



Family Wellbeing

IN THE PANDEMIC

May 2020

fluent[™]
public opinion + market research

Introduction

This report presents the research findings from the Fluent study on the wellbeing of families during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey addressed two key research questions:

1. What impact has the pandemic have on the wellbeing of families?
2. How do families cope with the effects of the pandemic?

The survey was conducted online among a national sample of 2,032 parents or guardians of children ages 2-18. In addition, 894 teens ages 13-18 from these households completed a separate section of the survey.

The survey was conducted April 22 – May 5, 2020.

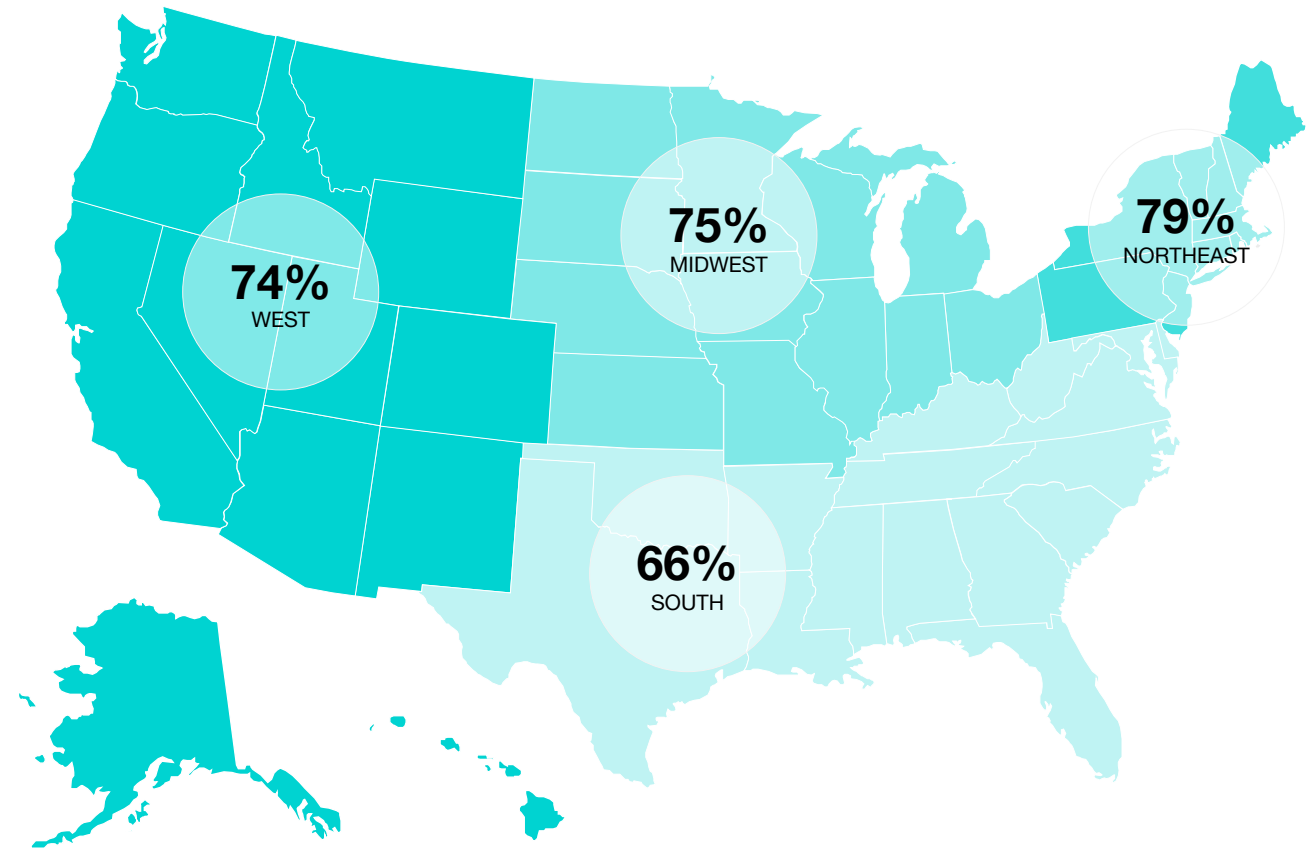
A young girl with dark hair in braids and bangs is the central focus, looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. She is wearing a blue denim shirt. In the background, a man and a woman are smiling warmly, their faces slightly out of focus. The overall tone is intimate and personal.

Impact of Covid-19 on Families' Lives and Livelihoods

At the time of the survey, nine in 10 families (91%) were living in an area with stay-at-home orders or recommendations to limit interactions with people currently in place.

Parents in the South were least likely to report that they were under government-mandated stay-at-home or quarantine orders.

Government-mandated stay-at-home or quarantine order



Which of the following best describes the state of the coronavirus/ Covid-19 outbreak in your community right now? N=2,032

Many families have experienced disruptions in their living situations

including where they are living or who is living in the household.

Nearly one in four families (22%) have had a change in the number of people living in their household.

This is particularly prevalent among families living in urban areas (33% vs. 17% suburban and 14% rural) and among Black/African American parents (32% vs. 18% White, 27% Hispanic, and 25% Asian).

One in 10 families have had a change in their living situation (either living in a different apartment/house or a different community).

