

Student Viewpoint: COVID-19 and the Value of College

October 27, 2020

Student experiences tied to the belief that education is worth the cost

Our Strada-Gallup research with education consumers identifies experiences linked to ratings of value:

- High-quality academics
- Coursework that is relevant to work responsibilities
- Development of skills that are used day-to-day
- Faculty mentoring
- Internships and jobs related to what they are studying
- High-quality career advising

Beliefs about the value of education are closely tied to its career relevance

How is COVID-19 affecting support for current students' career development?

- Starting in 2016, by way of our Strada-Gallup partnership, we have spoken with over 350,000 Americans about the value of education and training after high school.
- The connections between education and careers are closely tied to beliefs that education is worth the cost.

Student Viewpoint survey

- 4,007 current students
- Enrolled at bachelor's degree-granting colleges and universities
- Nationally representative on the basis of age, race/ethnicity and gender
- Online survey responses received Sept. 10-25, 2020

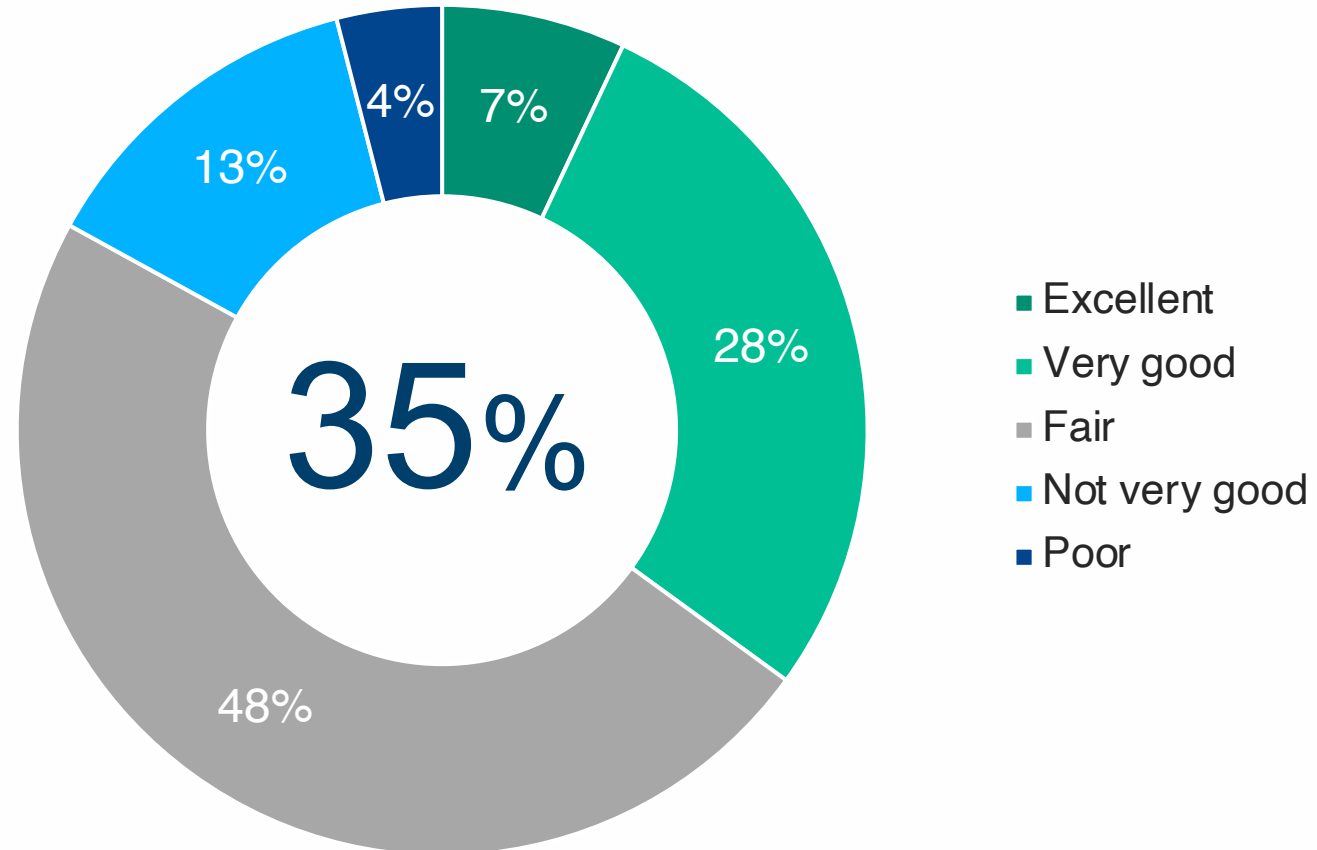
Since COVID we see these trends...

