



CENTER FOR EDUCATION
CONSUMER INSIGHTS™

Public Viewpoint: COVID-19 Work and Education Research

The Road Ahead for Community Colleges —
Examining Enrollment, Completion, Purpose, and Value

January 27, 2021

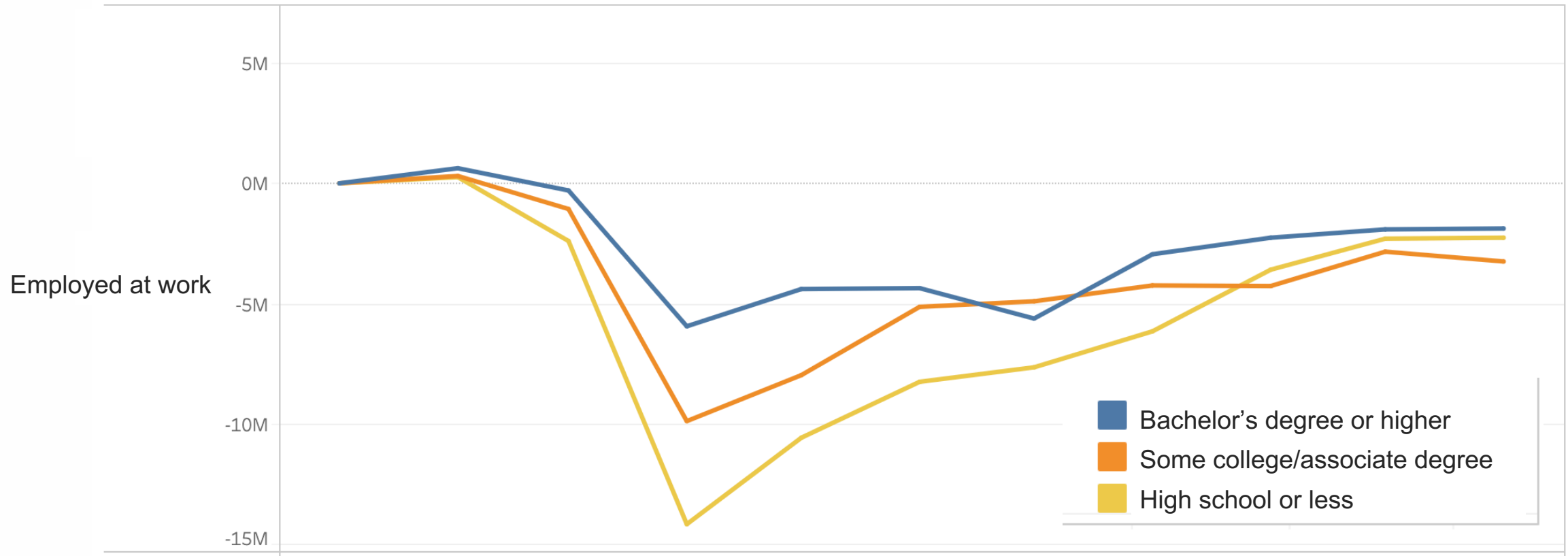
Key Questions

- Why has **enrollment** at community colleges fallen?
- How might COVID-19 affect **completion** rates for those enrolled in community college?
- How are community colleges doing with helping students connect their education to a **career**?
- What makes for a **valuable** community college education?