22%

10%

Which of the following changes, if any, are true for your family's situation since the coronavirus/ Covid-19 outbreak? N=2,032



Coronavirus is close to home for many families

One-third of parents (32%) report that a family member or a friend has been diagnosed with or has had symptoms consistent with coronavirus/Covid-19

More than one in ten parents (13%) report that a family member or a friend has died from coronavirus

32%

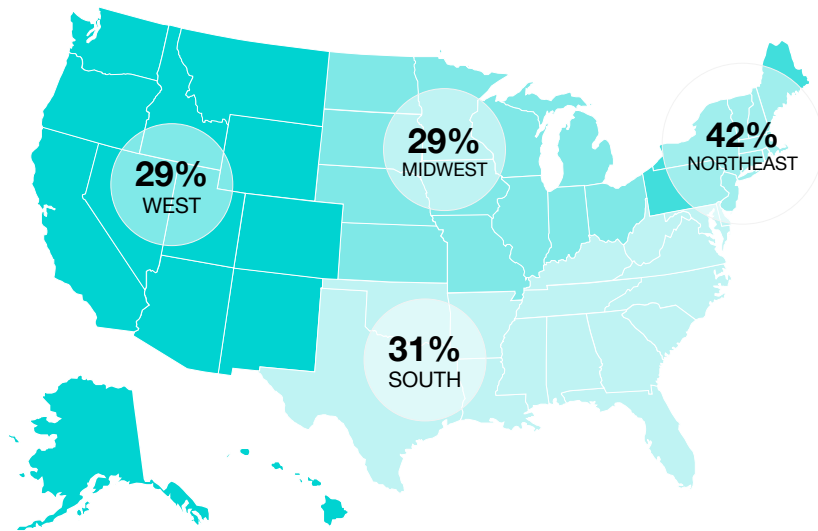
13%

Is each of the following true or not true for your family: a member of my family/friend has been diagnosed or has shown symptoms consistent with Covid-19/coronavirus? N=2,032

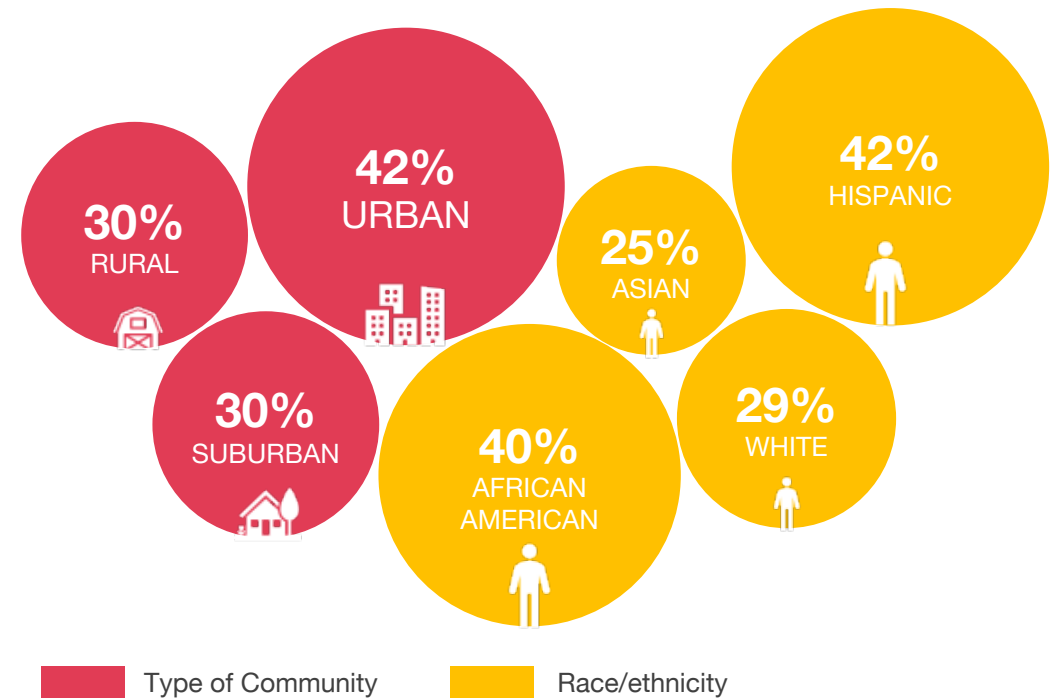


Direct experience with coronavirus varies by regions, metro status, and race/ethnicity

Hispanic and Black/African American parents, as well as parents living in the Northeast or in urban areas, are the most likely to have a family member or friend who has experienced Covid-19.



Have a family member or friend who has been diagnosed with or had symptoms consistent with Covid-19



Is each of the following true or not true for your family: a member of my family/friend has been diagnosed or has shown symptoms consistent with Covid-19/coronavirus? N=2,032

The economic impact of Covid-19 has been devastating for American families

In **one in two** families (50%), at least one parent in the household has either lost a job, been furloughed or had their salary reduced due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

In nearly a quarter of families (22%), **both parents** have either lost a job, been furloughed or had their salary reduced due to the Covid-19 outbreak.



50%

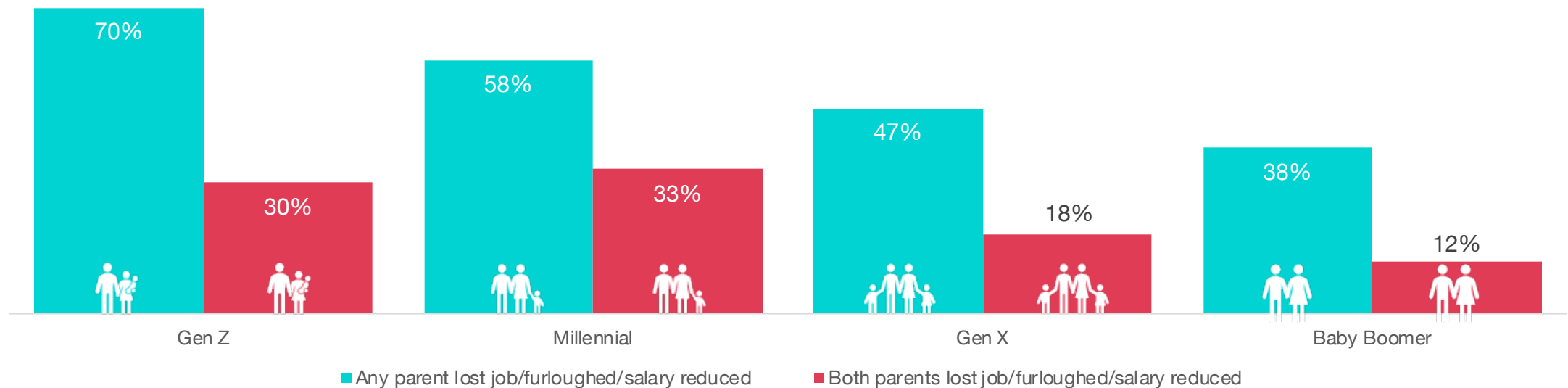


22%

Which of the following is true about your/your spouse/partner's employment situation since the coronavirus/ Covid-19 outbreak? N=2,032

