacher Interactions

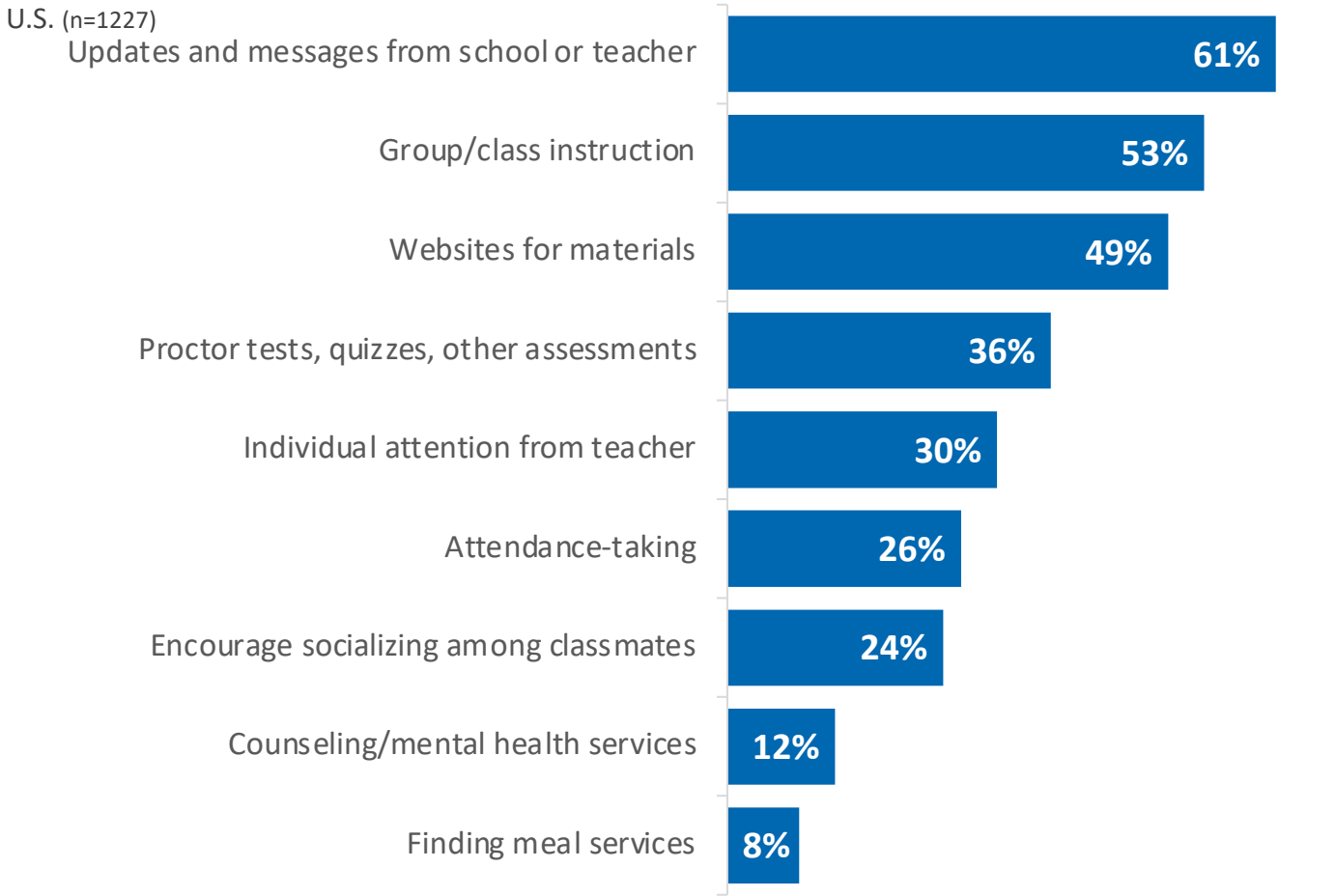


Q22: In which of the following ways have you as a parent interacted with your child's teacher(s) within the last two weeks?

Purpose of Student-Teacher Interactions

- Student-teacher interactions are primarily being used for message dissemination.
- Just over half of parents report class instruction as the reason for the online interactions.

How Student-Teacher Interactions are Being Used

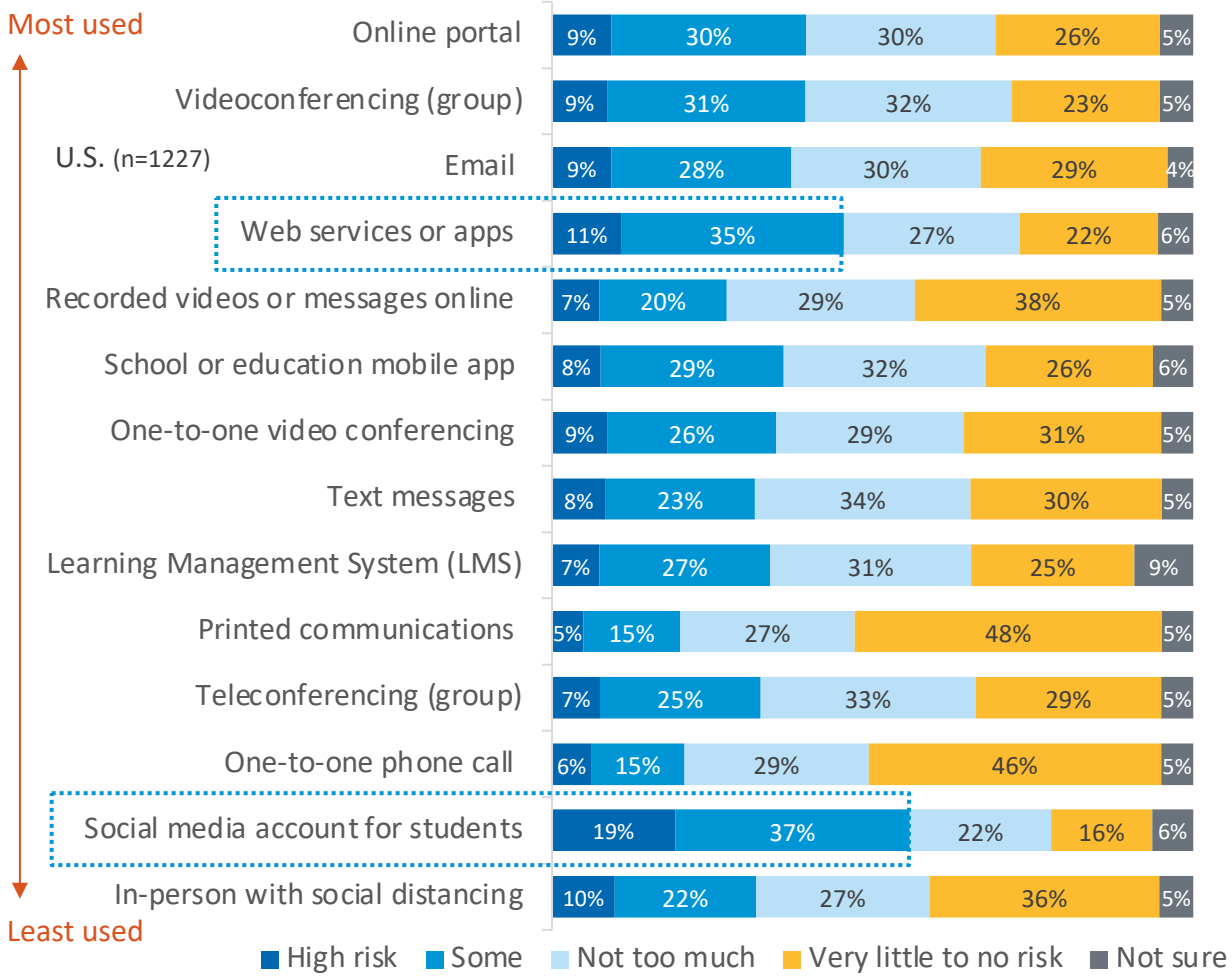


Q21: Thinking of the ways your child has interacted with their teacher in the last two weeks, how are these tools or interactions being used?

Risk Associated with Student-Teacher Technology Interactions

- The most widely used technology for student-teacher interactions is perceived to have limited risk.
- Parents indicate web services/apps and social media have the highest risk of items tested.
- Dads and younger parents associate greater risk with many technology supported interactions.