Lack of Confidence

2020 job loss was less severe for those with more education

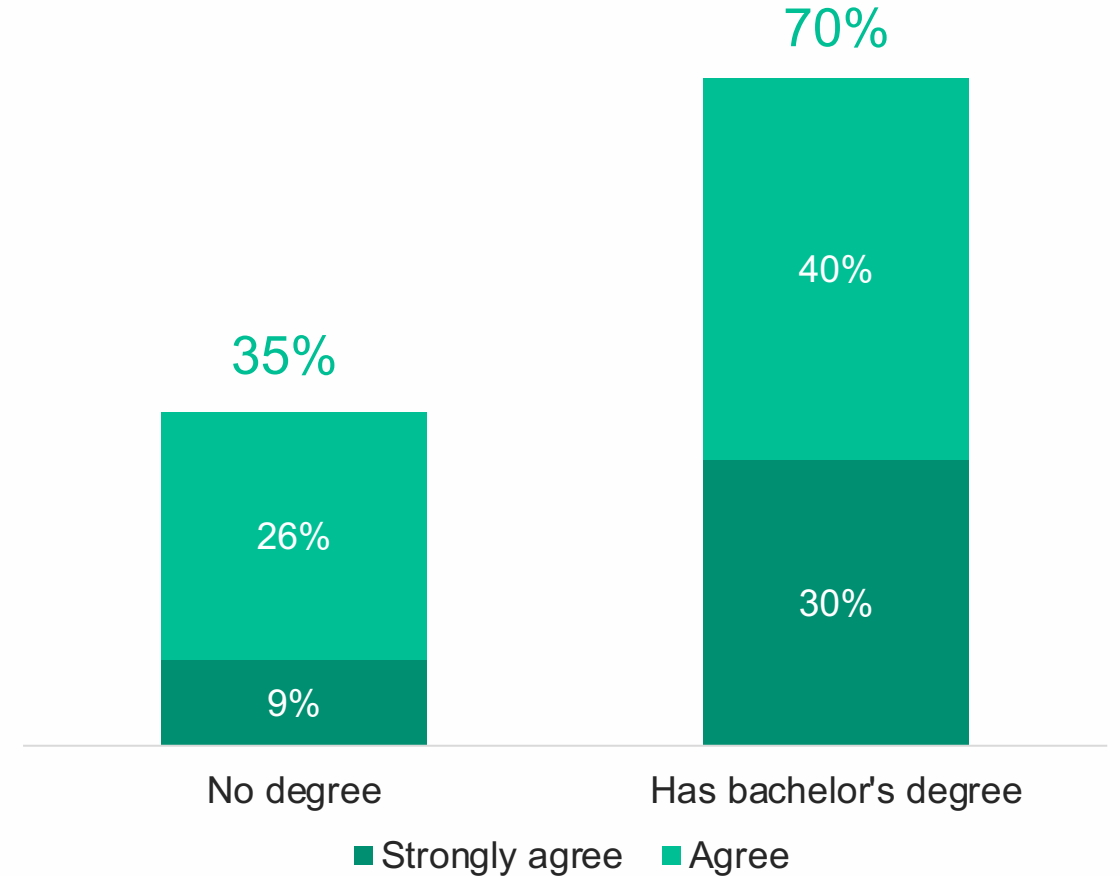
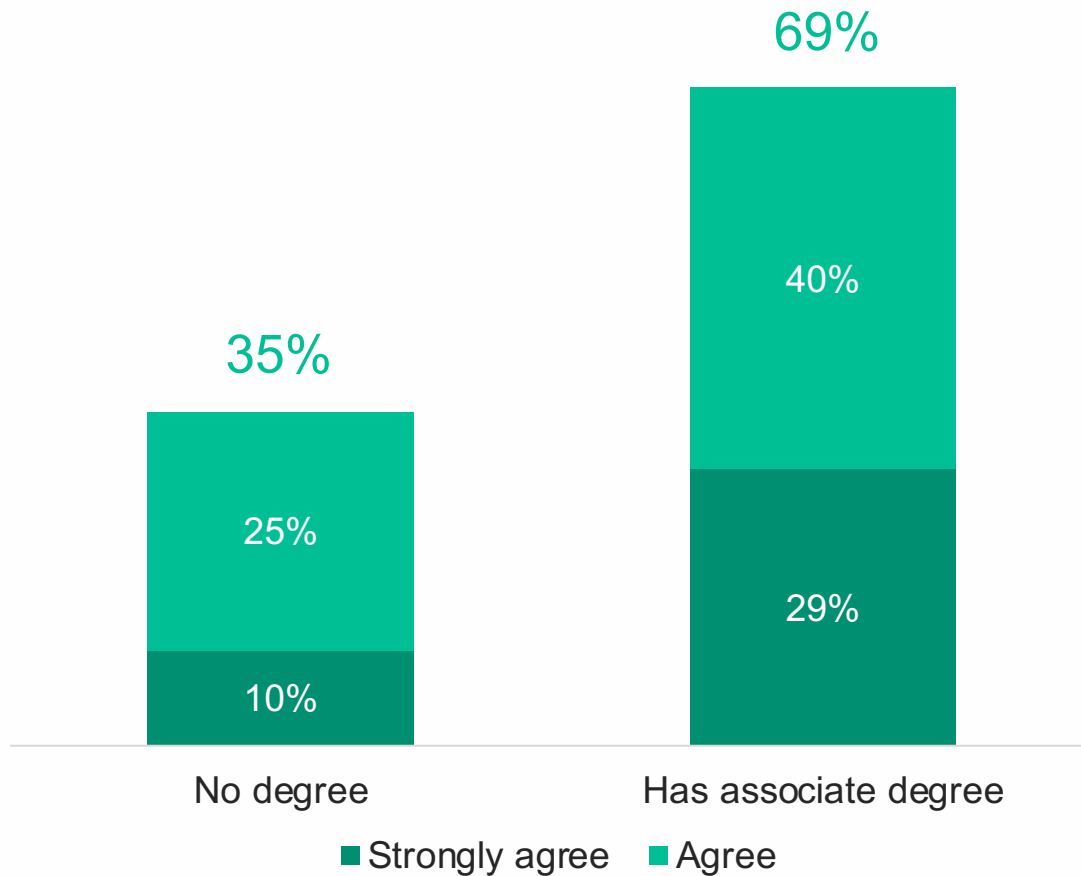
Number of Job Losses by Education Level