Younger parents are more likely to have been economically impacted than parents of older generations

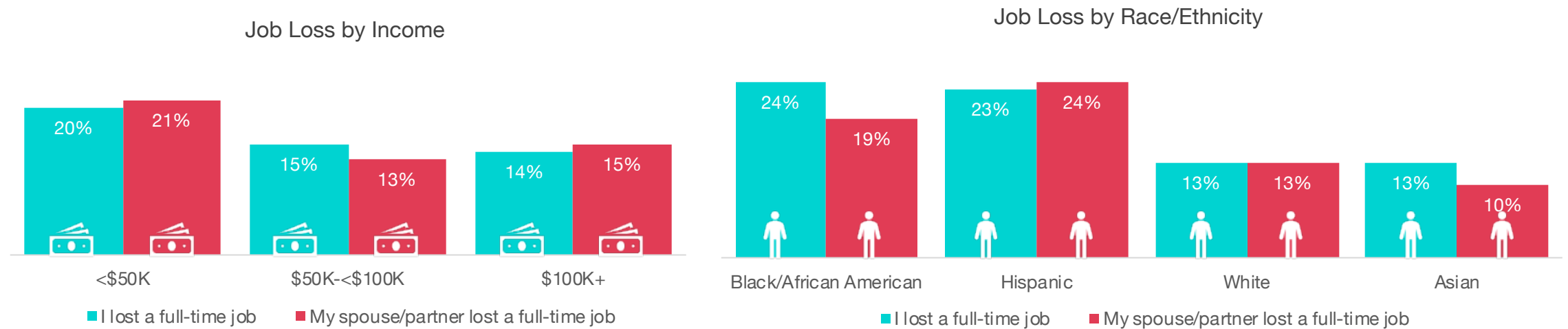
Families experiencing economic impact of the pandemic



Which of the following is true about your/your spouse/partner's employment situation since the coronavirus/ Covid-19 outbreak? N=2,032

The economic impact of the pandemic is particularly severe for lower-income, African American and Hispanic families

Black/African American and Hispanic parents, as well as parents from lower-income households, are more likely to report that they or their spouse have **lost a full-time job** due to Covid-19.



Which of the following is true about your/your spouse/partner's employment situation since the coronavirus/ Covid-19 outbreak? N=2,032

The pandemic has had a compounding effect on many families

More than one in ten families (12%) have experienced both the economic impact (at least one parent lost a job, been furloughed or had a salary reduced) and direct exposure to the coronavirus (a family member was diagnosed with or had symptoms associated with Covid-19).

A photograph of a Black man in a blue shirt holding a crying baby in a blue shirt. The man is looking down at a tablet device. A large teal circle with the text '12%' is overlaid on the image.

12%

Parents who are still employed have been working from home

45%

In nearly half of families (45%), at least one parent is working from home since the outbreak who had previously worked outside the home.

This experience is more common among higher income parents.

Working from home since the outbreak, by income

60%

\$100K+

44%

<50K - <\$100K

28%

<50K



A photograph of a family of four sleeping in a bed. A woman with curly hair is on the right, her head resting on a pillow. A young girl with dark hair is in the center, wearing a pink blanket and holding a yellow teddy bear. A young boy is on the left, also sleeping. A man is partially visible in the background, resting his head on a pillow. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting a peaceful night's sleep.

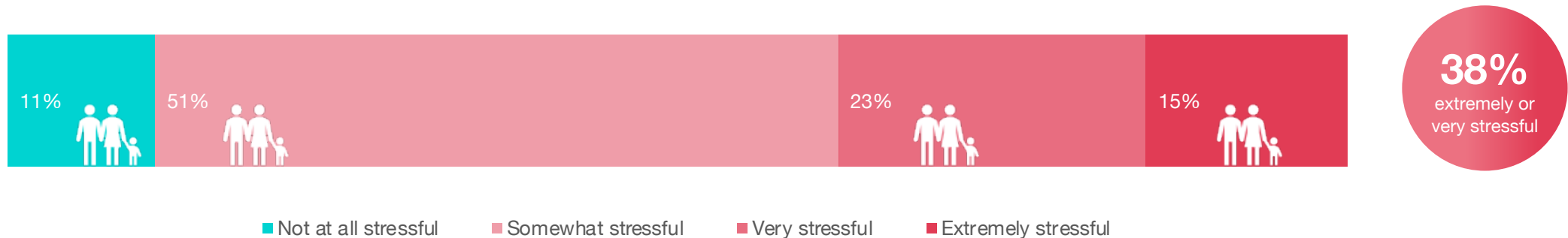
Impact of Covid-19 on the Emotional Wellbeing of Families

Nearly all families are stressed as a result of the pandemic

Nine in ten parents say the experience of coping with Covid-19 has been stressful.

Nearly four in 10 parents (38%) say the experience of coping with Covid-19 has been **extremely or very stressful** for their family.

How stressful has the experience of coping with the coronavirus/Covid-19 outbreak been for your family?

