



EDUCATION  
NETWORK

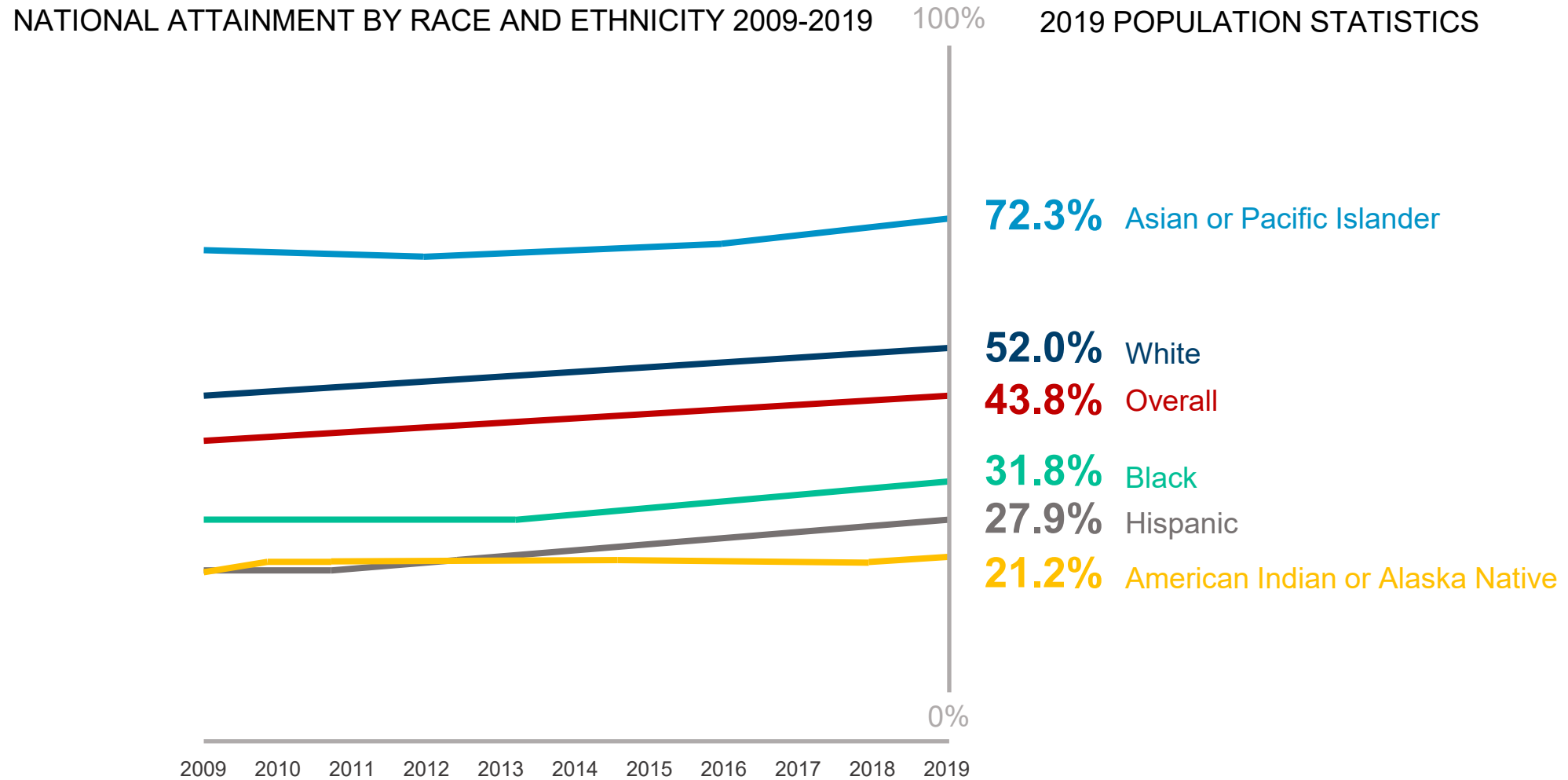
# Public Viewpoint

Listening to Recent High School Grads:  
'Be Mindful of What We Have Gone Through'