But people without degrees are skeptical of education's value

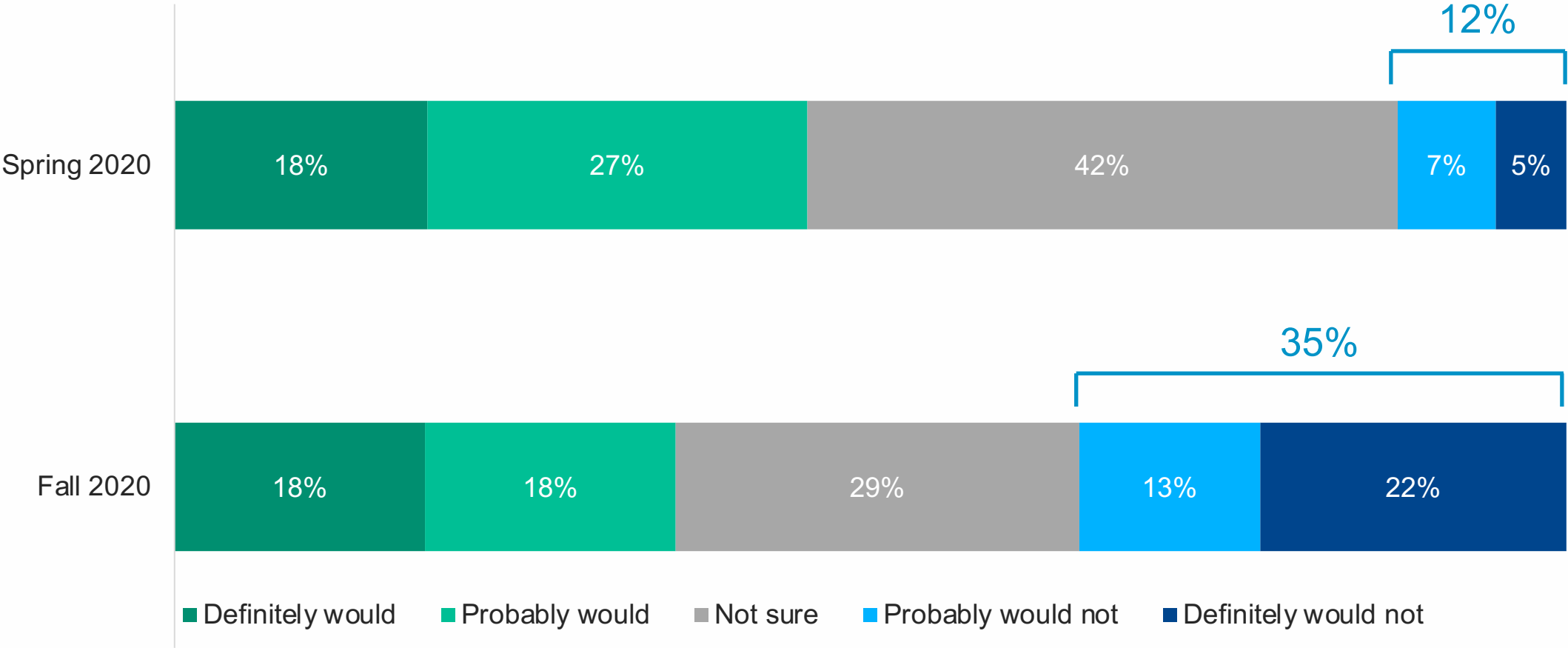
Getting an **associate degree** is worth the cost.

Getting a **bachelor's degree** is worth the cost.