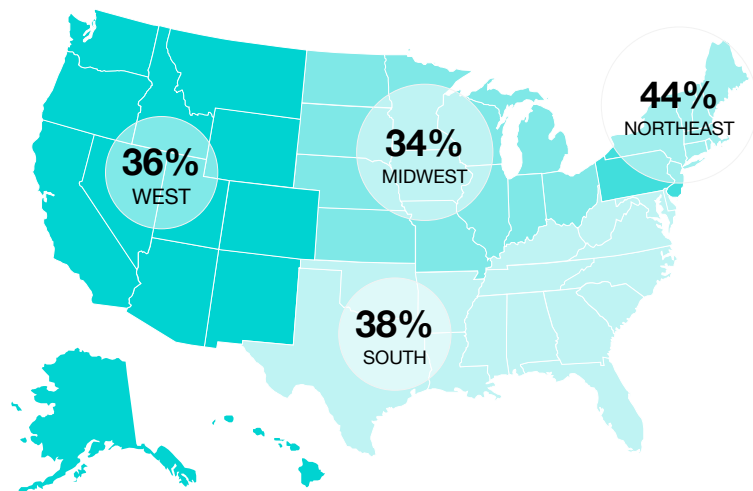


Overall, how stressful has the experience of coping with the coronavirus/Covid-19 outbreak been for your family? N=2,032

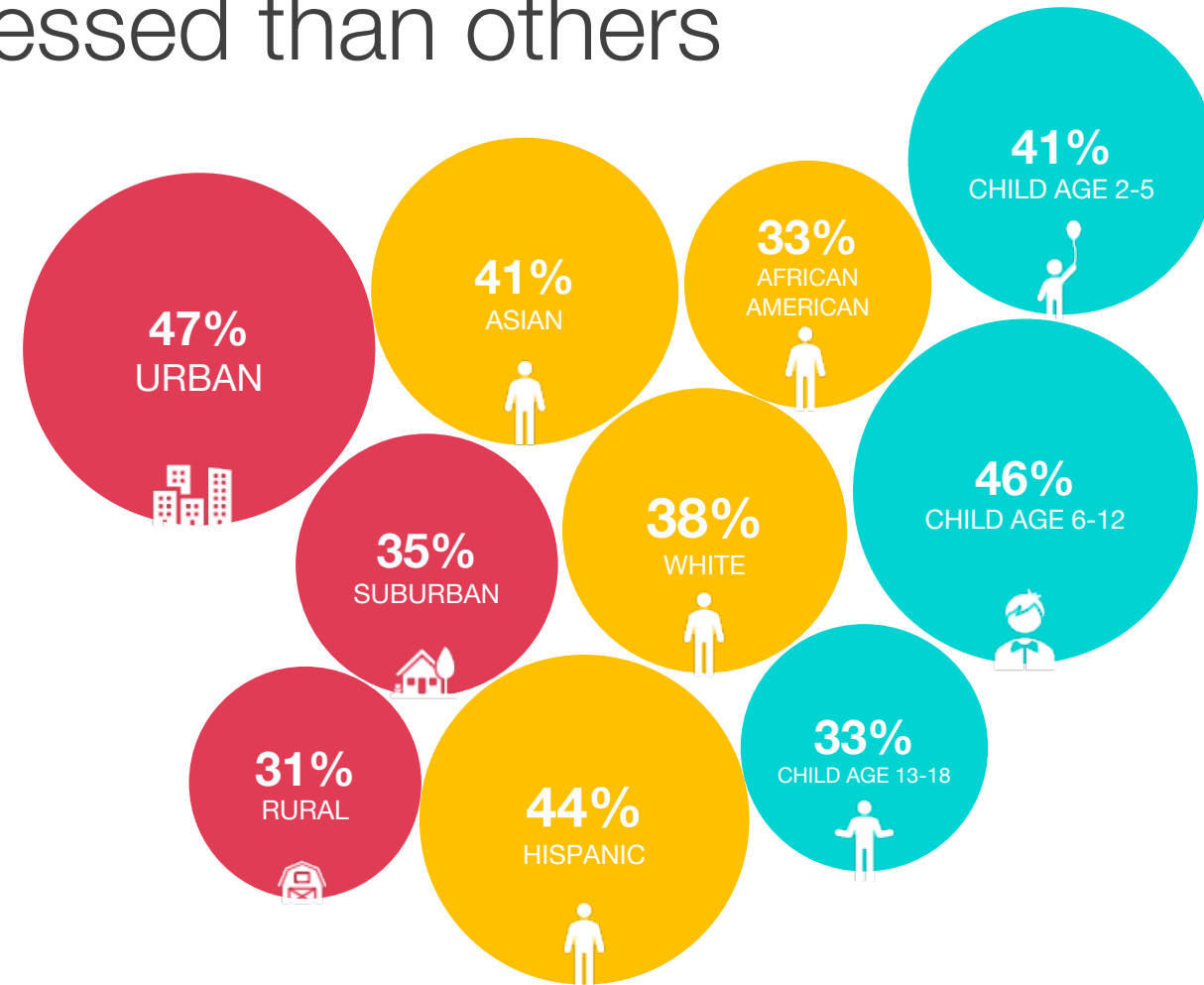
Some families are more stressed than others

The stress level is higher among parents of young children, families living in the Northeast and in urban centers, and among Hispanic parents.

% of parents rating experience with Covid-19 extremely/very stressful



Overall, how stressful has the experience of coping with the coronavirus/Covid-19 outbreak been for your family? N=2,032



Type of Community

Race/ethnicity

Child's Age

Fear of contracting the coronavirus and isolation from loved ones are the largest sources of stress

But other factors have also put families on edge.

Has caused a lot or tremendous amount of stress:

40%	Risk of contracting coronavirus
37%	Inability to visit relatives
32%	Working from home
29%	Planning for my child's summer
28%	Having all members of my family at home all the time
25%	Having less amount of "me" time
23%	Having a friend or family member experiencing symptoms associated with coronavirus
21%	Explaining the current health crisis to my child
21%	Having adequate technology devices or services at home for work and/or school needs

To what extent has each of the following caused you stress during the current coronavirus/ Covid-19 outbreak? N=2,032



My partner and I are essential employees. One in healthcare and the other in Law Enforcement, so the stress of possibly getting Covid-19 and bringing home to our family is our greatest fear and stresser.