Sept. 29, 2021

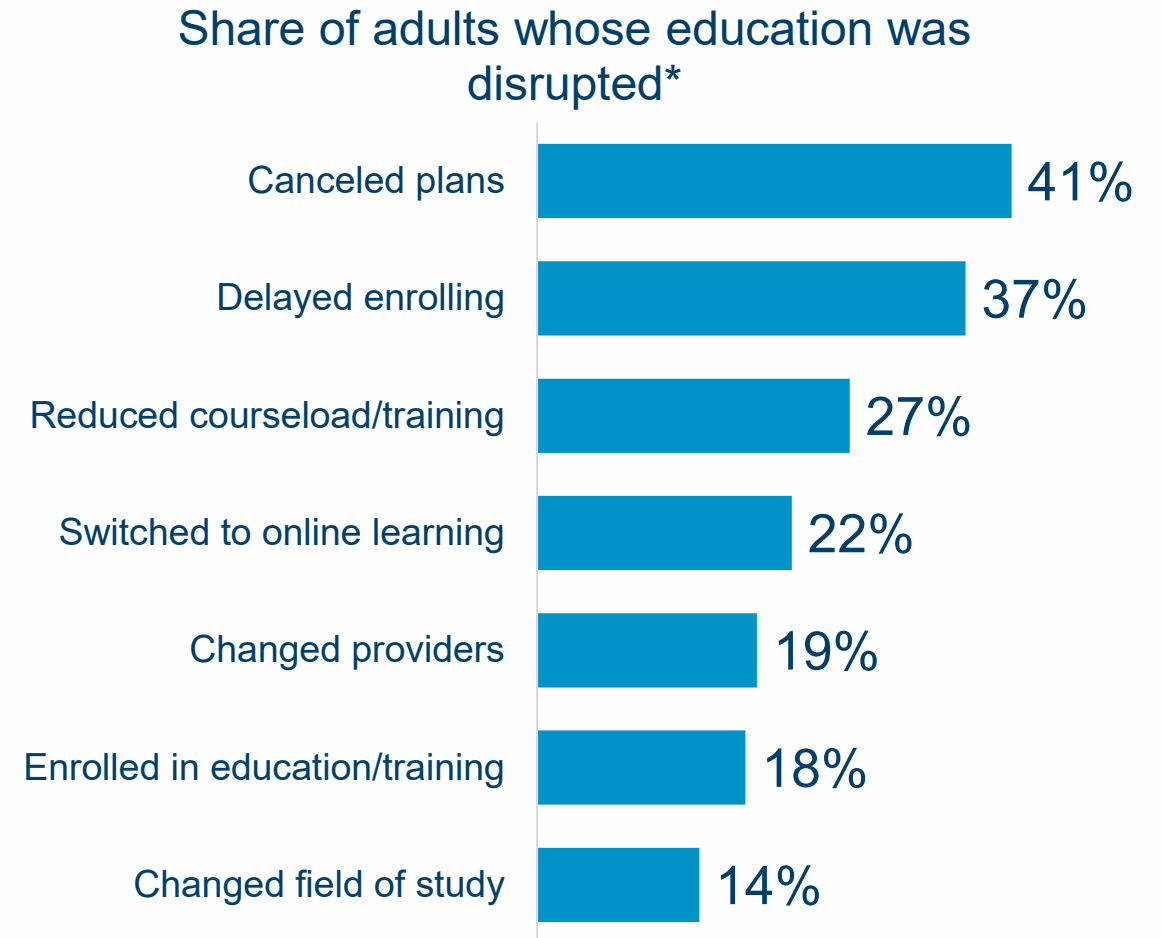
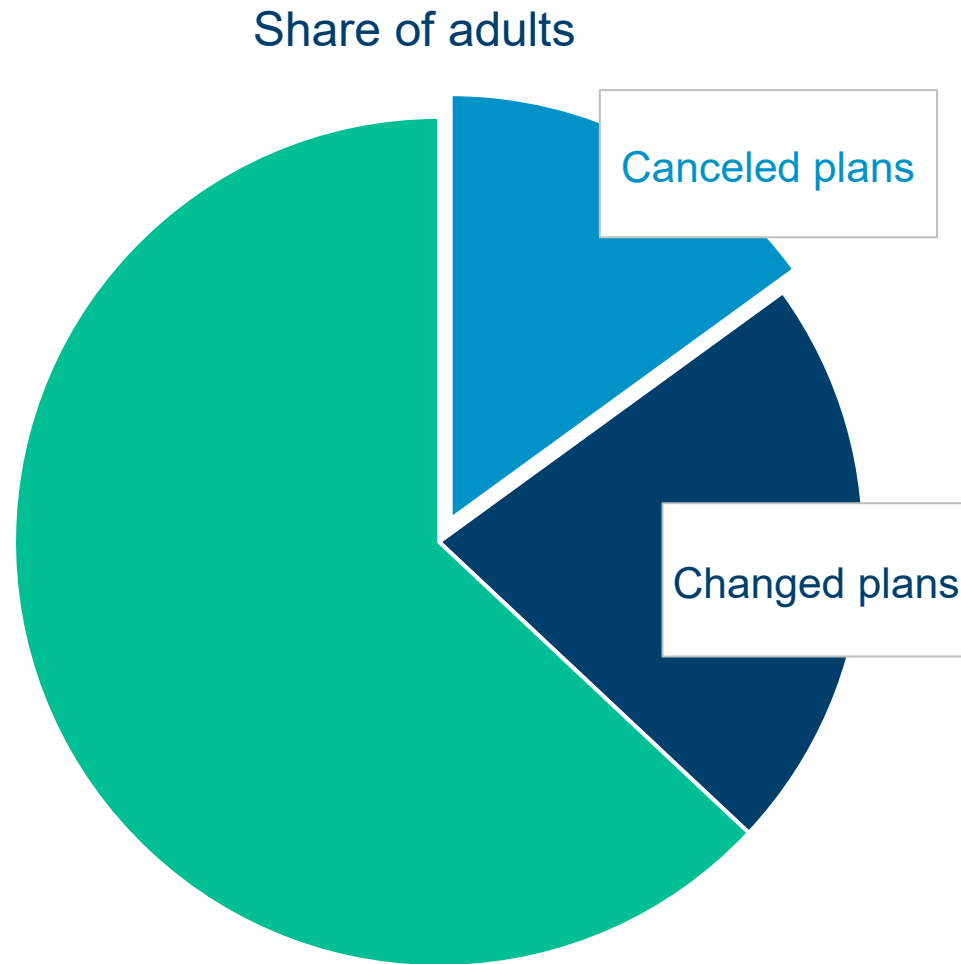
# Setting the Stage