Perceived Risk Associated with Technology Used for Student-Teacher Interactions



	Hispanic	Afr-Amer	Male	Female	< 35	35 to 44	45+
	(n=530)	(n=522)	(n=586)	(n=601)	(n=295)	(n=521)	(n=410)
Online portal	44%	40%	**44%↑**	35%	40%	38%	41%
Videoconferencing (group)	**42%↑**	35%	40%	38%	**44%↑**	37%	40%
Email	43%	40%	**42%↑**	33%	**43%↑**	36%	35%
Web services or apps	46%	43%	46%	45%	45%	45%	46%
Recorded videos or messages online	35%	32%	**31%↑**	24%	**32%↑**	27%	24%
School or education mobile app	36%	38%	37%	36%	36%	36%	36%
One-to-one video conferencing	**39%↑**	33%	**38%↑**	31%	38%	34%	33%
Text messages	37%	34%	**35%↑**	28%	**38%↑**	30%	29%
Learning Management System (LMS)	37%	35%	36%	32%	35%	35%	32%
Printed communications	24%	25%	**24%↑**	16%	**23%↑**	**22%↑**	15%
Teleconferencing (group)	**39%↑**	31%	32%	33%	35%	33%	30%
One-to-one phone call	27%	26%	**24%↑**	17%	**29%↑**	**21%↑**	15%
Social media account for students	**55%↑**	49%	57%	55%	56%	56%	55%
In-person with social distancing	39%	37%	**35%↑**	28%	**41%↑**	**35%↑**	21%

High or Some Risk

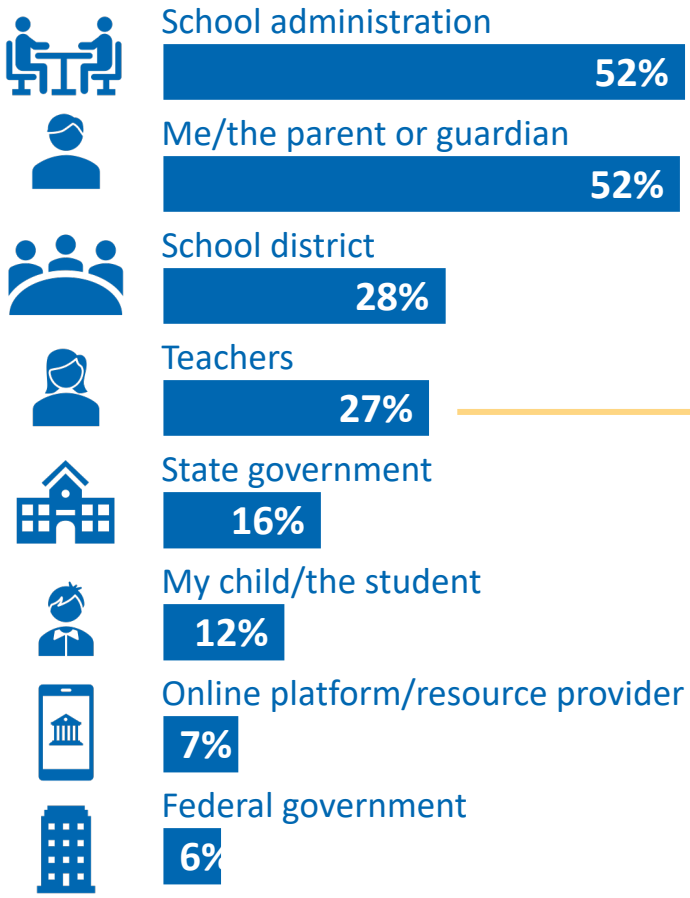
Q28: What level of student privacy and security risk do you associate with each of the following ways that a child may interact with their teacher(s)?

Parents’ Role and Inclusion in School Data Privacy Decisions

Responsibility and Go-to Resources for Questions

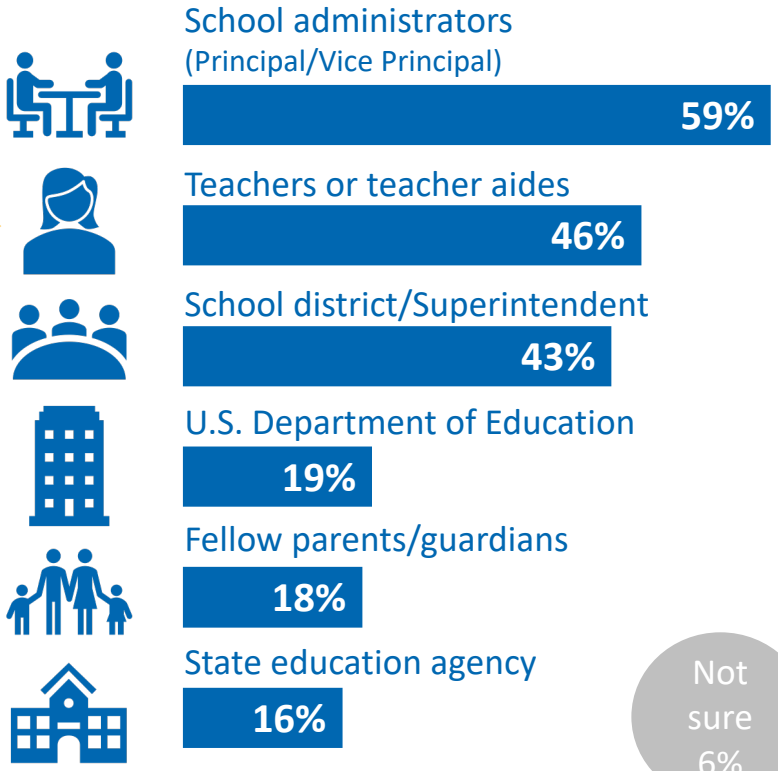
- The school administration and the parent themselves are widely considered to be MOST responsible for student data privacy and security. If a parent had a question, most would ask the school administration (principal or VP).
- Many would also go to their child's teacher if they had a question about the privacy and security of their child's data and information, even though they do not deem teachers most responsible on this issue.

MOST Responsible for Student Data Privacy and Security



Not sure 3%

If Had a Question or Concern Would Turn to…



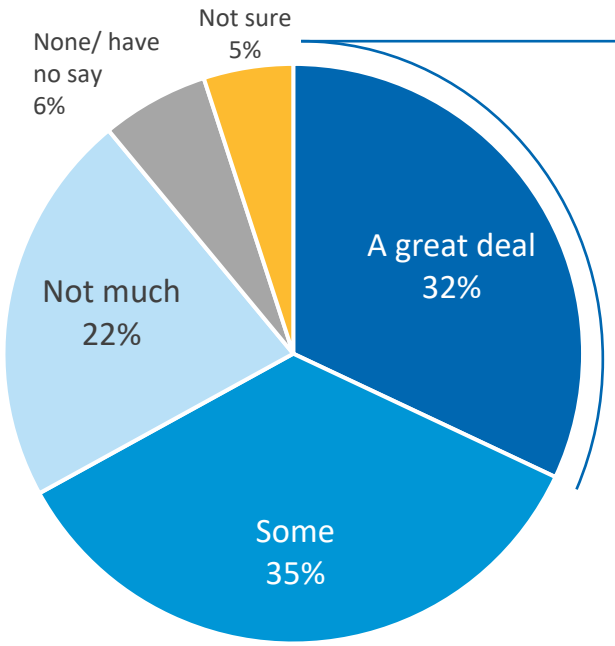
Not sure 6%

Q33: When you think about your child's student data, who do you feel is MOST responsible for protecting student privacy and security? Select up to three.
Q27: If you had a question or concern about the privacy and security of data and information about your child, to which of the following would you go to address these concerns? Select all that apply.

Involvement and Inclusion in Student Data Privacy at School

- 1 in 3 feel they "have a great deal of say" in child's data and information privacy. Another 1 in 3 feel they have little to no input or are unsure.
- A majority feels they have a choice in the online educational tools used at their child's school.
- 4 in 10 respond that someone at their child's school has discussed how the school protects student data.