Mother of 11-year-old boy

While most parents feel that the pandemic has brought their family closer together, nearly one in two parents report that spending more time together has put strains on family relationships

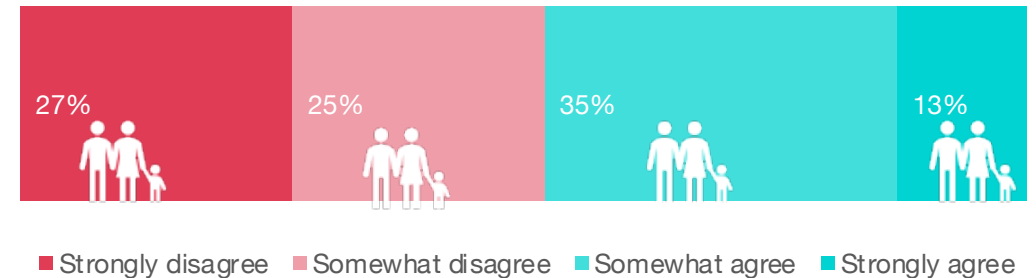
"My family has become closer as a result of coronavirus/Covid-19 outbreak"

80%
AGREE



"Spending more time together during the coronavirus/Covid-19 outbreak has resulted in tension and conflict in my family"

48%
AGREE



"It's been a good thing as far as bringing us even closer but bad thing because of how sad and scary the virus is."

MOTHER OF 13-YEAR-OLD GIRL

"My husband works from home and my daughter is working on school from home, so they are both driving me crazy."

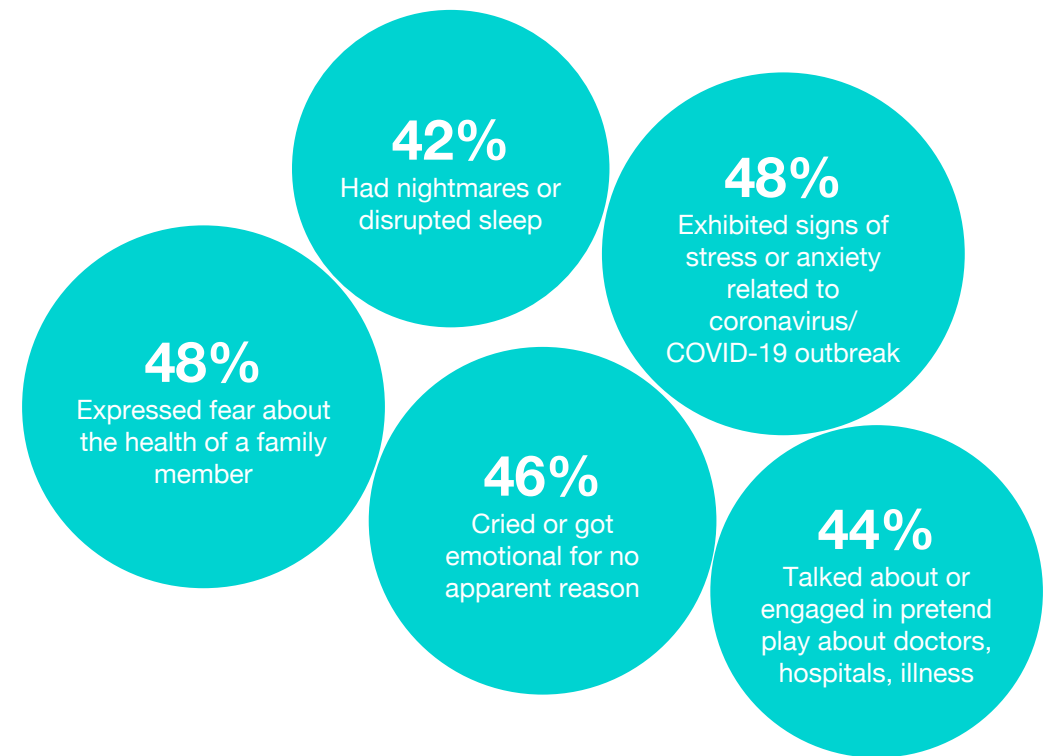
MOTHER OF 12-YEAR-OLD GIRL

The stress experienced by families has taken its toll on children's emotional wellbeing

Parents report a range of ways in which their children expressed their sadness or stress related to the outbreak. The impact has been particularly strong on the emotional wellbeing of school-age children.

Children aged 6-12 are old enough to grasp the seriousness of the Covid-19 pandemic and its effect on their family, yet may be too young to utilize coping strategies.

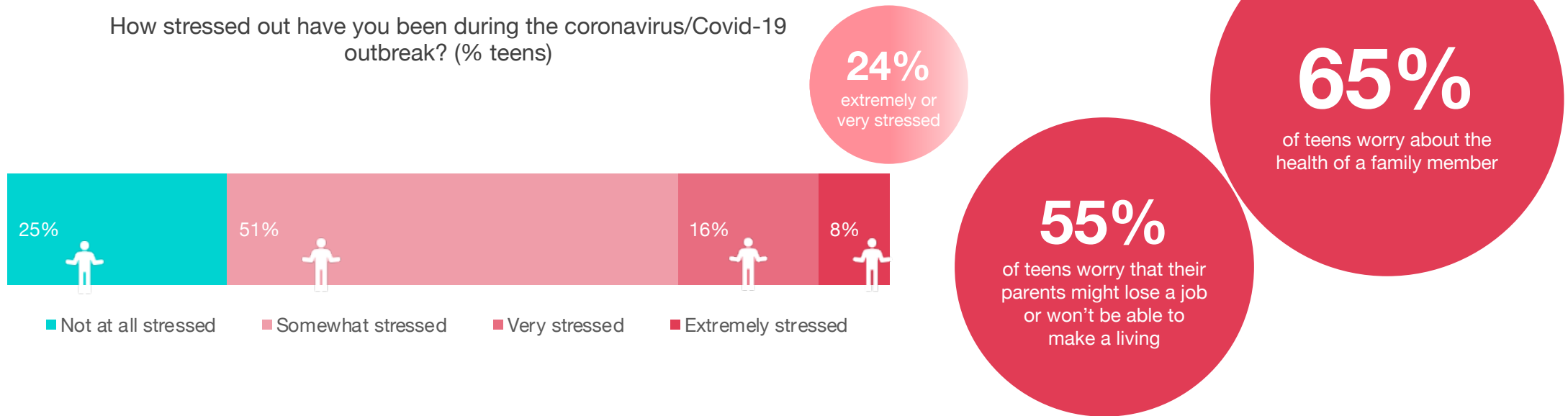
Percent of parents reporting that their child aged 6-12 did the following at least sometimes during the past week.