# Stark racial gaps in postsecondary attainment persist

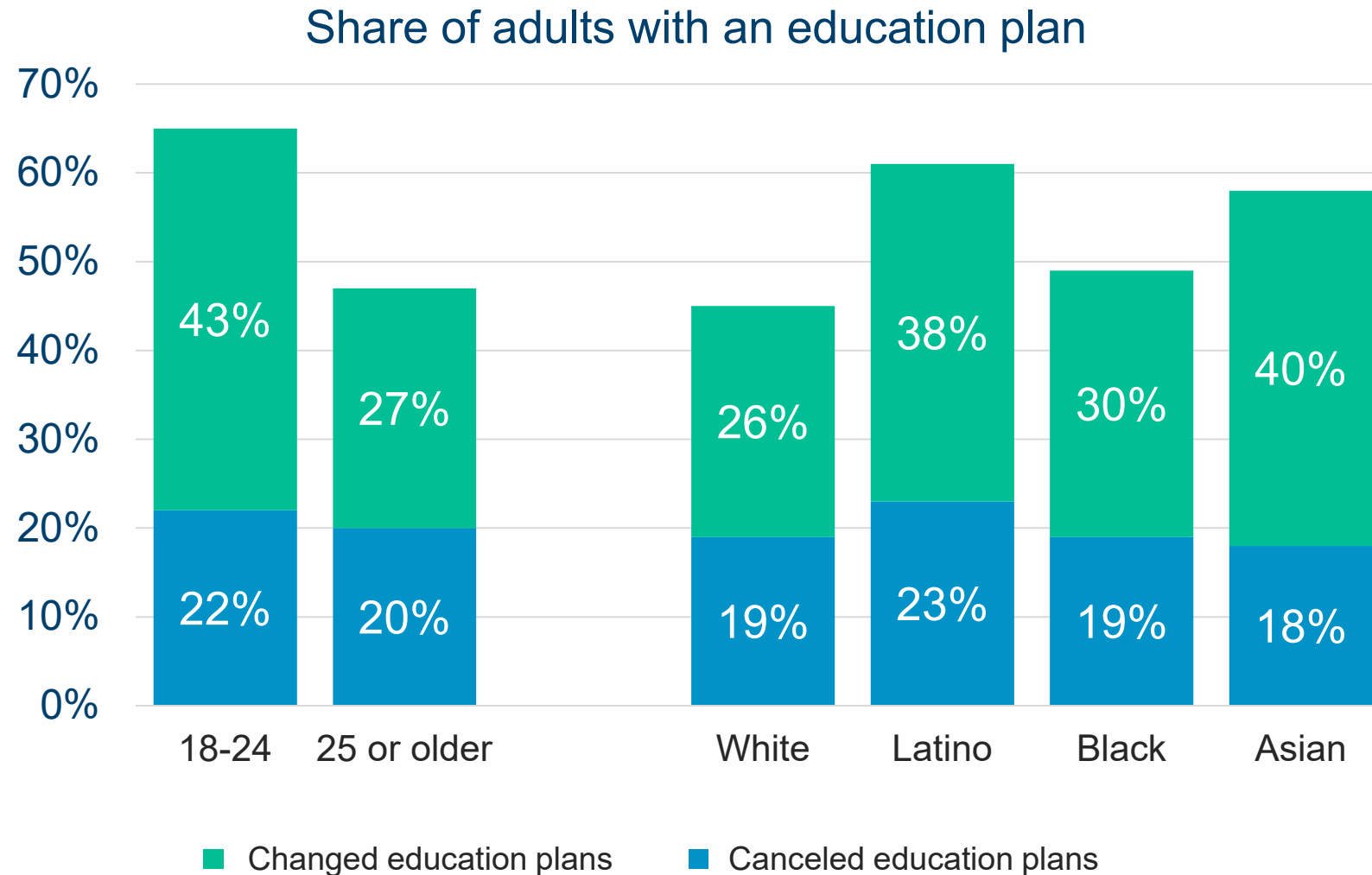


SOURCE: "A Stronger Nation: Learning Beyond High School Builds American Talent," Lumina Foundation, 2021.