"Have a Say" in the Way Child's Data and Information is Collected and Used by School



A great deal:	
Hispanic	40%↑
AA	51%↑
High school	27%↓
Age <35	37%↑
Age 35-44	34%
Age 45+	27%↓
Rural	30%
Suburb	26%↓
Urban	44%↑

51% Feel I have a choice in the online platforms used at school for educational purposes

{ ↑ ES ↑ Male ↑ <45 ↑ $100K+ ↑ Urban }

43% Someone at child's school has discussed with me how they protect student data

{ ↑ ES ↑ Male ↑ <45 ↑ $100K+ ↑ Urban }

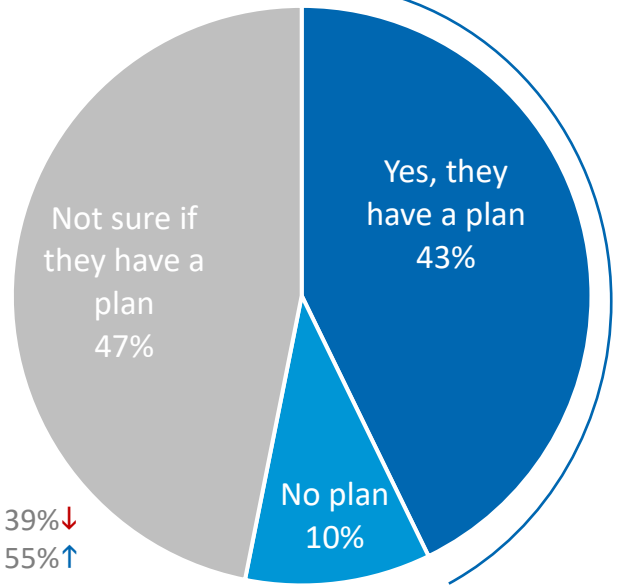
Q32: How much do you agree or disagree with the following? (top 2 box agree shown)

Q26: As a parent, to what extent do you feel you have a say over the way your child's data and information is collected and used by his/her school?

School Technology Plan Awareness and Parent Input

- Nearly *half of parents are uncertain* if their child's school has a technology plan in place.
- Fathers, younger parents, and higher-income households are more likely to say a school technology plan is in place.
- Even among those reportedly concerned about their child's data privacy at school, 1 in 3 are not sure whether a plan is in place.
- About half of parents agree that their child's school solicits feedback from parents about the technology plan.

School has Technology Plan addressing Student Privacy and Security



Yes, they have a plan:

Male parent	48%↑
Female parent	37%↓
Age <35	48%↑
Age 35-44	46%↑
Age 45+	35%↓
$50K+	35%↓
$50-$100K	42%↑
$100K+	56%↑

Not sure:

Male parent	39%↓
Female parent	55%↑
Very concerned	35% ↓
Not concerned	53%↑

54% Child's school solicits feedback from parents about the education technology plan prior to implementing or purchasing new online education services

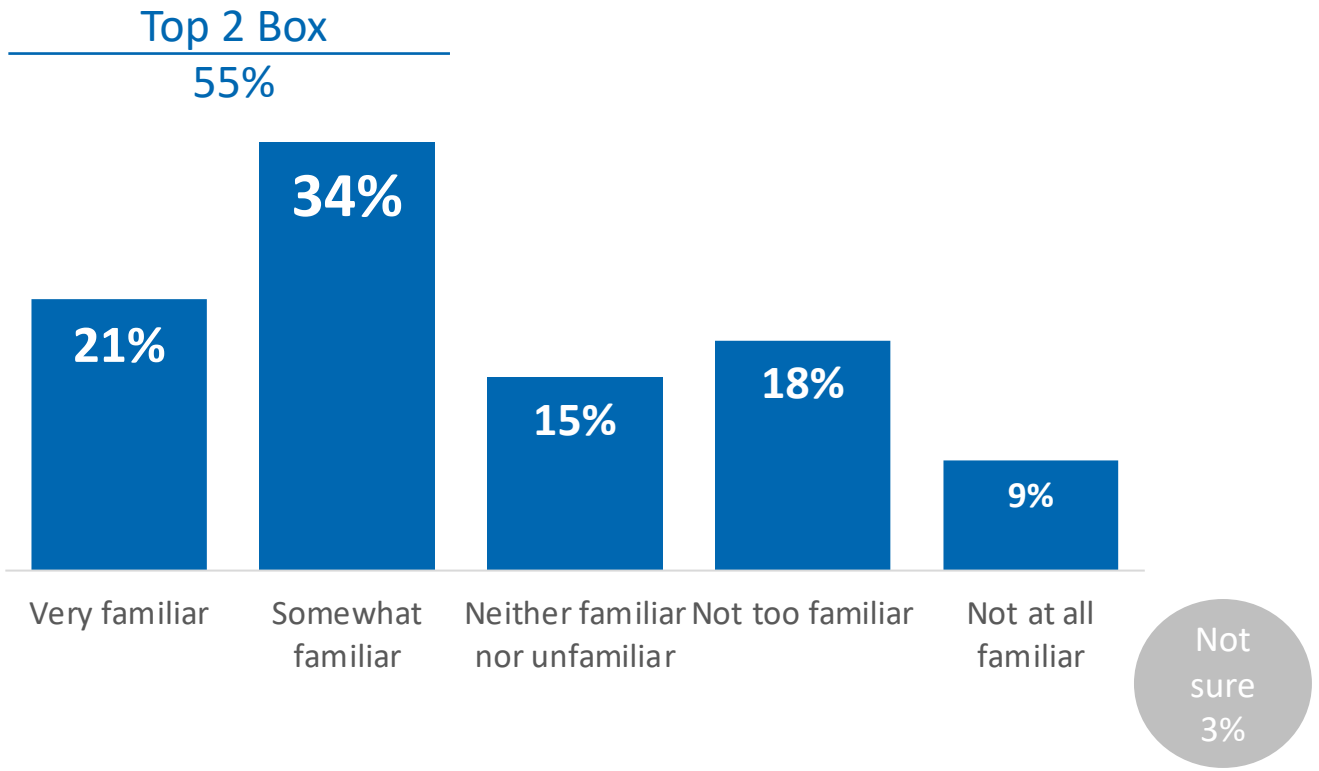
↑ ES ↑ Male ↑ <45 ↑ $100K+ ↑ Urban

Q30: Does your child's school have a technology plan addressing student privacy and security issues?
Q32: How much do you agree or disagree with the following? (top 2 box agree shown)

Familiarity with Parental Rights

- Parents have moderate familiarity with legal rights to protect their child's data privacy and security – just 2 in 10 are very familiar and slightly over half are at least somewhat familiar.
- Fathers, younger parents, and higher-income households report greater familiarity with parental legal rights.

Familiarity with Legal Rights as a Parent for Making Decisions about the Privacy and Security of Student Information at School