- **Declining fall enrollments:** 9.4 percent decline at community colleges and 2 percent decline at four-year universities.
- More Americans say the pandemic has **increased their interest in enrolling** in education. Among Latinos and Black Americans, there is a **much larger net increase in interest**. This increased interest is even more intense among disrupted workers — those who have lost jobs, shifts, or hours — with a 20 percent jump.
- Contrary to popular belief, cost is not the top barrier to pursuing education and training. The No. 1 barrier is **time and logistics** (55 percent report as the top challenge) and the No. 2 barrier is **self-doubt** (49 percent report).

COVID-19's Impact on Career Development

About one-third of students rate their school as “excellent” or “very good” at connecting education to meaningful careers

How would you rate your college or university’s support for helping students connect their education to a meaningful career?



1 in 5 students say COVID-19 has made their opportunities for career exploration much worse

How has COVID-19 impacted your opportunities for career exploration?



■ Much worse ■ Slightly worse ■ No change ■ Slightly greater ■ Much greater

Students feel COVID-19 has made faculty and staff less available for mentoring

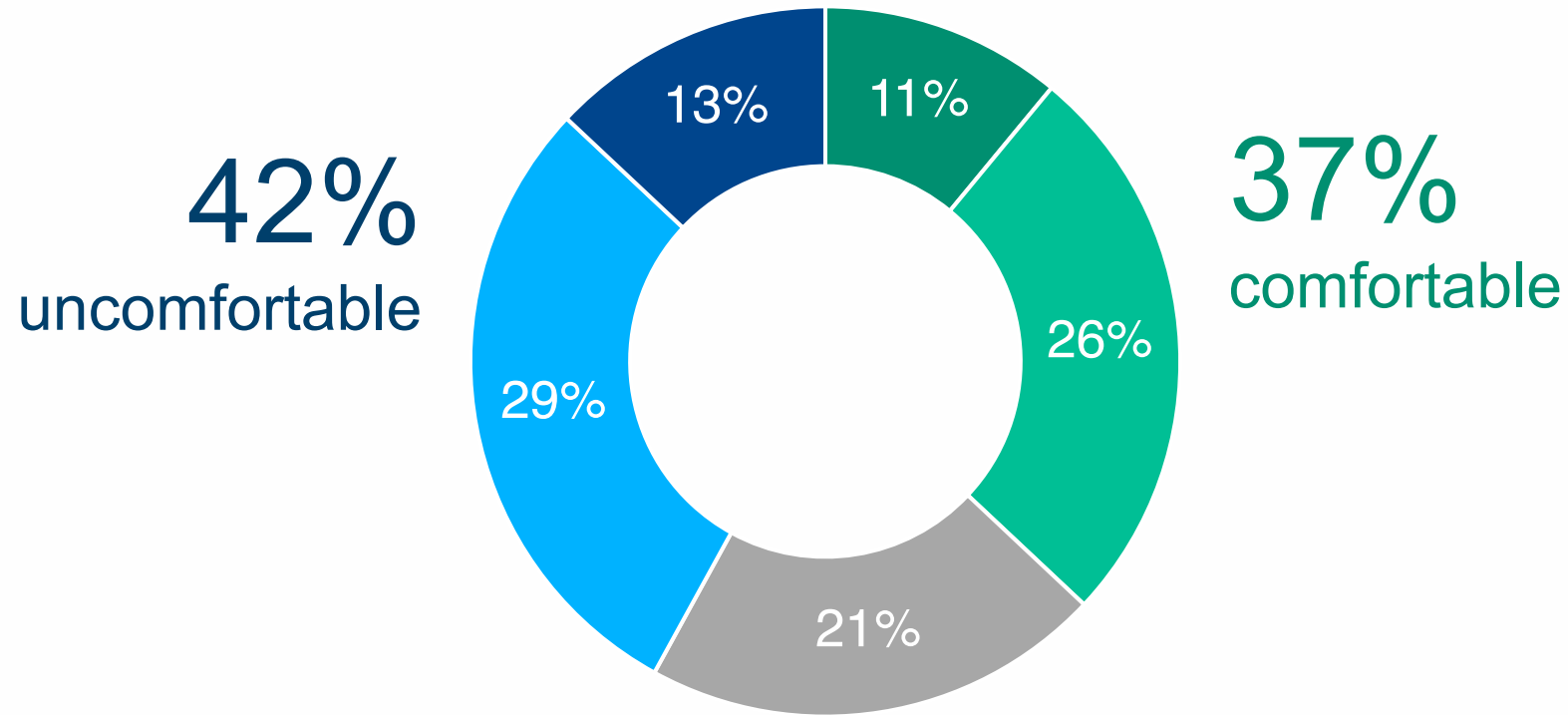
How, if at all, do you think COVID-19 has impacted the availability of faculty and staff for providing advice and mentoring about your academic and professional development?