During the past week, how often did your child do the following? Among parents of children age 6-12 N=518

Emotional toll is not limited to younger kids

Teens participating in the survey expressed high levels of stress and anxiety about the effects of the pandemic on their families. One in four teens have been **extremely or very stressed out** during the Covid-19 outbreak.

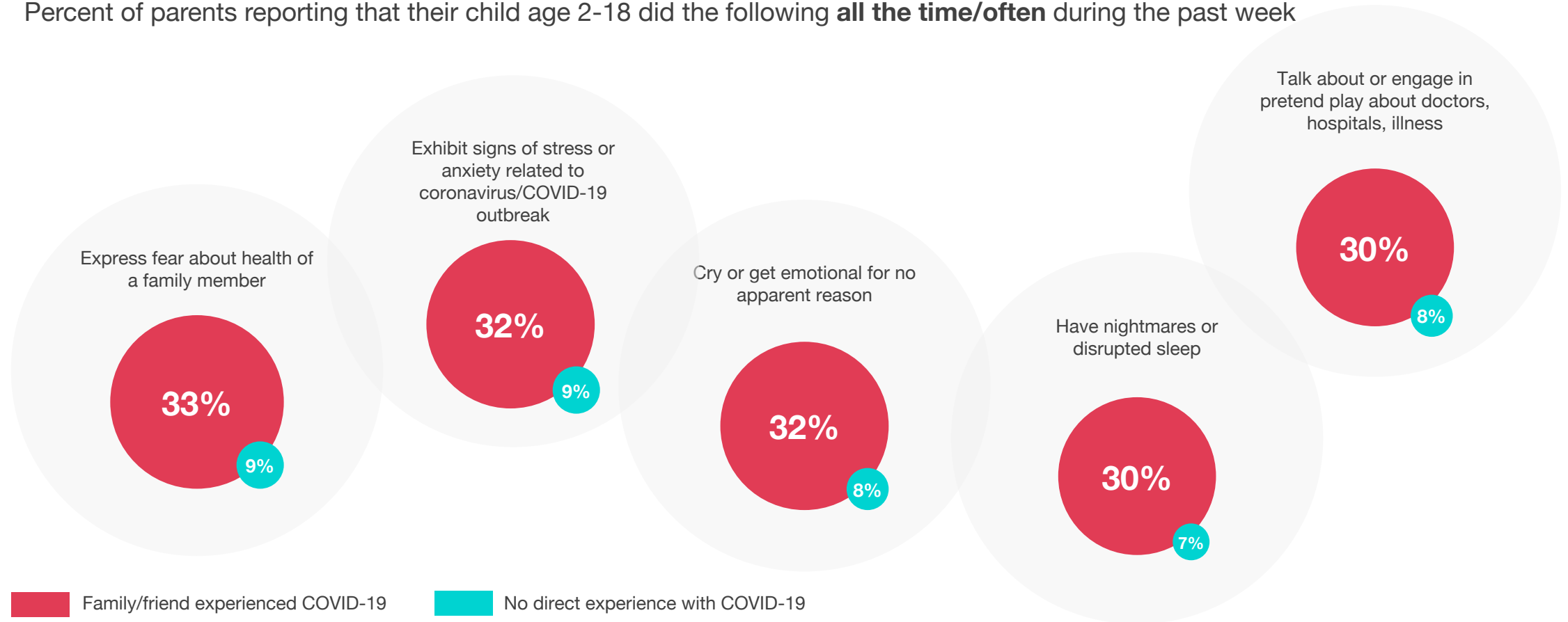


How stressed out have you been during the coronavirus/Covid-19 outbreak? Sample of teens age 13-18, N=894

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your experiences during the coronavirus/ Covid-19 outbreak? % agree, among teens age 13-18, N=894

Children from families with direct coronavirus experience are significantly more likely to exhibit signs of stress and anxiety

Percent of parents reporting that their child age 2-18 did the following **all the time/often** during the past week