Top 2 Box Familiarity

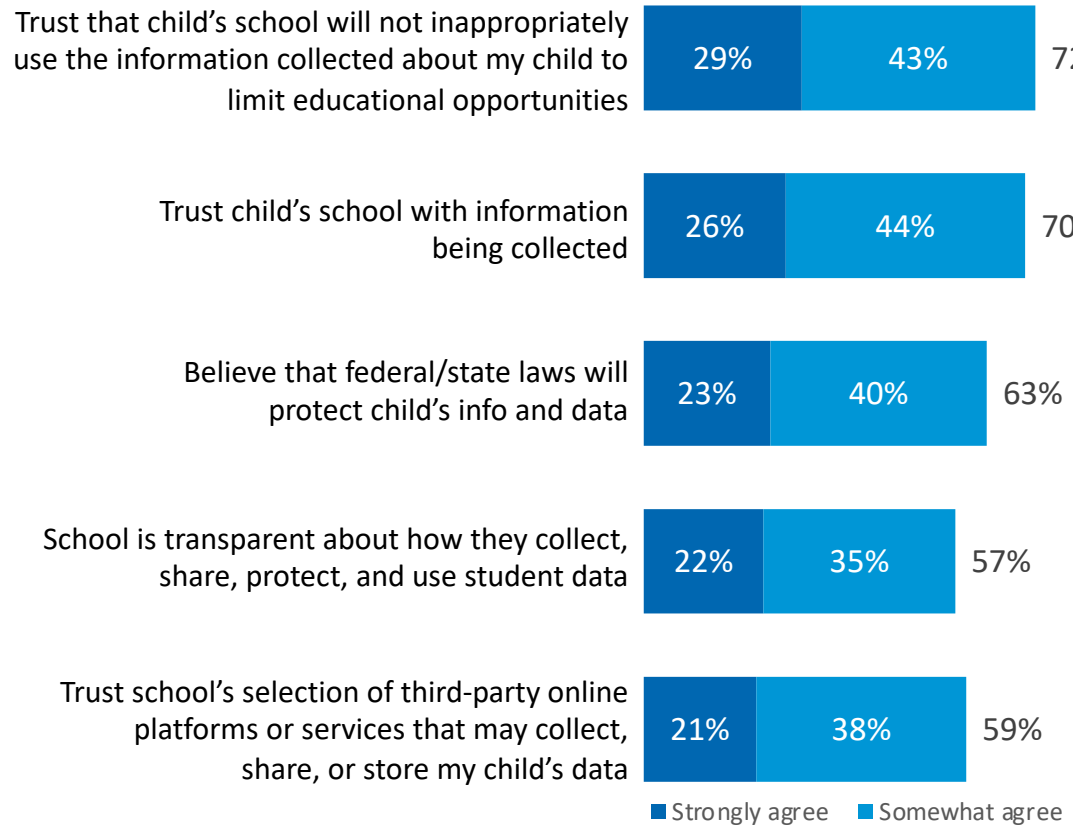
Male parent	63%↑
Female parent	47%↓
Age <35	60%↑
Age 35-44	57%↑
Age 45+	48%↓
$50K+	52%↓
$50-$100K	52%↓
$100K+	63%↑

Q31: How familiar are you with your legal rights as a parent when it comes to protecting and making decisions about the privacy and security of your child's student information at their school?

Confidence/Trust in Institutions to Protect Student Data

- For the most part, parent's trust the school to collect and use information appropriately, but this trust is subdued (as seen by low levels of strong agreement with trust statements).
- Parents of elementary school age kids are more trusting of school and legal efforts to protect children's data.

Confidence/Trust in Institutions to Protect Student Data



	Hispanic (n=530)	Afr-Amer (n=522)	ES (n=570)	MS (n=282)	HS (n=375)	Male (n=586)	Female (n=601)	< 35 (n=295)	35 to 44 (n=521)	45+ (n=410)
Trust that child's school will not inappropriately use the information collected about my child to limit educational opportunities	74%	73%	**76%↑**	68%	68%	72%	71%	67%	**75%↑**	71%
Trust child's school with information being collected	72%	70%	**74%↑**	67%	65%	70%	70%	72%	70%	68%
Believe that federal/state laws will protect child's info and data	68%	65%	**68%↑**	59%	58%	**67%↑**	59%	64%	64%	61%
School is transparent about how they collect, share, protect, and use student data	62%	**63%***	**62%↑**	52%	52%	**64%↑**	50%	**62%↑**	58%	52%
Trust school's selection of third-party online platforms or services that may collect, share, or store my child's data	**65%***	61%	**64%↑**	56%	54%	**63%↑**	56%	**62%↑**	**62%↑**	53%

* Hispanic or Afr-Amer: significantly higher than U.S. base sample

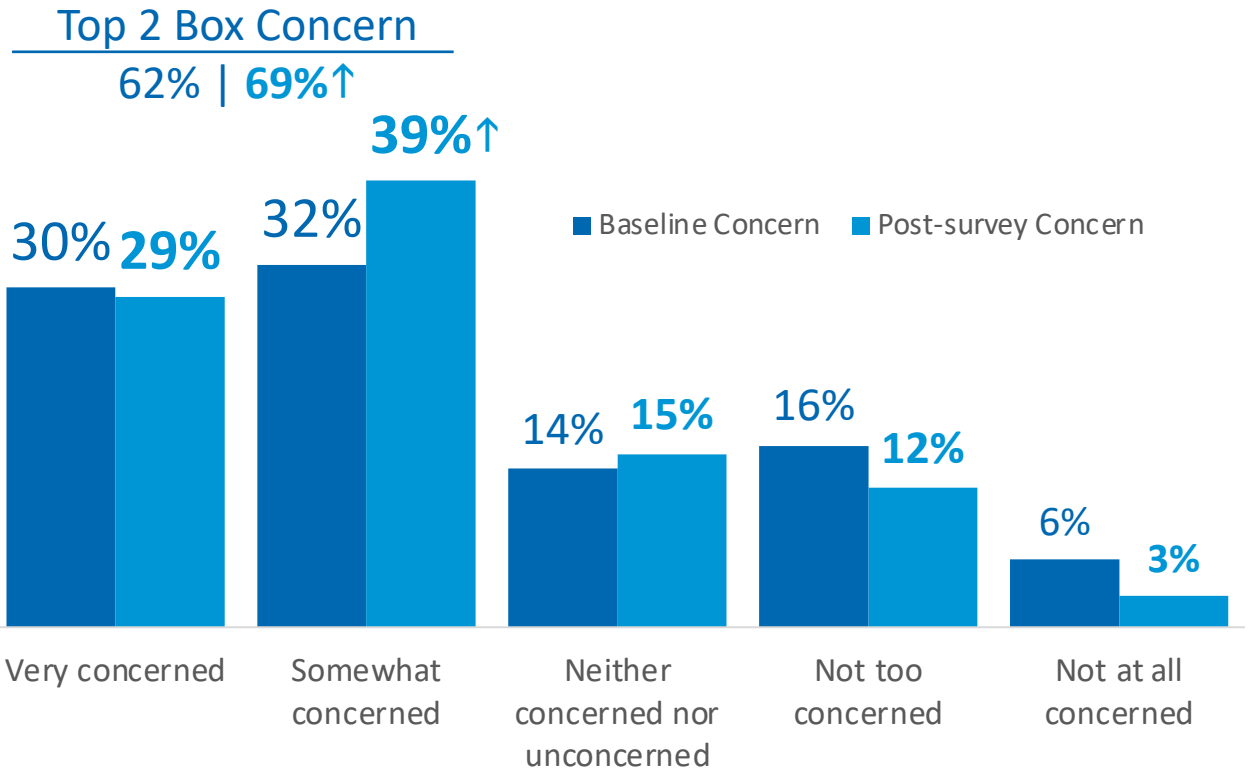
Q32: How much do you agree or disagree with the following?

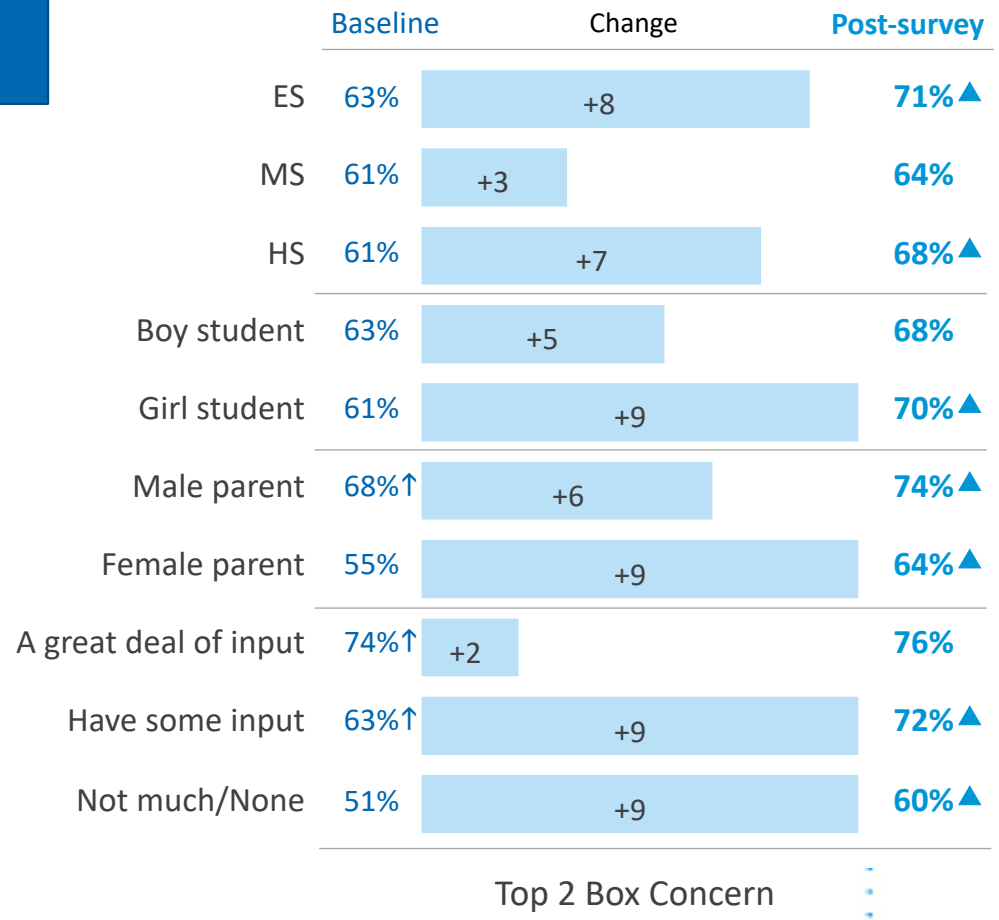
Student Data Privacy and Security Concerns