■ Much less available ■ Somewhat less available ■ No change ■ Somewhat more available ■ Much more available

Students are more likely to be uncomfortable than comfortable about asking professors for career advice or work connections

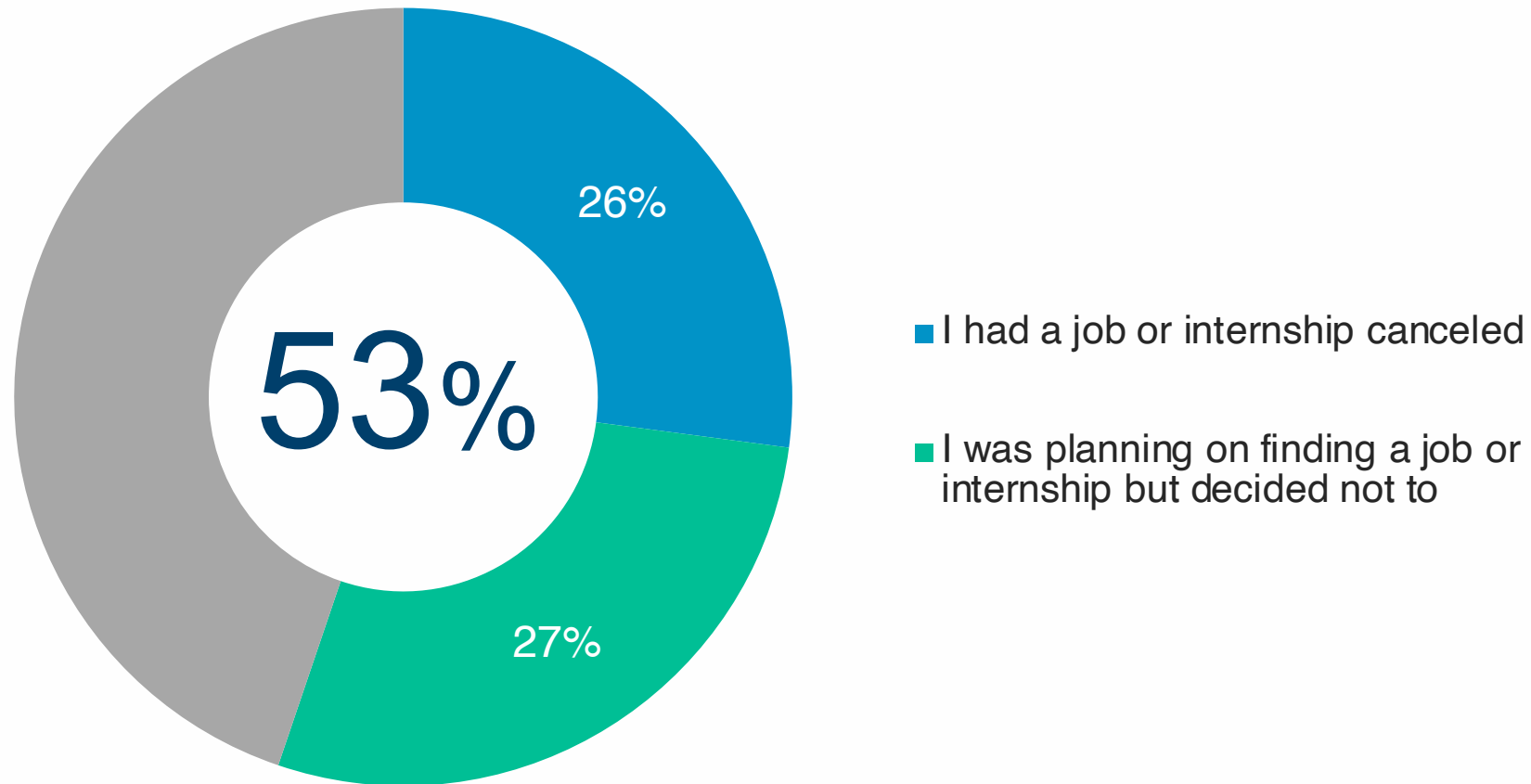
Overall, how comfortable are you asking a professor for career advice or connections to a job or internship?



- Very comfortable
- Somewhat comfortable
- Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable
- Somewhat uncomfortable
- Very uncomfortable

The majority of students have changed their plans or had a job or internship canceled due to COVID-19