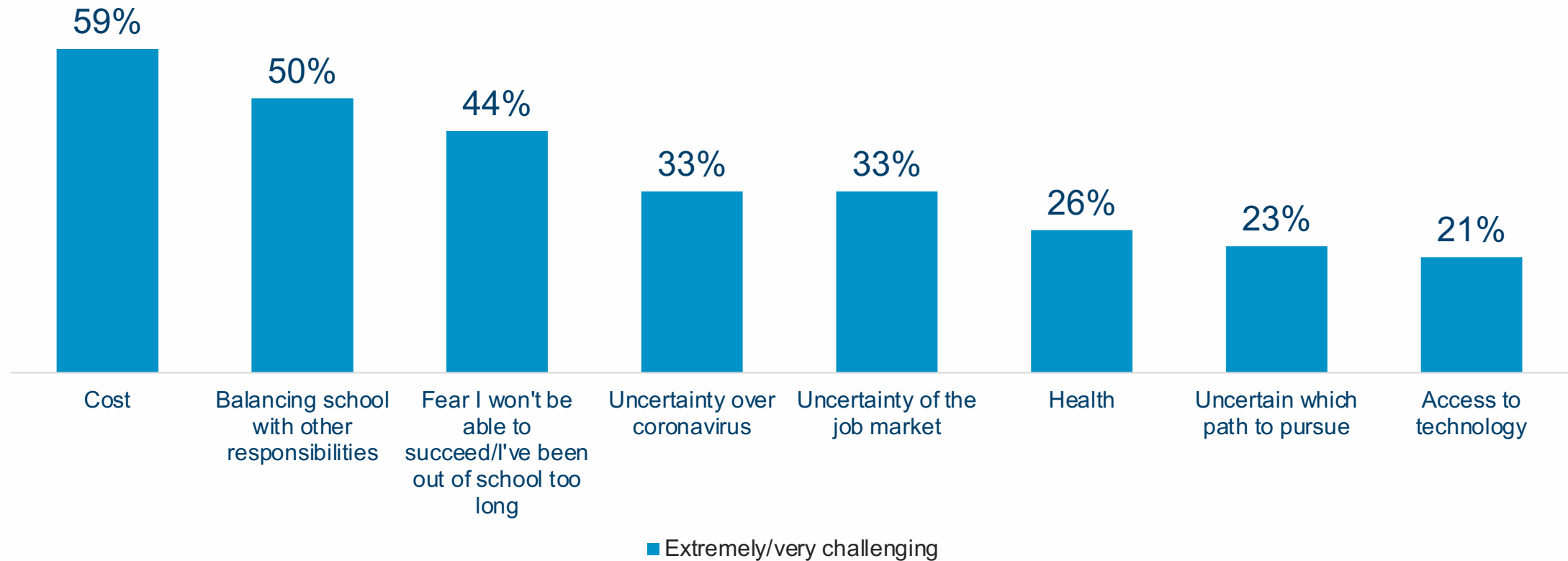
Skepticism about the value of education grew during 2020 among Americans without degrees

Additional education would help you get a job in times of economic uncertainty.

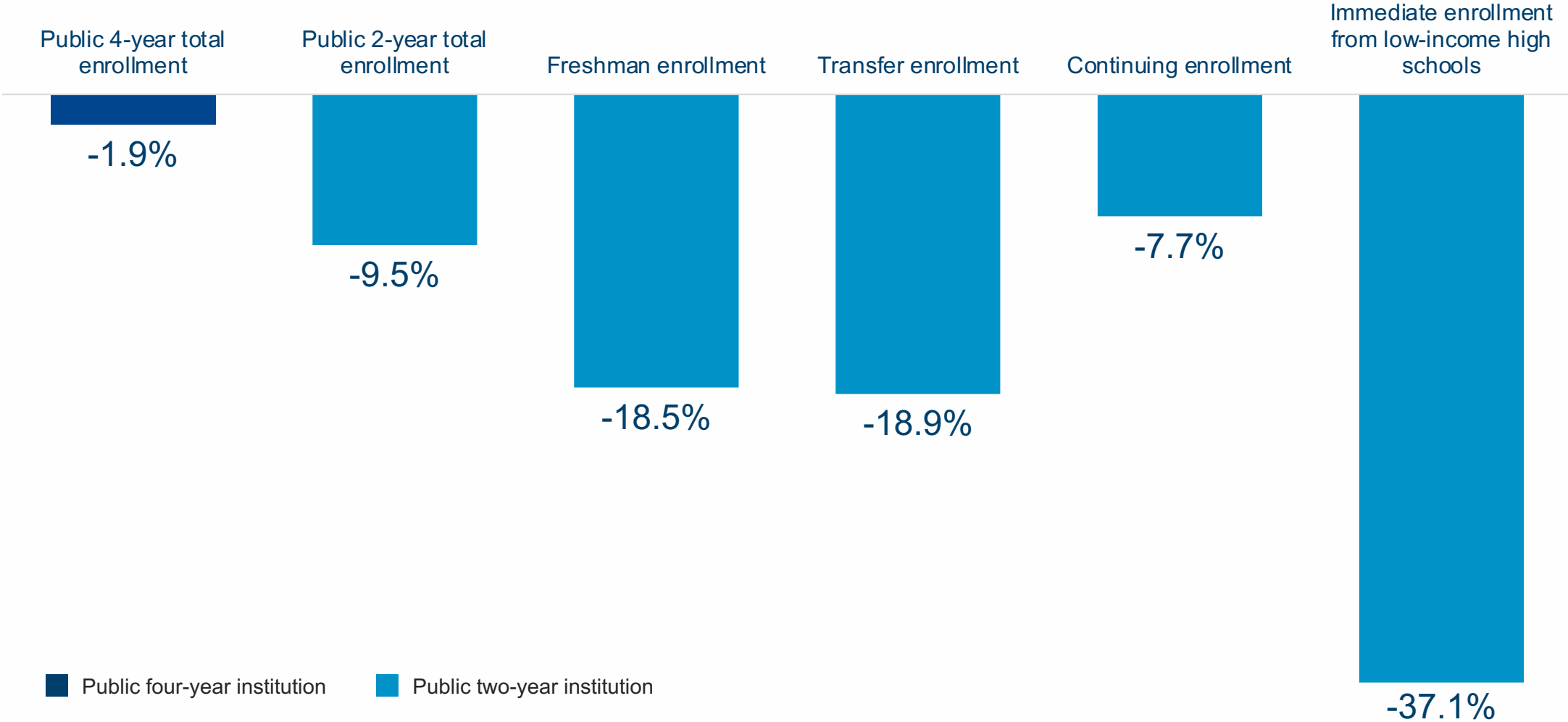



Prospective students question their ability to pursue education and face many uncertainties

How challenging would each of the following be for you personally in pursuing education and training?