# More than one-third of U.S. adults changed or canceled their education plans as a result of the COVID-19 crisis



# Young adults, Latinos, and Asian Americans are more likely to have had their education disrupted



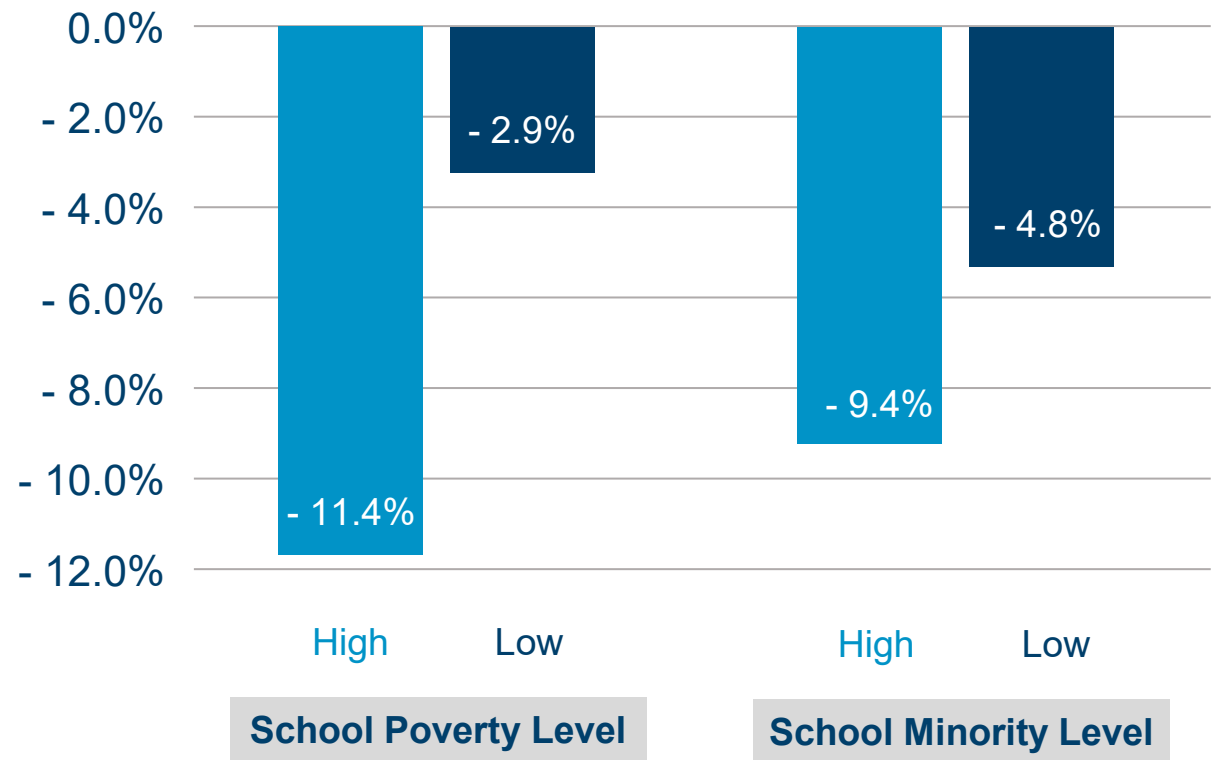
# Fall 2020 enrollment declines hit hardest at schools serving more lower income and people of color