Student Data Privacy and Security Concerns Pre- and Post-Exposure

- Parent concern for student data privacy grows with increased awareness; increases are primarily a shift from "not concerned" to "somewhat concerned."

Concern about privacy and security of child's data and information that may be collected and stored by child's school



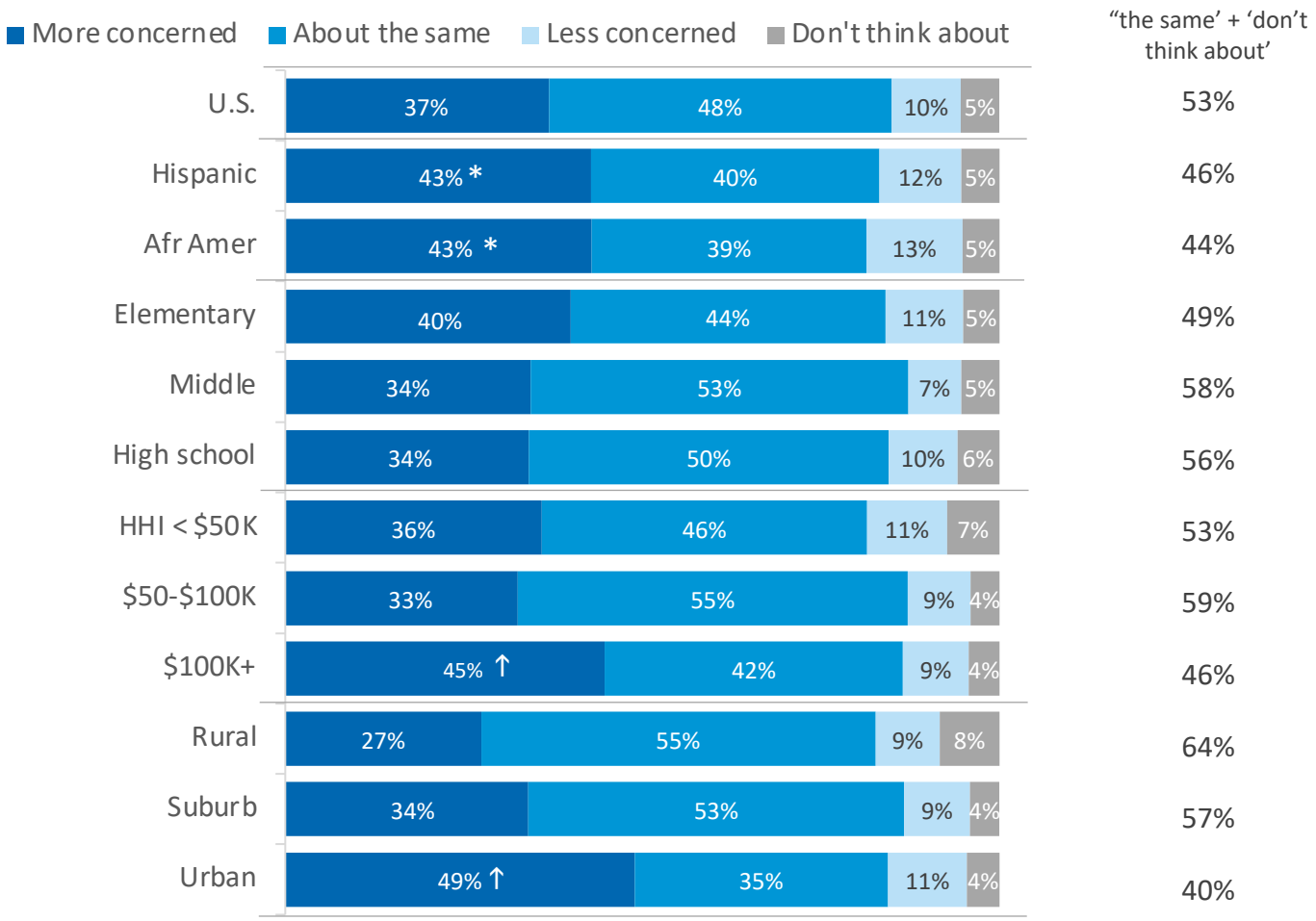


Q24: Overall, how concerned are you about the privacy and security of your child's data and information that may be collected and stored by your child's school?
Q41: Now that you have read and answered questions about student data privacy and security, how concerned are you about the privacy and security of your child's data and information that may be collected and stored by your child's school?

COVID-19 Impact on Concern

- Over half of parents indicate no change in the level of concern about data privacy as a result of COVID-19.
- Hispanic and African-American parents, parents of elementary school children, those with higher incomes, and those in suburban/urban areas report slightly higher levels of concern than their counterparts.

COVID-19 Impact on Concern about Privacy and Security of Child's School Data and Information