These challenges translated into dramatically lower fall enrollment

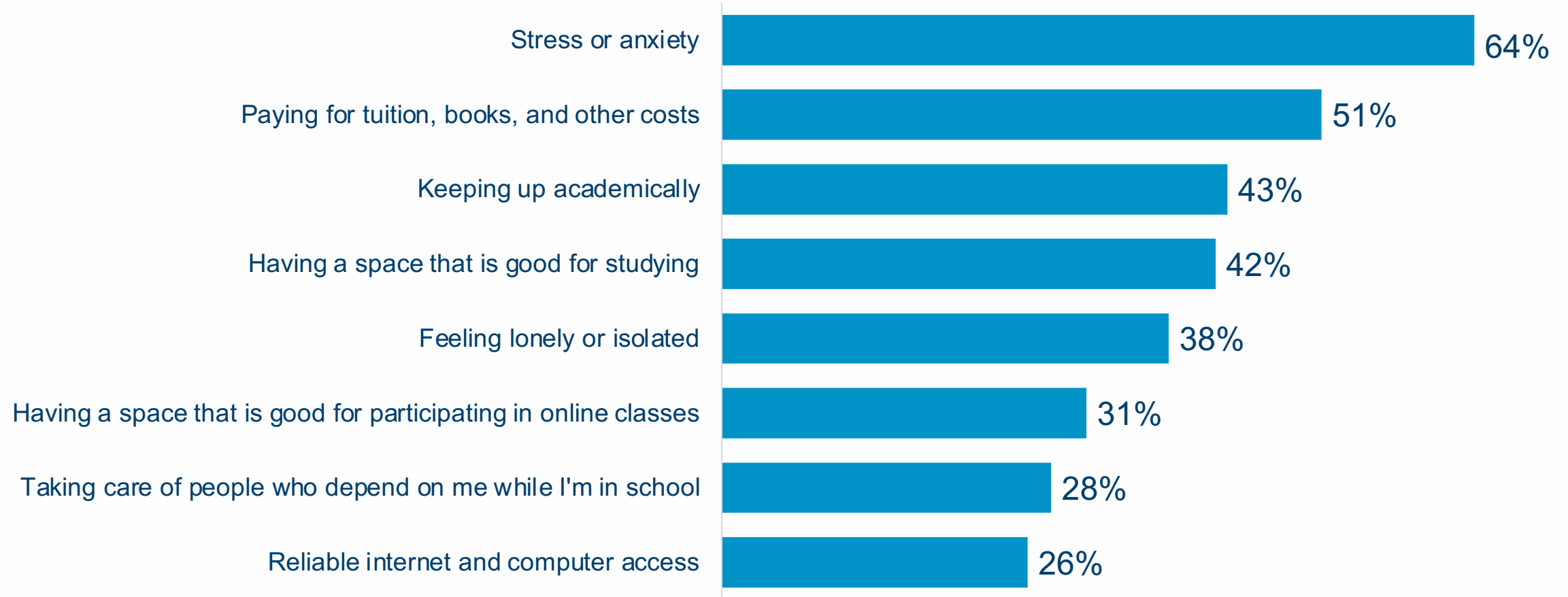


The background consists of several overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of blue, creating a modern, abstract design. The shapes include triangles and polygons of different sizes and orientations, with some areas appearing darker and others lighter, giving a sense of depth and movement.