OVERALL

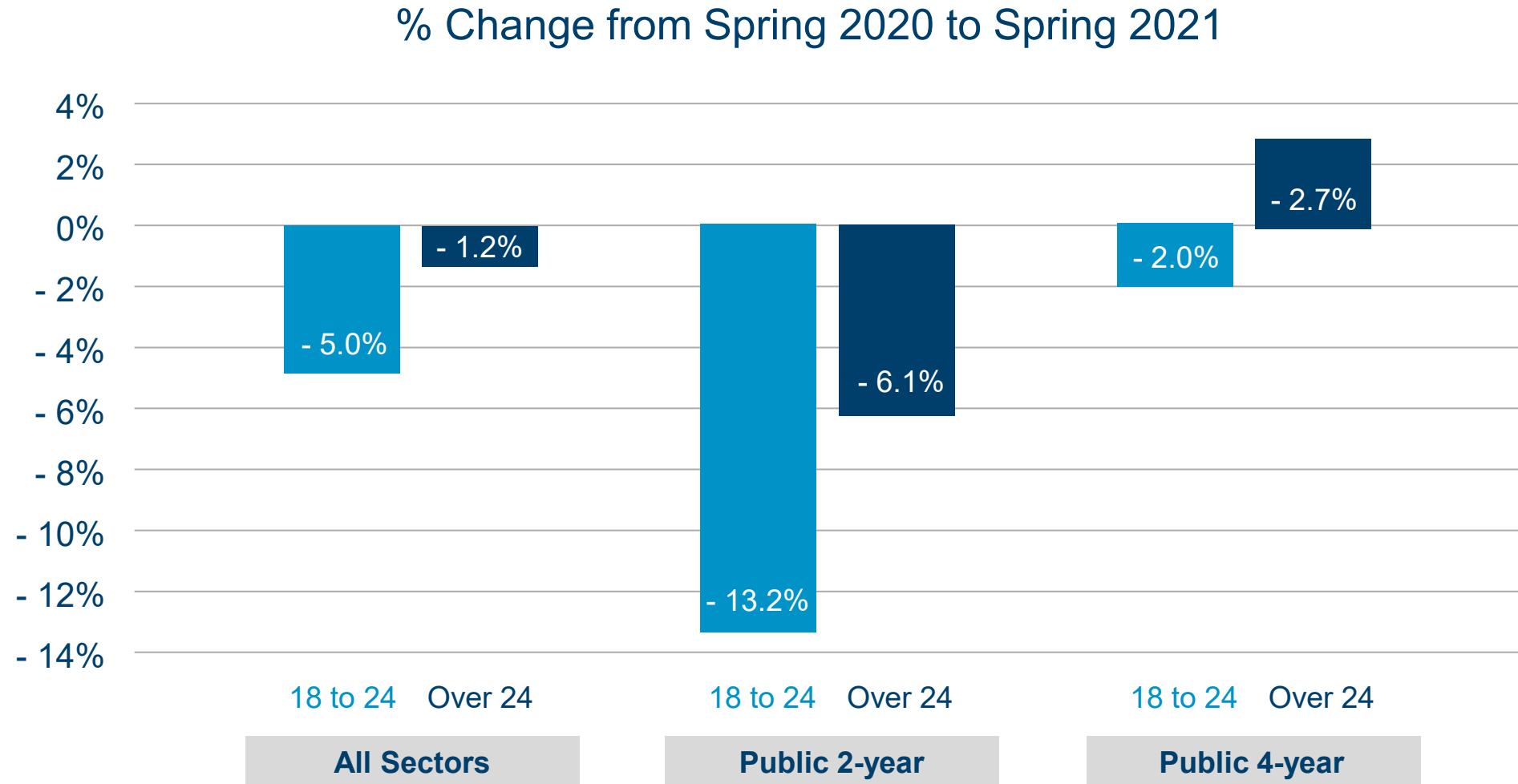
↓ **6.8%** on average

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**4.5x** Pre-pandemic declines



# Spring 2021 enrollment dropped most for 18- to 24-year-olds, especially at community colleges



# Disrupted learners shared their experiences

Strada and its research partner, Heart + Mind Strategies, conducted a mixed-methods study:



## PARTICIPANTS

Online survey  
(*nationally representative*)