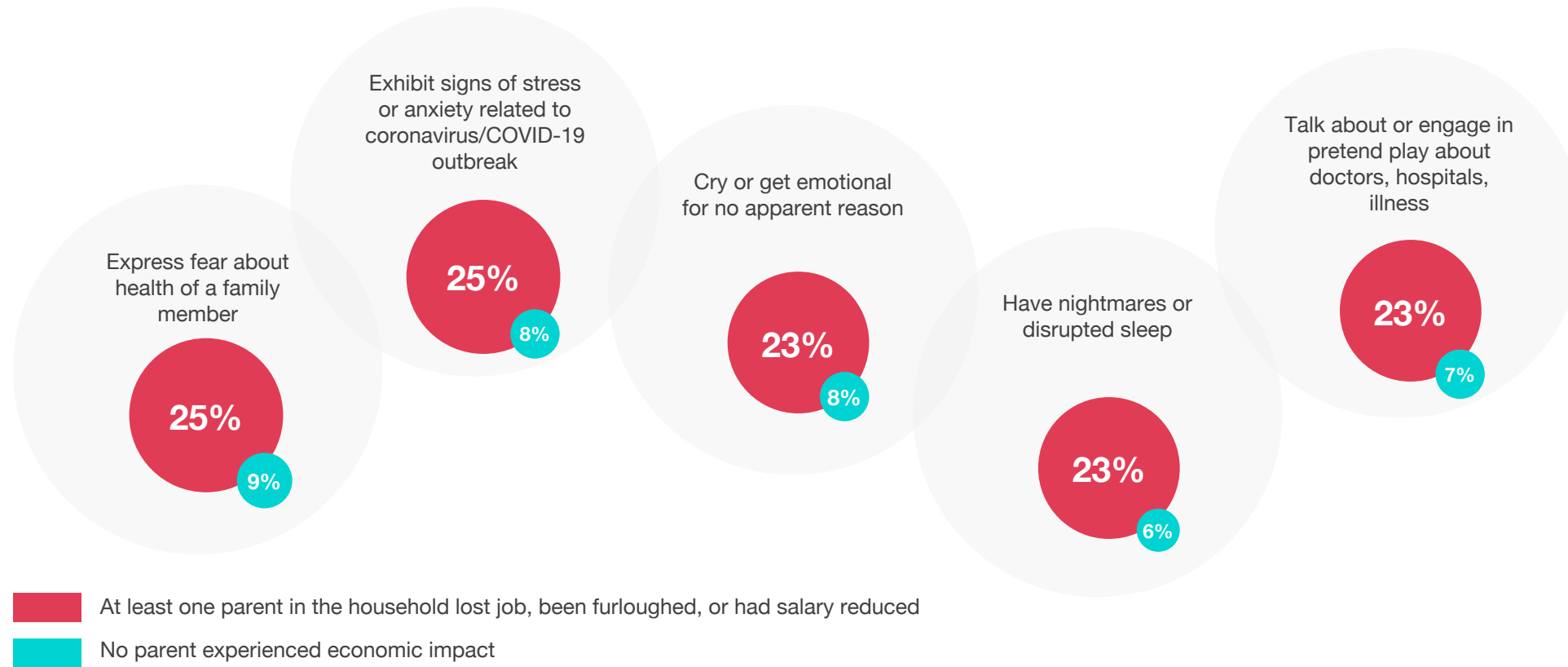


My grandmother has passed due to the [Covid-19] disease. My child has severe anxiety and night terrors because of it.

Mother of 6-year-old girl

Children from families, which experienced the economic impact of the pandemic, are significantly more likely to exhibit signs of stress and anxiety

Percent of parents reporting that their child age 2-18 did the following **all the time/often** during the past week





I am out of work, my wife is working from home at a reduced salary, and our daughter is terrified of catching Covid-19 and experiencing a lot of anxiety.

Father of 17-year-old girl

Parents have also had to contend with the fallout of a disrupted school year and their children's social isolation

Percent of parents reporting that their child aged 2-18 did the following at least sometimes during the past week

57%

Talked about missing playing outdoors

57%

Talked about missing their teachers*

48%

Stressed out about the amount of classwork**

67%

Talked about missing going to school*

72%

Talked about missing their friends

During the past week, how often did your child do the following? N=2032

*Among parents of child age 2-18 who are not homeschooled

**Among parents of child age 6-18



Coronavirus/Covid-19 has affected my family by making us feel isolated from the real world. Many sports and family events have been cancelled. Me and my family have been more stressed than usual. Crying has been big in our household.

Mother of 13-year-old girl

Parents grapple with a near constant task of providing solace and comfort to their anxious kids

Percent of parents of children aged 2-18 who **nearly every day** during the past week...

30%

Tried to comfort their child to address their child's worries about COVID-19

30%

Talked to their child about how the coronavirus/COVID-19 outbreak affects their family

During the past week, how often did you do each of the following with your child? % 5-6 times a week or more often. N=2032



Discussing what is going on with the children has been very important. Trying to ease their fear.

Mother of 3-year-old girl



Coping with the Pandemic

Nearly all parents (95%) have used at least one strategy to cope with the effects of the pandemic on their family



- Eat dinner and meals together as a family (56%)
- Cooking or baking with their children (46%)



- Spending more time doing things together as a family (50%)
- Spending more time playing with their children (42%)



- Getting enough sleep (45%)
- Letting their children get more sleep than usual (43%)



- Maintain family's daily routines (45%)
- Creating new family routines (31%)



- Encouraging their children to exercise (39%)
- Exercising or keeping up with fitness routines (37%)
- Practice yoga, meditation or mindfulness (16%)



- Limiting family's exposure to news (21%)

Parents share their coping strategies

“We stay home, exercise together and laugh over very little things, just to forget about what’s happening.”

Mother of 2-year-old girl

“Eating 3 meals a day together as a family has worked out great. We watch our favorite TV shows together, and we've done a lot of reading during the day as I've been home schooling our oldest.”

Father of 5-year-old boy

“We have been baking together which both of my children enjoy. We have been playing a LOT of board games together and doing craft projects. When the kids go outside to play, I go out also just to give them family contact since they can't have their friends over to play.”

Mother of 9-year-old girl

Many parents have loosened their rules around their children's activities during the pandemic

61%

of parents report they have been more lenient about their child's eating unhealthy snacks and foods

43%

of parents report letting their child sleep more than usual

73%

of parents report that they have been more lenient about their child's screen time during the outbreak

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your experiences during the coronavirus/ Covid-19 outbreak? N=2032



I have loosened up a lot of rules we previously had. I have been letting my kids have more screen time, take longer baths, play outside later, and just generally do things more that make them happy since they cannot go places or see friends.

Mother of 7-year-old girl



I do not put restrictions on their bedtimes at this point, and they are happier for it. Although they stay up practically all night, but they are better in the daytime.

Mother of 8-year-old boy

Teens agree that their parents have been less strict about the rules during the pandemic

63%

of teens report their parents let them eat whatever they want more so than before

77%

of teens agree their parents let them watch video or play games more so than before

84%

of teens say they are getting more sleep than before

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your experiences during the coronavirus/ Covid-19 outbreak? Sample of teens age 13-18, N=894



Sleeping later on school mornings, letting him have the freedom to work on his assignments as he wants to, and taking breaks/taking walks with him to let him take a brain break.