Completion

For current students, stress, anxiety, and cost concerns are pervasive

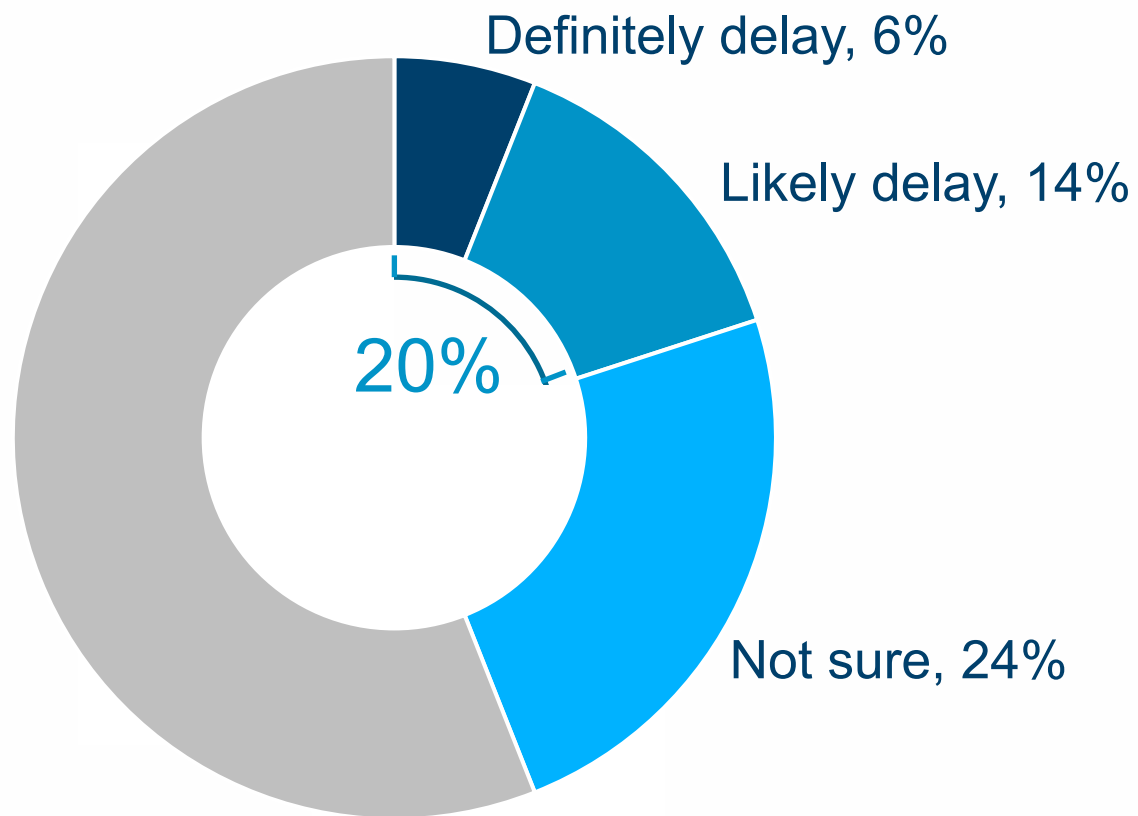
Which of the following have been challenges or struggles for you this fall?



Strada-College Pulse survey, Sept. 10-25, 2020. Base: current students enrolled at community colleges, n=975.

20% of community college students expect to delay their graduation because of COVID-19

Have you had to make any changes to your expected graduation date due to the impact of COVID-19?



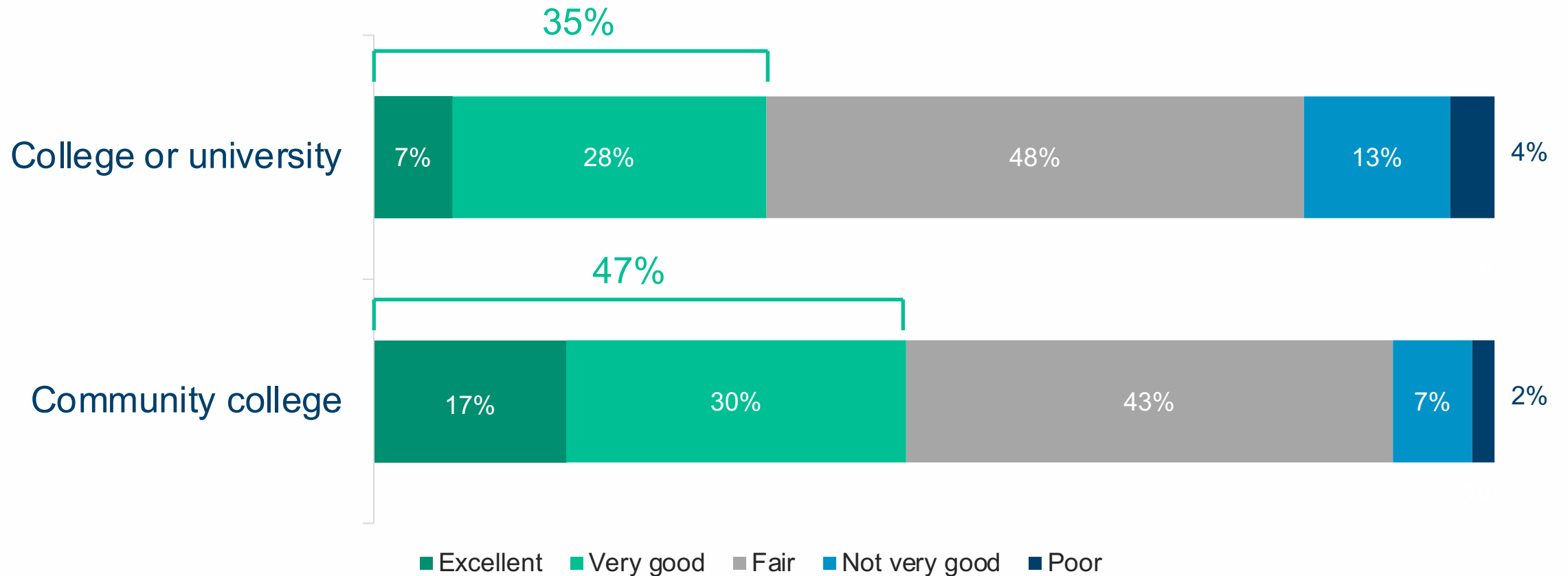
Strada-College Pulse survey, Sept. 10-25, 2020. Base: current students enrolled at community colleges, n=974.