Online discussion board

1:1 interviews

n=1,212

n=17

n=12

Class of 2020: 626 grads  
Class of 2021: 586 grads

Interactive, online discussion board participants

**Disrupted students:  
Changed or delayed plans**



## MODE

Online survey, 14 minutes

Online discussion board conducted over 3 days

Interviews conducted over Zoom lasting 45-70 minutes



## DATES

April 30 – May 16, 2021

June 2021

July 2021

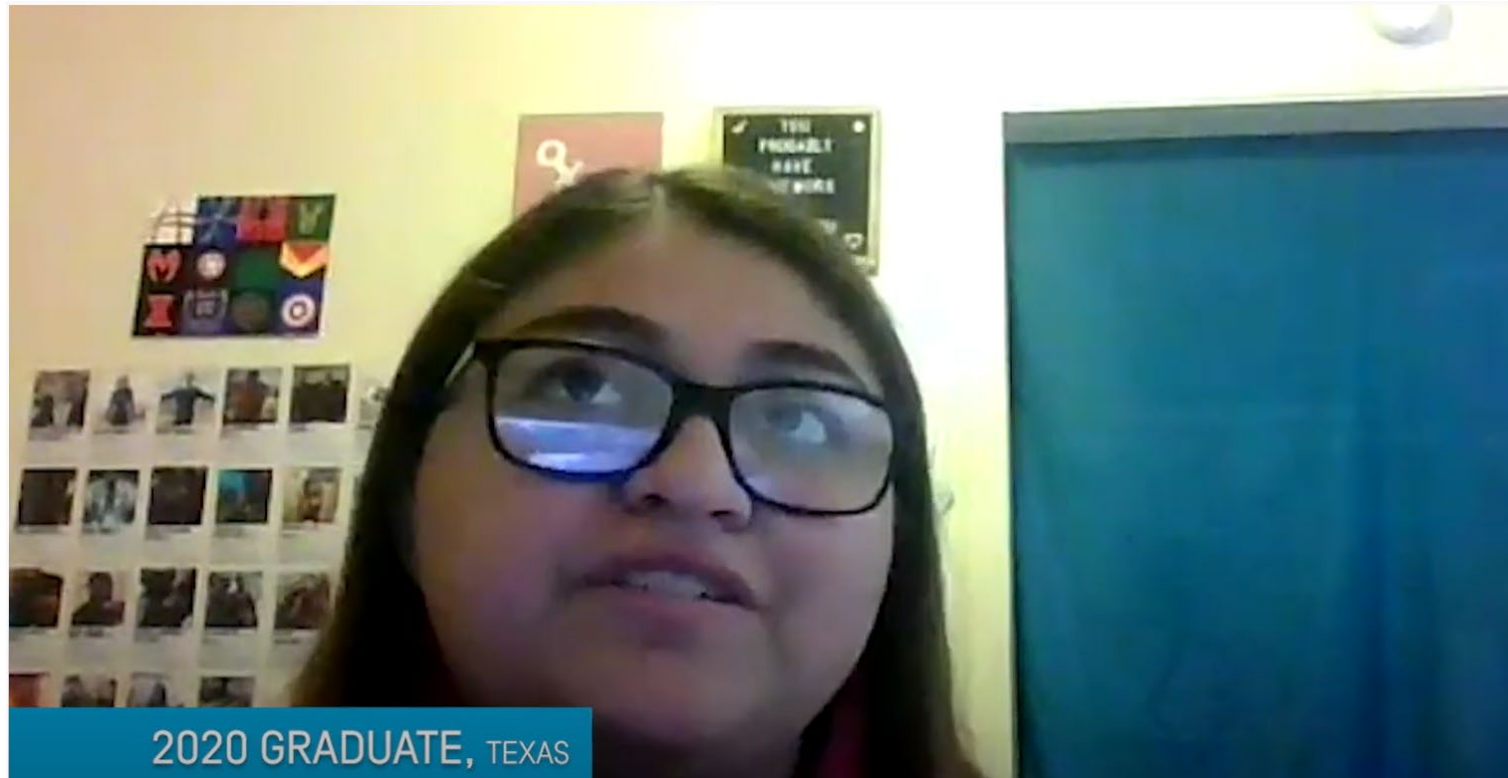


# Key Findings

- Students disrupted by the pandemic recognize that the world into which they've graduated differs dramatically from what they expected, and they **question whether the education, career, and financing options that worked for other students are still relevant today.**
- Despite numerous stressors fueling anxiety about the future, students remain committed to postsecondary education. They are **demonstrating resilience** by actively exploring different education and career options and setting new goals for themselves.
- Students need open-minded, **personalized college and career guidance** that gives them a window into future career options.
- **Removing financial barriers** is a core priority for students. The sudden disruption of the pandemic contributed to a heightened awareness of the risks associated with accruing debt and led to more loan-averse attitudes.
- Students know that **connecting college and career** will prepare them for an uncertain world of work. They want flexibility and career relevance infused into their educational experience so they can prepare for their intended career while being ready to pivot to other options as needed.

# Listening to the High School Classes of 2020 and 2021

# How are students responding to the disruption of the pandemic?



# What do disrupted students say they need?



# What we heard: Personalize college and career guidance

## What We Heard

*“Be open-minded.”*

- Class of 2021, California

*“Focus on the students.”*

- Class of 2020, Texas

*“Advice from people who’ve already done it.”*

- Class of 2021, Oregon

## How We Can Act

- Bolster students’ capacities to discover their own learning needs and values and promote multiple pathways to postsecondary and career success.
- Invest in near-peer and whole-school models of college advising and develop partnerships especially in the summer transition between high school and college.
- Provide students with greater access to mentors, peers, and people’s stories about navigating career paths.

# What we heard: Remove financial barriers

## What We Heard

*“The main issue is finances.”*

– Class of 2020, Ohio

*“I don’t want to waste all my time and money.”*

– Class of 2020, Arizona

*“I’m worried I will be in debt.”*

– Class of 2020, North Carolina

## How We Can Act

- Increase affordability by making it easier for students to balance learning and work.
- Provide financial coaching and guidance throughout the college journey.
- Offer personalized assistance with scholarship and aid applications from trusted sources.