Mother of 13 year-old boy

Looking for a silver lining

Despite all the stress and anxiety caused by the pandemic and its economic fallout, many parents look on the positive side of their experience, expressing appreciation for the many ways that it has brought their families closer together.

84%

of parents agree that spending more time with their children during the coronavirus/ Covid-19 outbreak has been a rewarding experience

80%

of parents agree that their family has become closer as a result of the coronavirus/ Covid-19 outbreak

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your experiences during the coronavirus/ Covid-19 outbreak? N=2032



Being around my kids is amazing. It gives me so much joy! That's how I cope with [the pandemic].

Father of 12-year-old girl



It just brings us together as a family. Before, we hardly ever saw my parents, and we all did eat at different times. So having them home has been nice. My son loves spending time with them.

Mother of 4-year-old boy

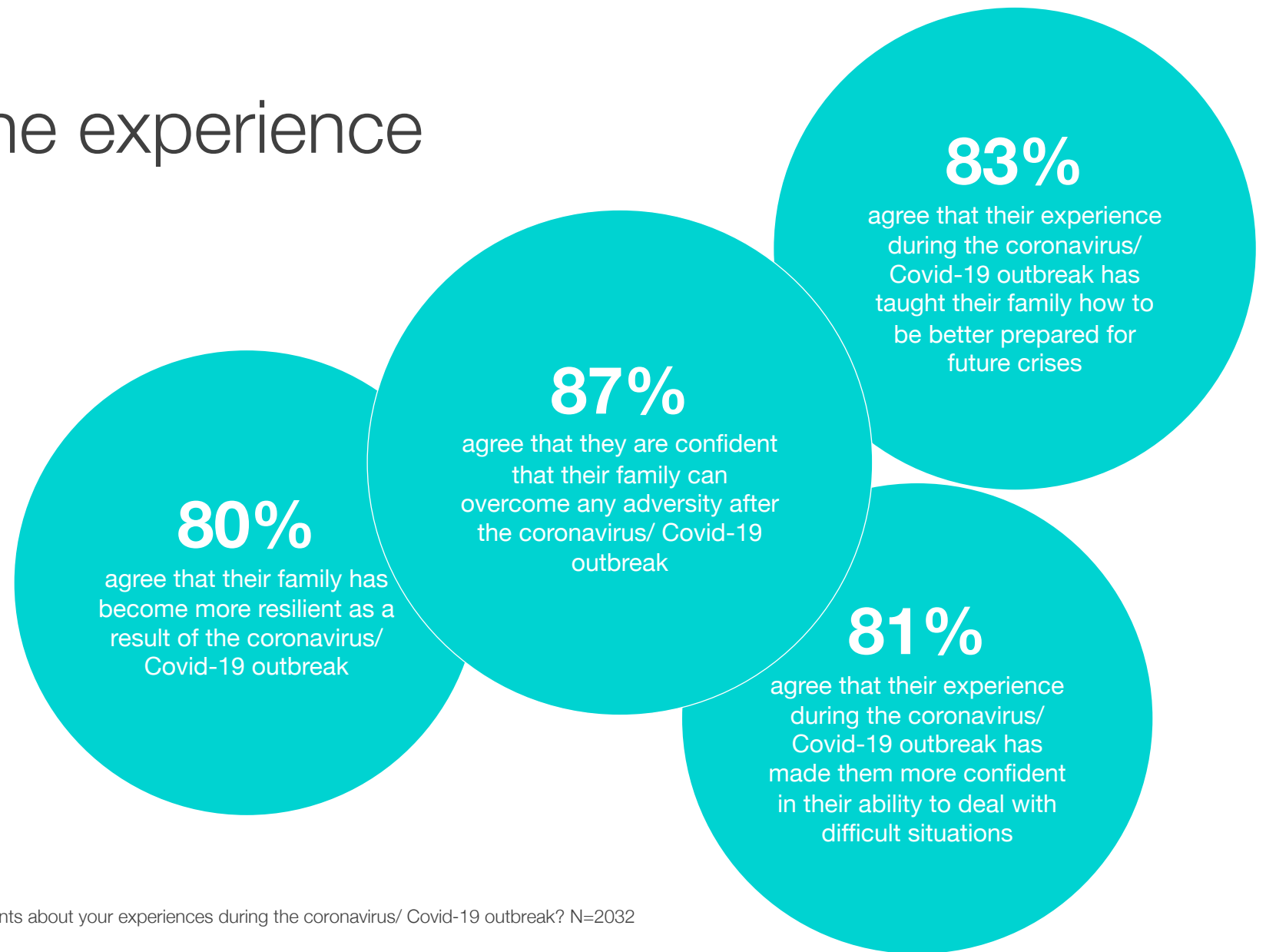


I would have to say that since the outbreak I've learned that my children are funnier than I thought. So we've been bonding over that.

Father of 18-year-old boy

Learning from the experience

Parents express a belief that their experience with the Covid-19 pandemic has better prepared them for future crises and made their families more resilient in the face of adversity.




How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your experiences during the coronavirus/ Covid-19 outbreak? N=2032



My sister is an ER Doctor in NYC and she was very, very sick with Covid-19. She was in the ICU on a ventilator for over a week. It was very emotionally stressful. She is recovering now. I feel like I can handle anything else so long as my family is healthy.

Mother of 4-year-old boy



Fluent is a consulting firm specializing in research that informs the development of public policy, educational programs, media and technology focused on children's education, health and wellbeing. We have applied rigorous and innovative research solutions in service of promoting children's access to and quality of education, and gender equality in the U.S. and in over 70 countries around the world.

Fluent Research
845 Third Avenue, Sixth Floor
New York, New York, 10022
www.fluentresearch.com

Research Lead
Nellie Gregorian
+1.646.701.2955
ngregorian@fluentresearch.com

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