The background consists of several overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of blue, creating a modern, abstract design. The shapes include a large light blue triangle at the top, a dark blue triangle at the bottom left, and a medium blue triangle at the bottom right. The word "Purpose" is centered in the middle of the image.

Purpose

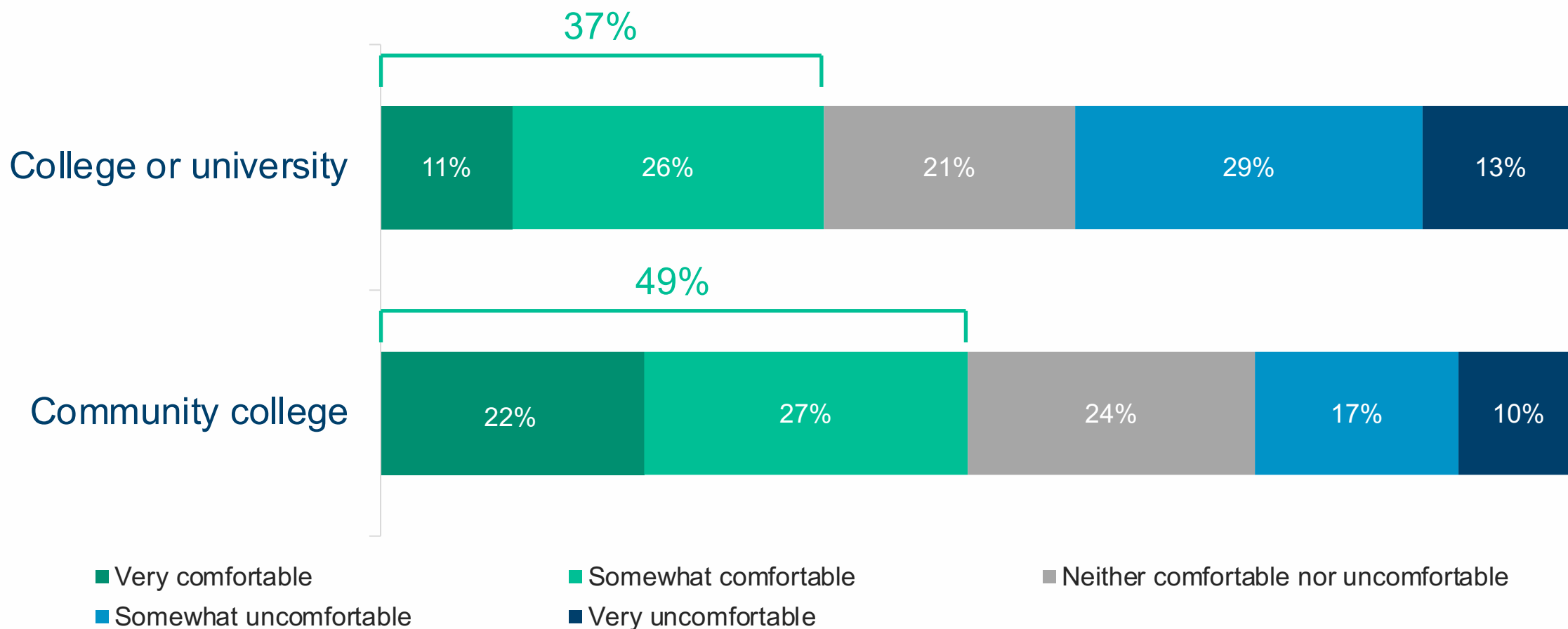
Community college students feel more support connecting education to career

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



Community college students are more comfortable 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?