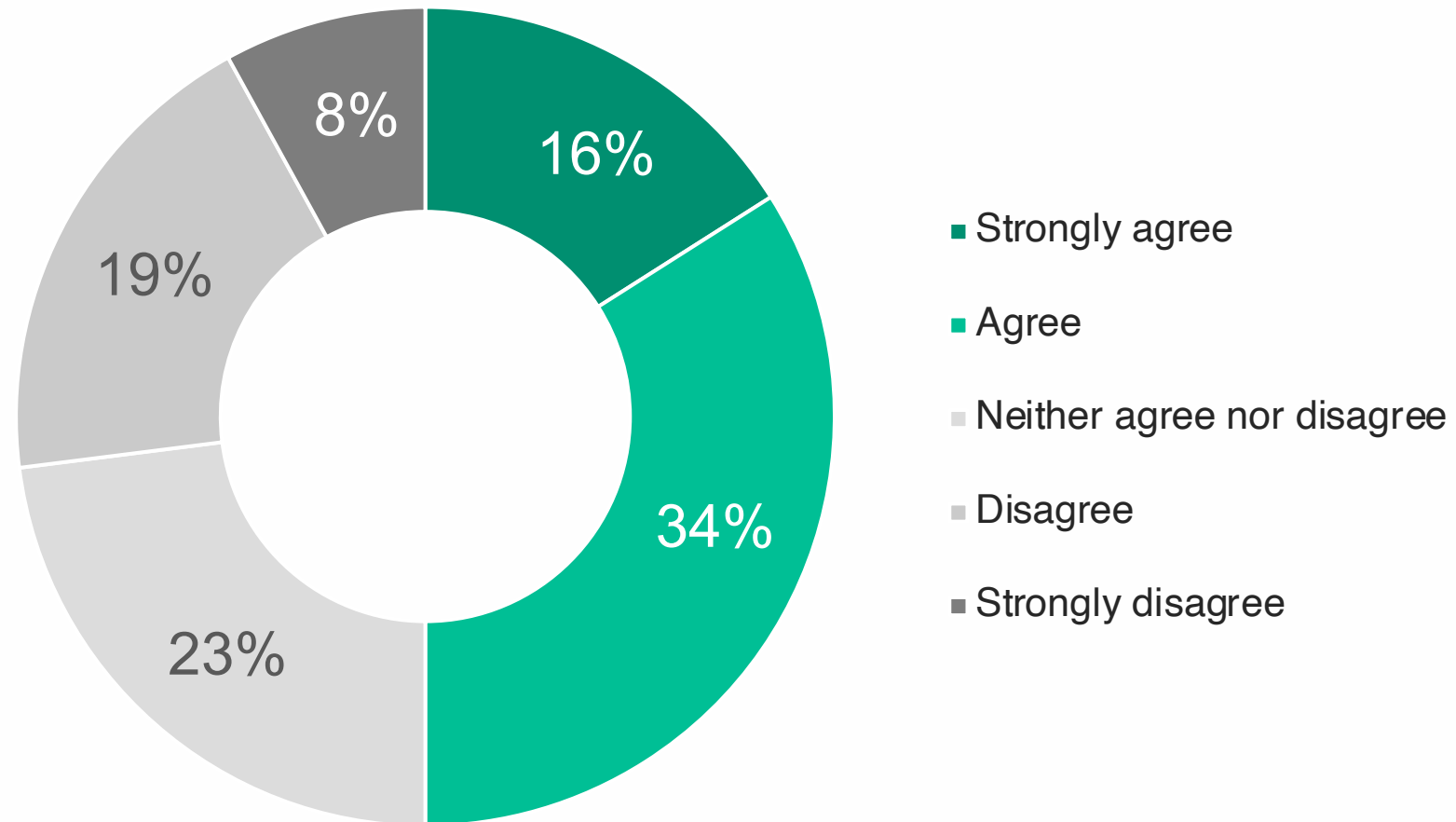
How have your opportunities for work and internships been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic?