# What we heard: Connect college and career

## What We Heard

*“If my career doesn’t work out ... I still have knowledge about another career.”*

– Class of 2021, Maryland

*“They had gone to college, and they couldn’t find work.”*

– Class of 2021, California

*“Getting an edge in the labor market.”*

– Class of 2021, Georgia

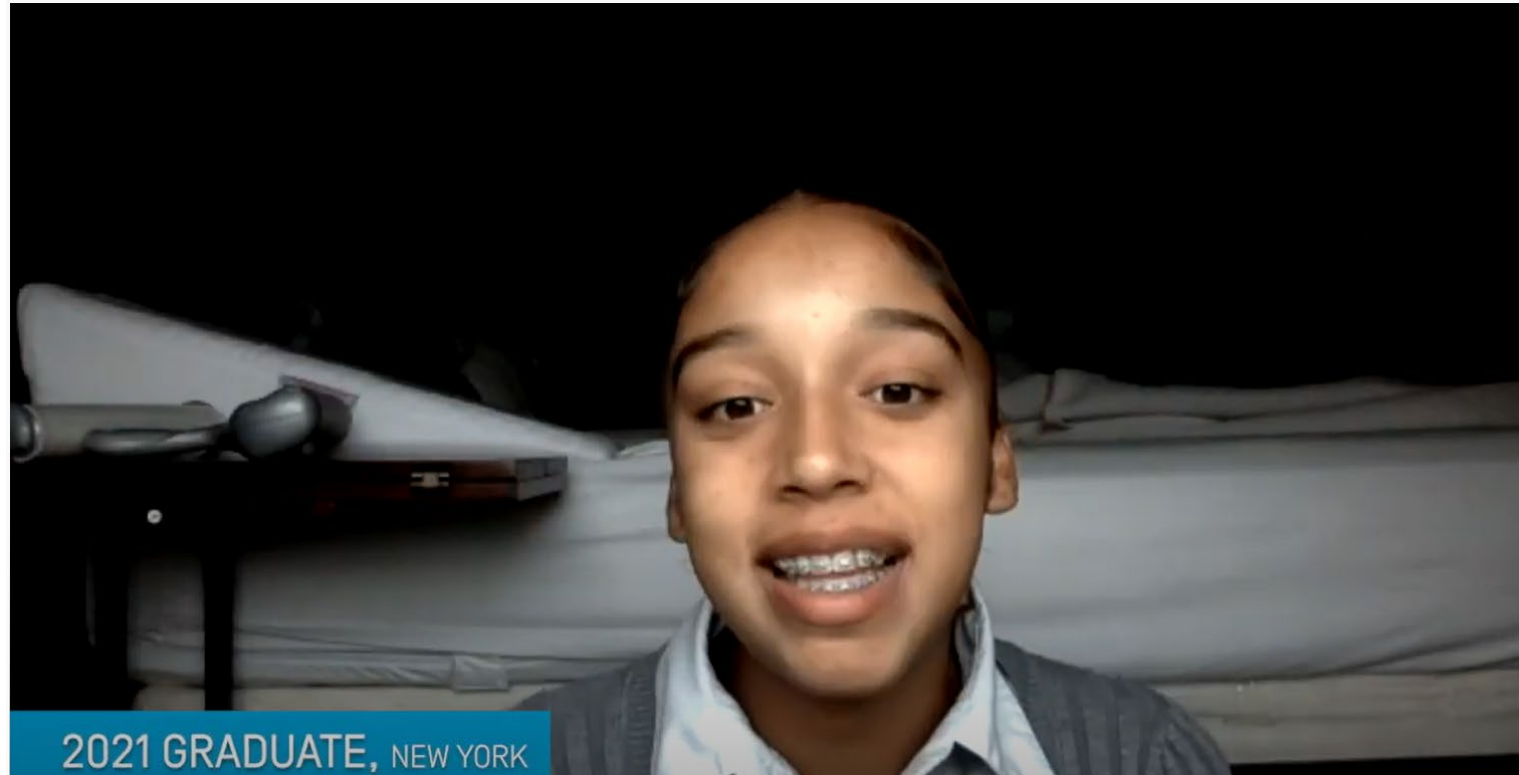
## How We Can Act

- Integrate career navigation into advising services and coursework.
- Build partnerships with employers and align coursework and curricula with in-demand skills.
- Enhance academic programs with work-based learning and skills-based credentials.