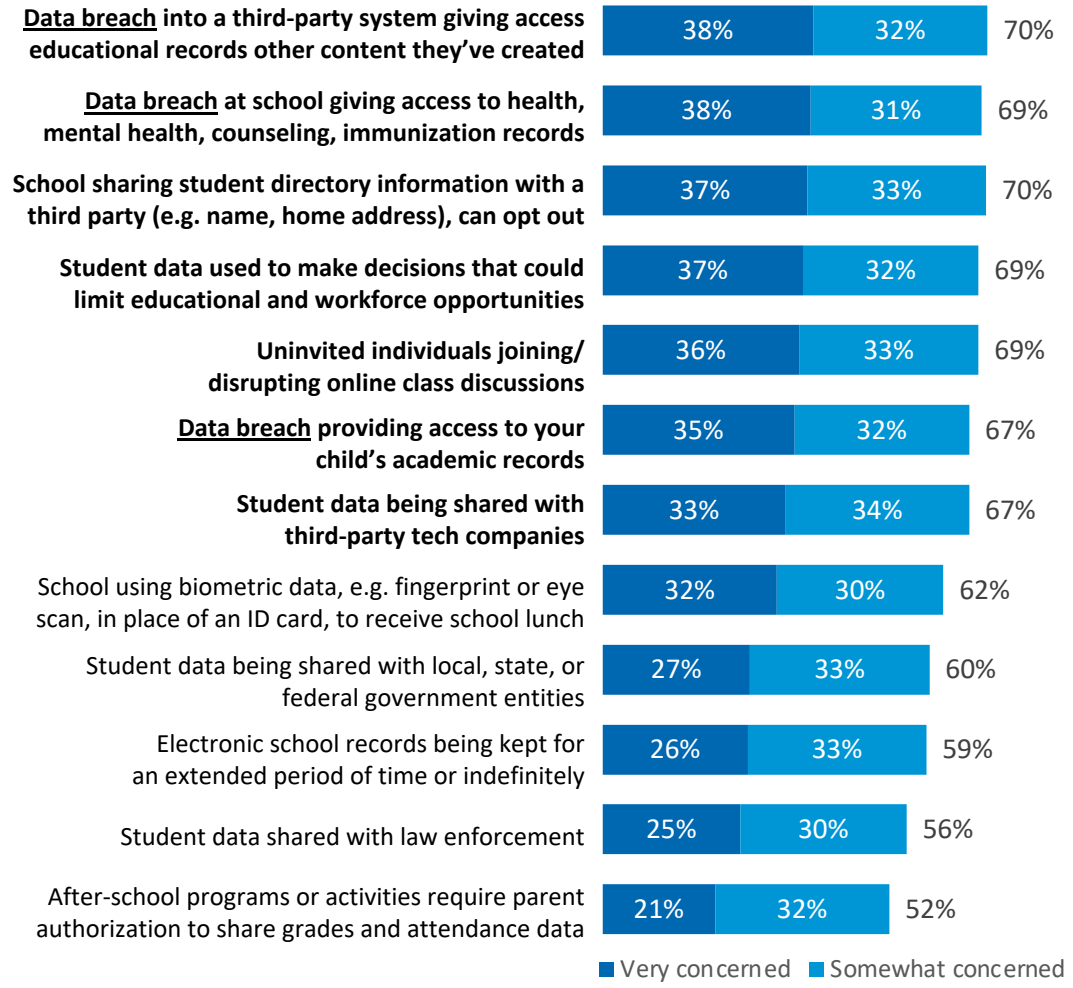


* Hispanic or Afr-Amer: significantly higher than U.S. base sample

Q25: Compared to before the social distancing guidelines in response to coronavirus were put in place -- today, would you say you are more concerned, less concerned, or have about the same level of concern about the privacy and security of your child's data and information that may be collected and stored by your child's school?

Student Data Privacy and Security Risk Scenarios

- Results illustrate limited differentiation across privacy and security risks tested in the survey.
- Data breaches and risk scenarios with a potential tangible impact on the student generate the most concern.



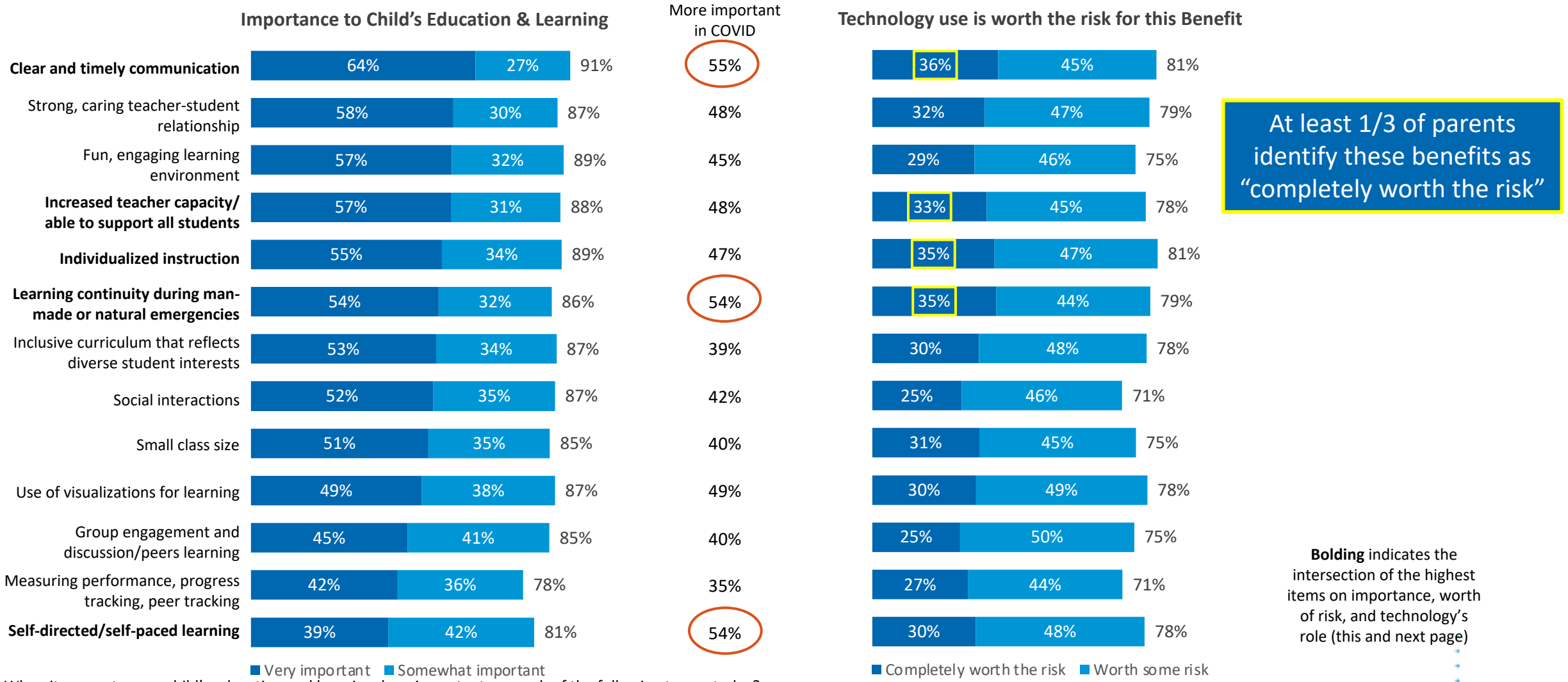
Concern over Student Data Privacy and Security Risk Scenarios	Very concerned	Somewhat concerned	Total	Hispanic (n=530)	African-American (n=522)	Rural (n=277)	Suburb (n=564)	Urban (n=378)
Data breach into a third-party system giving access educational records other content they've created	38%	32%	70%	72%	70%	63%	**71%↑**	**75%↑**
Data breach at school giving access to health, mental health, counseling, immunization records	38%	31%	69%	72%	70%	63%	69%	**74%↑**
School sharing student directory information with a third party (e.g. name, home address), can opt out	37%	33%	70%	72%	71%	65%	71%	72%↑
Student data used to make decisions that could limit educational and workforce opportunities	37%	32%	69%	72%	71%	61%	**69%↑**	**75%↑**
Uninvited individuals joining/ disrupting online class discussions	36%	33%	69%	71%	69%	61%	**68%↑**	**75%↑**
Data breach providing access to your child's academic records	35%	32%	67%	70%	69%	58%	**67%↑**	**73%↑**
Student data being shared with third-party tech companies	33%	34%	67%	69%	71%	59%	**68%↑**	**72%↑**
School using biometric data, e.g. fingerprint or eye scan, in place of an ID card, to receive school lunch	32%	30%	62%	**68%***	65%	56%	61%	**70%↑**
Student data being shared with local, state, or federal government entities	27%	33%	60%	63%	64%	48%	**59%↑**	**70%↑**
Electronic school records being kept for an extended period of time or indefinitely	26%	33%	59%	**64%***	61%	52%	57%	**67%↑**
Student data shared with law enforcement	25%	30%	56%	60%	**61%***	45%	**54%↑**	**66%↑**
After-school programs or activities require parent authorization to share grades and attendance data	21%	32%	52%	57%	54%	40%	**50%↑**	**65%↑**

* Hispanic or Afr-Amer: significantly higher than U.S. base sample

Q29: Listed below are potential situations that could put your child's privacy and security at risk. How concerned would you say you are with each?

Student Benefit Risk-Reward Tradeoff

- Remote schooling during COVID-19 pandemic altered parents' perspectives of which elements of their children's education are most important.
- Solid majorities believe technology is "worth the risk" to deliver key education benefits.