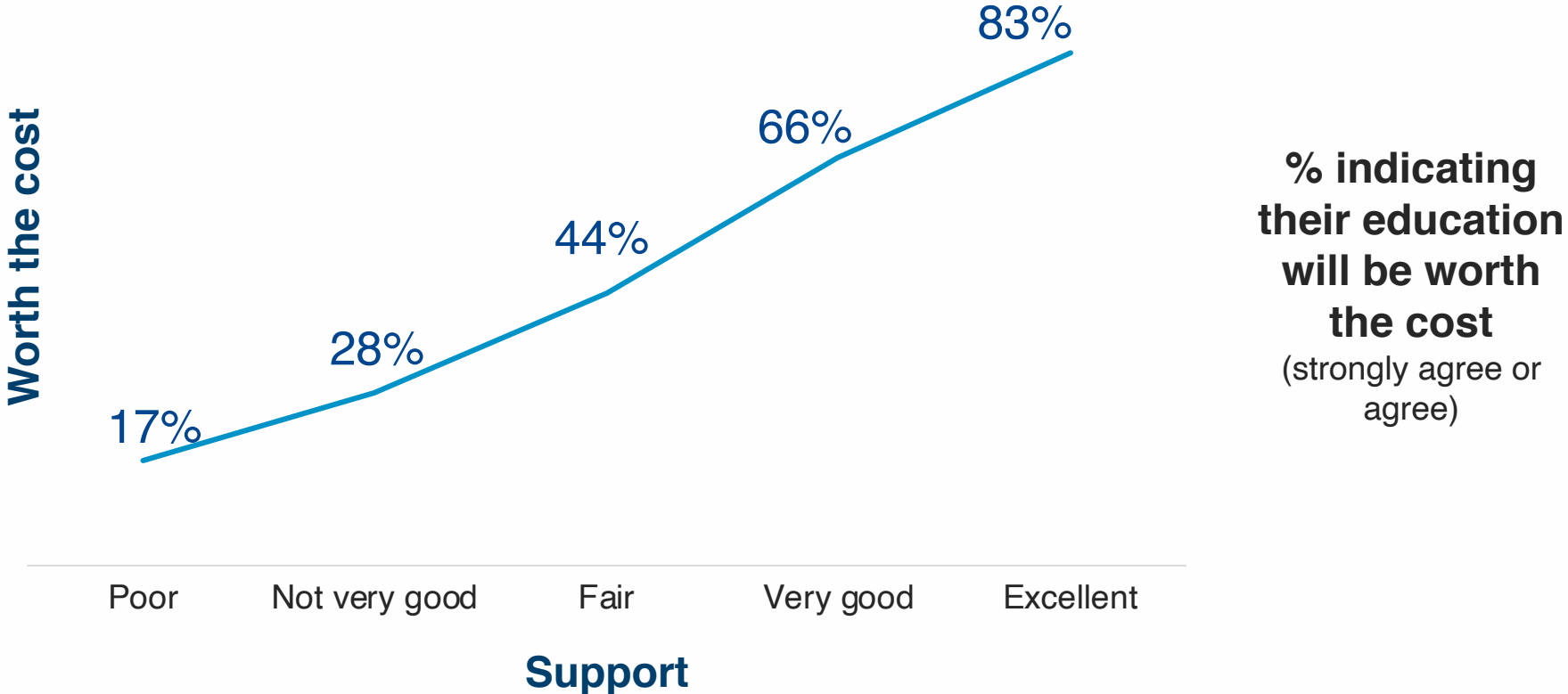
Value

Fewer than 1 in 5 current college students strongly agree their education will be worth the cost

My education will be worth the cost.



When students have the support to connect their education to a career, they are more likely to say their education will be worth the cost



How would you rate your college or university's support for helping students connect their education to a meaningful career?

Key Findings

COVID-19 is putting additional pressure on important resources that support students in their career development. Campus leaders, faculty, and staff will need to ensure they are effectively supporting connections between education and meaningful careers to give students confidence that college will be worth the cost.

- **Many students feel schools are not providing good support to connect academics to career pathways.** Only about one-third of students rate their college as “excellent” or “very good” in helping students connect their education to a meaningful career.
- **The pandemic is creating challenges for critical career and professional development experiences for students.** About 1 in 5 current students say that COVID-19 has made their opportunities for career exploration much worse, and another 45 percent have experienced a slight negative impact. Similarly, 1 in 10 feel faculty and staff are much less available for advice and mentoring, and an additional 42 percent feel they are somewhat less available.
- **Many students are not confident in the value of their education.** Among current students, only half believe their education will be worth the cost.
- **Education value and career pathway connections are strongly linked.** When students have support to connect their education to a career, they are much more likely to say their education will be worth the cost.

Learn more at
StradaEducation.org/PublicViewpoint
or email
consumervoice@stradaeducation.org

Methodology

- The Strada Student Viewpoint survey was fielded by College Pulse from Sept. 10 to 25 as an online survey from a panel of students enrolled at four-year institutions. Data are weighted based on the Current Population Survey on the basis of age, race/ethnicity, and gender; n=4,007. Theoretical margin of error +/- 1.7%.
- Please contact Center for Education Consumer Insights with questions or information requests at consumervoice@stradaeducation.org or learn more at StradaEducation.org/PublicViewpoint.