# Success Beyond Completion




# 'I'm ready for my success'



# Next Steps: October Workshop on Promising Practices

# Continue the conversation



**Strada** EDUCATION NETWORK

VIEWPOINTS

## Oct. 20, 2021 | Workshop on Promising Practices: Reconnecting Recent High School Grads

REGISTER

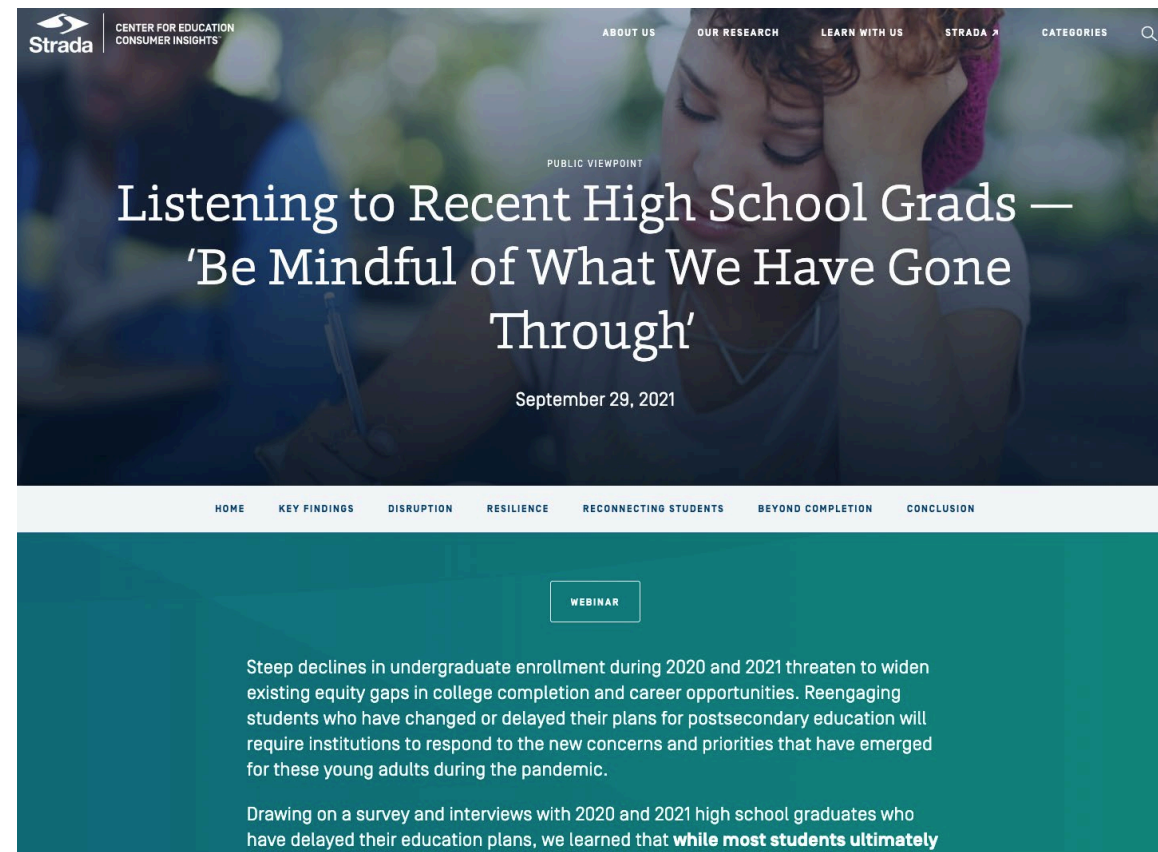
Where: Virtual  
When: October 20, 2021  
Time: 2-3:15 p.m. Eastern

Strada Event

Looking for a space to learn and share with colleagues on how to support students who graduated from high school during the pandemic? Join us for this workshop on steps we can take to reengage recent high school grads who changed or delayed their plans for postsecondary education. We will spend 75 minutes learning from one another, focusing our conversation on guidance, financial resources, and career preparation, and brainstorming with colleagues who are developing and implementing promising approaches in these areas. The majority of our time will be spent in facilitated small groups where you can share early learnings, problem-solve challenges, and gain insight into what other institutions are trying.

There's nothing to prepare – just bring yourself and ideas for reengaging students. After the workshop,

<https://stradaeducation.org/event/reconnecting-recent-high-school-grads-a-workshop-on-promising-practices/>



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PUBLIC VIEWPOINT

## Listening to Recent High School Grads — 'Be Mindful of What We Have Gone Through'

September 29, 2021

HOME KEY FINDINGS DISRUPTION RESILIENCE RECONNECTING STUDENTS BEYOND COMPLETION CONCLUSION

WEBINAR

Steep declines in undergraduate enrollment during 2020 and 2021 threaten to widen existing equity gaps in college completion and career opportunities. Reengaging students who have changed or delayed their plans for postsecondary education will require institutions to respond to the new concerns and priorities that have emerged for these young adults during the pandemic.

Drawing on a survey and interviews with 2020 and 2021 high school graduates who have delayed their education plans, we learned that **while most students ultimately**

[cci.stradaeducation.org/recentgrads](https://cci.stradaeducation.org/recentgrads)

Learn more at  
[StradaInsights.org](https://StradaInsights.org)