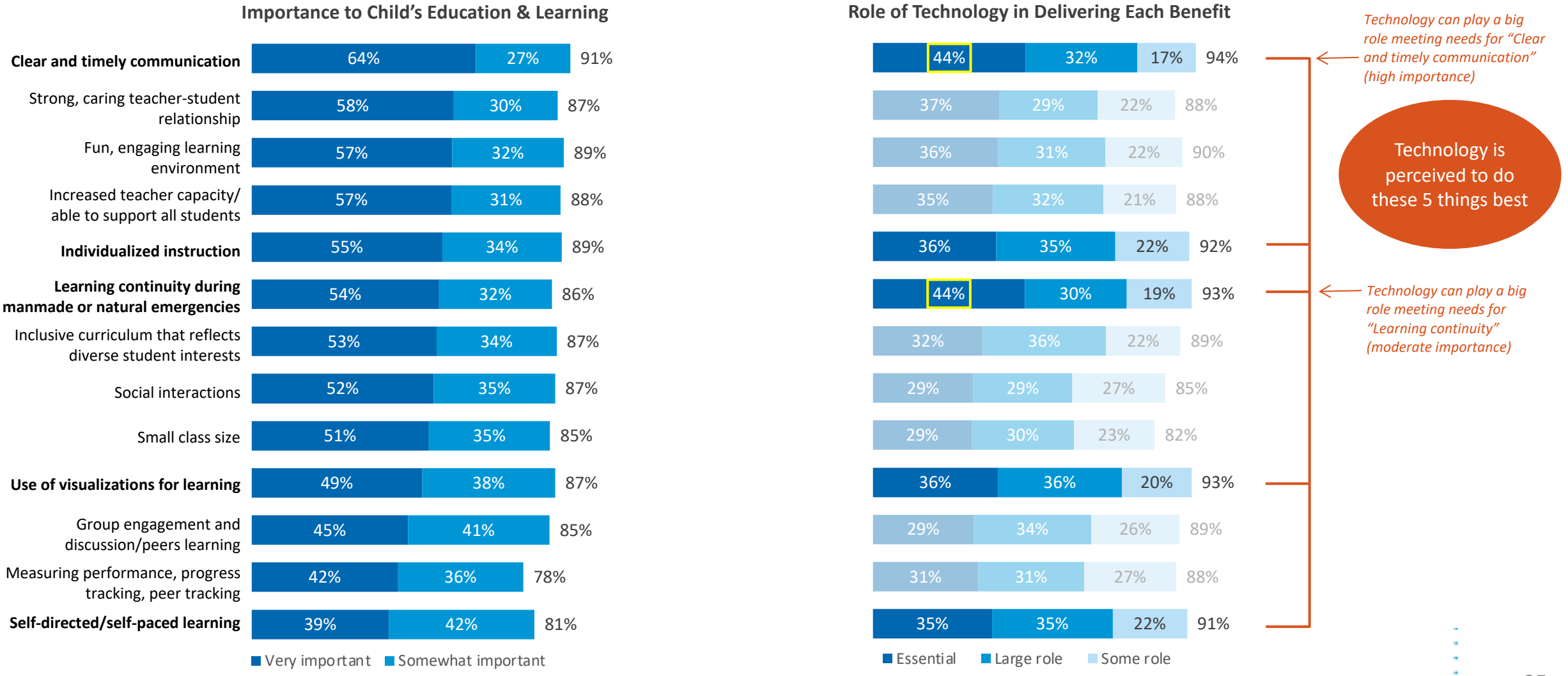
At least 1/3 of parents identify these benefits as "completely worth the risk"

Bolding indicates the intersection of the highest items on importance, worth of risk, and technology's role (this and next page)

Q34: When it comes to your child's education and learning, how important are each of the following to you today?
Q35: Compared to before social distancing guidelines were put in place and schools were closed, would you say the importance of each has grown more important, less important, or is about the same in importance?
Q37: The use of technology and online learning comes with educational benefits as well as with some student privacy and security risk. For each of the following, to what extent is it worth the risk to receive the benefit?

Top Student Benefits Delivered through Technology

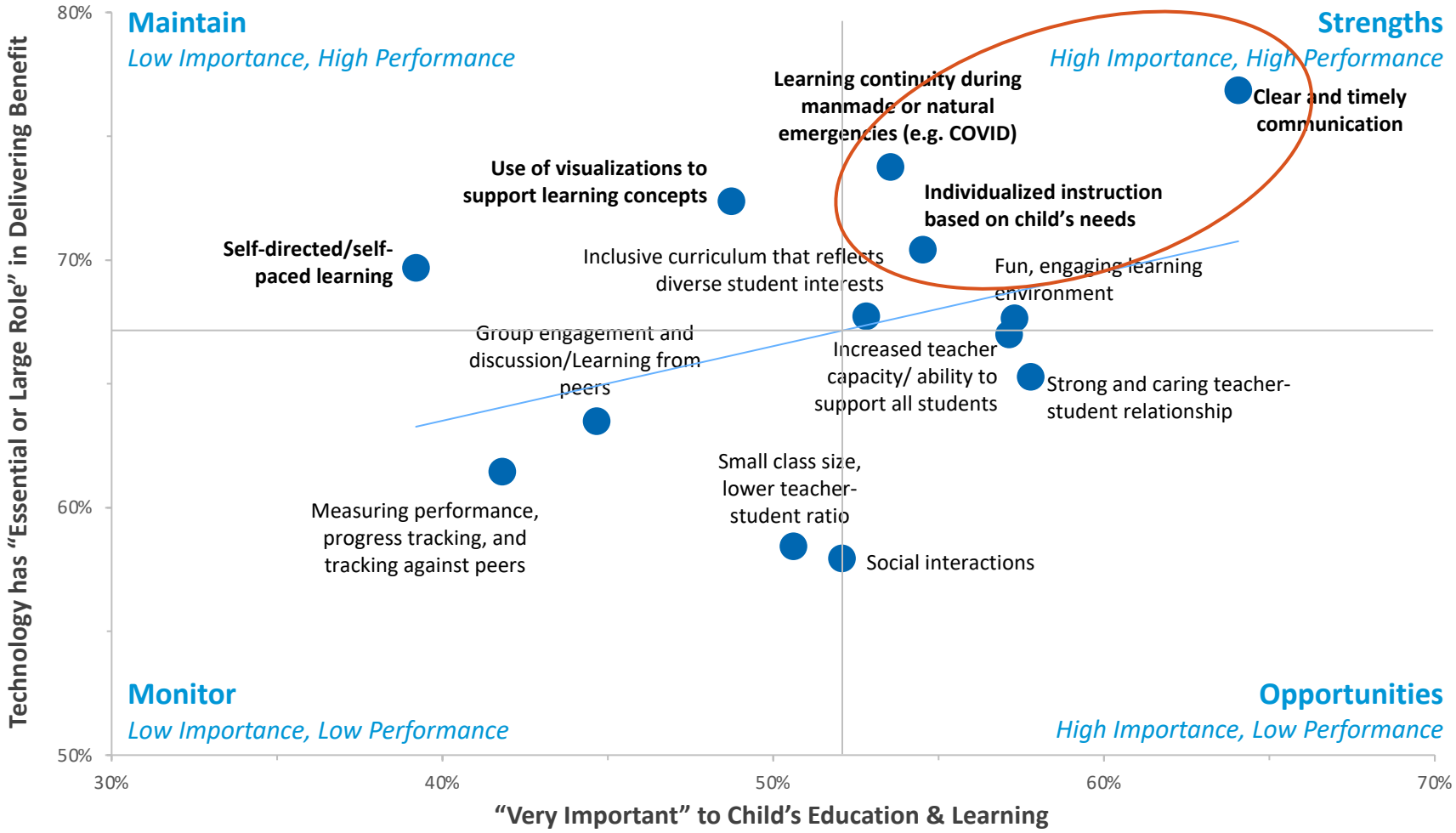
- Parents overwhelmingly believe technology plays a role in helping to deliver key education benefits.
- Technology is viewed as playing an essential or large role in delivering clear and timely communication (high importance), individualized instruction, learning continuity, use of visualizations, and self-directed learning.



Q34: When it comes to your child's education and learning, how important are each of the following to you today?
Q36: What role can technology and/or online learning play in delivering or providing each of the educational benefits listed below?

Technology Benefits Perceptual Map

- Viewed another way, education benefits that fall in the upper right quadrant are areas that are both important to parents and that parents deem technology/online learning does well.
- In the bottom right quadrant are areas that are important, but where technology/online learning is not considered to play a large role.