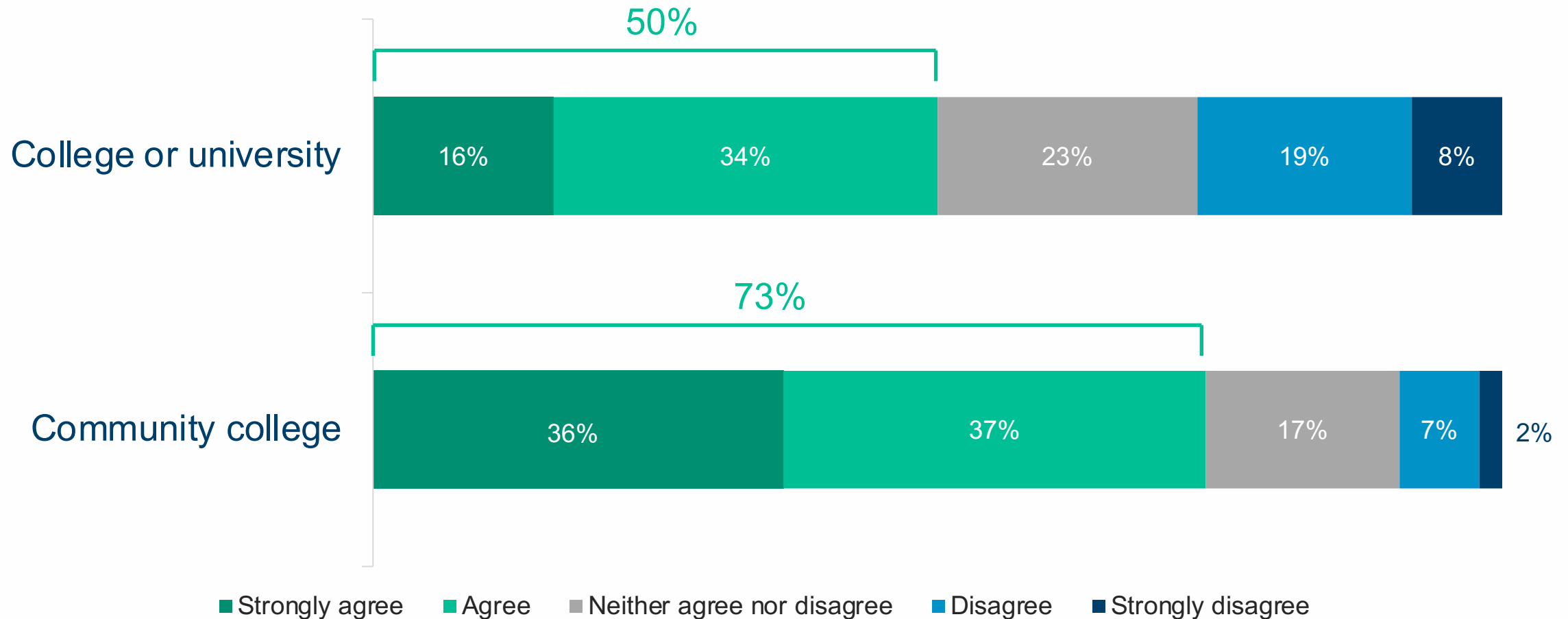


Strada-College Pulse survey, Sept. 10-25, 2020 Base: current college students enrolled at two-year and four-year institutions, n=4,862.

Value

Community college students are more likely to say their education will be worth the cost

My education will be worth the cost.



Strada-College Pulse survey, Sept. 10-25, 2020. Base: current college students enrolled at two-year and four-year institutions, n=4,863.

3x

Students who think their community college is very good or excellent in **connecting students to a meaningful career** are three times more likely to strongly agree their education will be **worth the cost.**

Fifty-four percent of students who felt their college was excellent or good at connecting them to meaningful careers strongly agreed that their education would be worth the cost. Alternatively, only 19 percent of students who felt their support was not very good or poor strongly agreed that their education would be worth the cost. Strada-College Pulse survey, Sept. 10-25. Base: current college students enrolled at two-year and four-year institutions, n=4,863.

Key Findings

- **Individuals without college degrees are increasingly skeptical about the value of additional education.** Those who have completed a degree have, on average, suffered less job loss and feel more confident about the value of education. But people without postsecondary degrees lack confidence in education's promise and in their own ability to successfully pursue an education to work pathway.
- **In addition to financial costs, anxiety and stress are pervasive challenges for current community college students, and 1 in 5 expect to delay graduation.** Sixty-four percent of students report feeling stress or anxiety this fall, and 51 percent are struggling to pay for tuition, books, and other costs. Cost pressure is being felt much more acutely for community college students compared to students attending four-year institutions, and cost is the biggest challenge for those who are not enrolled.
- **Though enrollment declines are greater for community colleges, their students are more likely to believe their education will be worth the cost than their peers at four-year institutions.** Community college students were more likely to say their college helped students connect their education to a meaningful career, to feel comfortable asking a professor for career advice or connections, and to feel their education will be worth the cost.
- **Education value and career connections are strongly linked.** When students see a direct connection between their education and 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, 2020, as an online survey of a panel of students enrolled at two-year and four-year institutions. Data are weighted based on the Current Population Survey on the basis of age, race/ethnicity, and gender; n=4,863. Theoretical margin of error +/- 1.7%.
- The 2020 Strada-Gallup Education Consumer Survey is a nationally representative mail and web-based survey of U.S. adults ages 18 to 65; n=13,904.
- Please contact Strada Center for Education Consumer Insights with questions or information requests at consumervoice@stradaeducation.org or learn more at StradaEducation.org/PublicViewpoint.