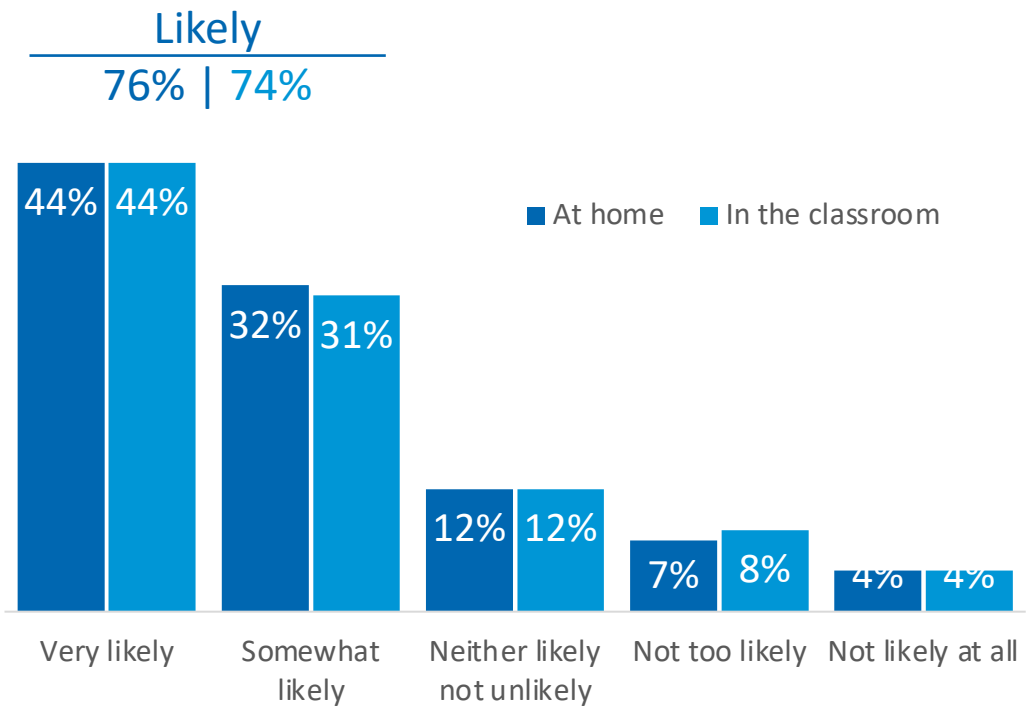
Q34: When it comes to your child's education and learning, how important are each of the following to you today?
Q36: What role can technology and/or online learning play in delivering or providing each of the educational benefits listed below?

Online Learning Going Forward

Online Learning Going Forward

- Most parents say they will support an increased level of online learning at home and in the classroom, even after the stay-at-home restrictions are lifted.
- Among the few that do not support online learning going forward, top reasons are not related to data privacy.

Likelihood of supporting an increased level of online learning at home and in the classroom



What makes you say that you are unlikely to support online learning at home and/or in the classroom?

	U.S. (n=250)	Hispanic (n=109)	Afr-Amer (n=123))
Traditional classroom learning is all that is needed	33%	29%	24%
Online learning is not effective for my child	27%	27%	20%
I cannot continue to supervise my child during online learning at home	24%	21%	18%
My child's teacher will not be as attentive to online learning as they are now, during the crisis	23%	21%	25%
Online learning we use is free now during the COVID-19 crisis, but will not be after the crisis	18%	22%	25%
Due to data security and privacy concerns	14%	18%	15%
Do not have internet access at home	5%	2%	4%
Do not have a device for my child to use at home	4%	6%	6%
Other	6%	6%	9%
Not sure	9%	12%	13%

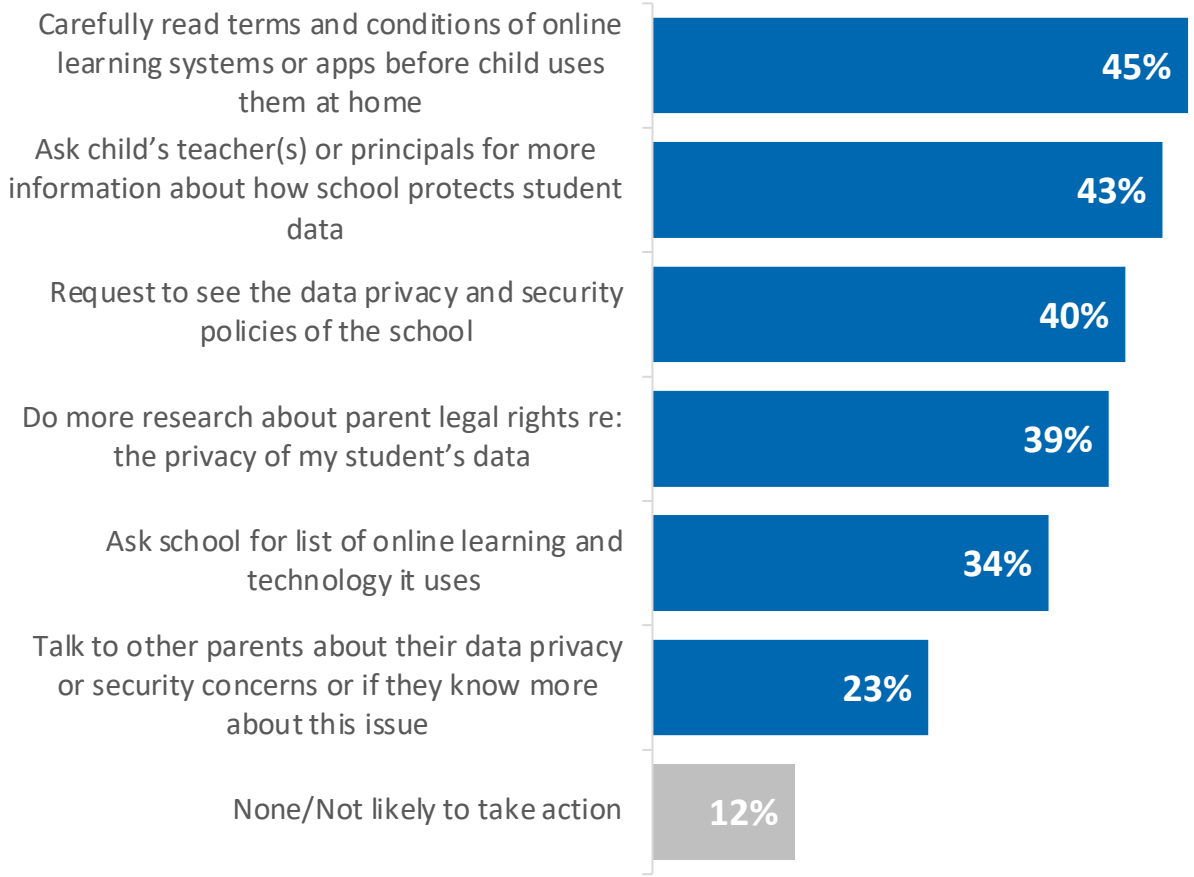
Q39: When the stay-at-home restrictions are lifted and students can return to the classroom, how likely are you to support your child continuing an increased level of online learning at home and in the classroom?
Q40: What makes you say that you are unlikely to support online learning at home and/or in the classroom? Select all that apply.

Actions Likely to Take Going Forward

- Results are mixed as to the actions parents will take moving forward.
- Hispanic parents are more likely to say they will act. Younger parents show an increased likelihood to take steps to protect their student's data in the future.

Actions Likely to Take Going Forward

U.S. (n=1227)



	Hispanic	Afr-Amer	Male	Female	< 35	35 to 44	45+
	(n=530)	(n=522)	(n=586)	(n=601)	(n=295)	(n=521)	(n=410)
Carefully read terms and conditions of online learning systems or apps before child uses them at home	**51%***	**52%***	**50%↑**	40%	**51%↑**	43%	45%
Ask child's teacher(s) or principals for more information about how school protects student data	48%	48%	**47%↑**	40%	46%	41%	43%
Request to see the data privacy and security policies of the school	44%	44%	41%	38%	40%	40%	40%
Do more research about parent legal rights re: the privacy of my student's data	**45%↑***	39%	42%	37%	**44%↑**	38%	35%
Ask school for list of online learning and technology it uses	**40%***	36%	**38%↑**	29%	35%	32%	34%
Talk to other parents about their data privacy or security concerns or if they know more about this issue	22%	26%	**27%↑**	20%	25%	24%	21%
None/Not likely to take action	7%	7%	8%	**16%↑**	11%	13%	12%

* Hispanic or Afr-Amer: significantly higher than U.S. base sample

Q42: Given what you know about data privacy and security now, what actions are you likely to take regarding your child's data privacy and security?