



TO: Emily Lockwood, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

FROM: Amy Simon and Naser Javaid, Goodwin Simon Strategic Research

DATE: January 19, 2021

RE: Key Research Findings on COVID Youth Survey Wave 3

---

*This memo summarizes key findings from a nationwide online survey of 1,203 Black, Hispanic, and lower-income white youth, ages 15- to 21-years old, conducted by Goodwin Simon Strategic Research (GSSR) from December 14<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020. The memo compares these survey findings to results from three similar surveys that GSSR previously conducted, one among 1,272 young people ages 15- to 21-years old from September 22<sup>nd</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020, one among 1,305 young people ages 15- to 21-years old from August 8<sup>th</sup> to August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020, and another among 2,638 young people ages 15- to 21-years-old from September 16<sup>th</sup> to September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019. A detailed description of the methodology is included at the end of this memo.*

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The events of 2020—including the COVID-19 pandemic, Black Lives Matter, and the November 2020 elections—have impacted these young people across the country, and have often changed both their daily lives and how they are thinking about their future education and career plans.

Many survey respondents have had their daily routines, especially around school and work, disrupted by the pandemic. For example, compared to 2019, they are going to school online or working from home for the first time, experiencing reduced hours or lost jobs, are more likely to be working more than one job, and are starting to providing care for others in their household. Many respondents also have great concern about what the long-term impact of the COVID pandemic will be, as well as uncertainty about when, if ever, things will go back to normal. It is notable that a larger proportion of respondents now feel it will take longer—two years or more—before things are back to normal than did in the August 2020 survey.

Despite this heightened uncertainty, many respondents are continuing to think about their future. However, this thinking is not done in a vacuum, and COVID and other national currents loom large over them. Respondents in 2020 are reporting having less clarity about their future goals, and less optimism about their future, than did respondents in the 2019 survey. Nonetheless, most respondents are still optimistic about being able to achieve the kind of life they want in the future.

Many respondents are also leaning into current and past work experiences to help gain clarity about their future career goals. Numerous respondents report they are choosing to work in jobs that are along their career pathway, while others report they are learning that they want to pursue a particular career because of their experiences in their current job. For other respondents, working in a job related to their career pathway has helped them learn that is actually not a career they want to pursue. Many respondents also report that their high school experiences have helped prepare them to be able to achieve their career goals, and respondents continue to report they value hands-on learning programs available through their high schools.

Many respondents are also reconsidering what educational plans make the most sense for their future. A majority of respondents still believe college is worth it, but COVID is causing some to feel like they need to stay closer to home if they attend college, and a large number are reevaluating the value of going to college, their possible programs of study, and considering alternatives to college.

While they understand that the world is different than it was just one year ago, many respondents continue to have a strong sense of self-agency. Many believe that they have control over their future, and that they can work to achieve the kind of life they want. Many respondents are looking to others—including parents, friends, and mentors—for help or advice about how to approach their future and shape and accomplish their goals.

Despite all the challenges, many young people also see opportunity in the moment, especially around civic engagement, the 2020 election, and issues such as racial justice. Most respondents report they are actively engaged on these issues. Many are also actively engaged in conversations about racial justice with their friends, family, and even co-workers, and most find these conversations to be valuable. Perhaps more importantly, most respondents see value in their engagement and also see opportunity in a future where they are able to help engineer important social changes.

Separately, the survey also asked respondents about their high school experiences and the extent to which they feel their voices and opinions can affect what happens in their school. Some respondents feel that their high school teachers, and to a slightly lesser extent administrators, respect and solicit their thoughts and opinions. Fewer than half feel that their opinions are able to actually impact aspects of class or school policy.

The remainder of this memo goes into more detailed discussion of the key findings from the survey.

### **DETAILED KEY FINDINGS**

Key findings from the survey are detailed below. Please note that the memo discusses results that are notable and significant. When results for particular demographic subgroups are not discussed it is because there are not any notable findings among or differences between these subgroups. Quotes from survey respondents included in the memo have been lightly edited for clarity.

#### ***IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON DAILY LIFE***

##### **COVID-19 continues to impact the financial lives of many (62%) respondents, and the impact has been consistent over survey waves.**

Some (15%) respondents in the Wave 3 survey report that they have lost income or had their hours reduced, have been temporarily laid off (11%), have lost a job (8%), have lost an internship or similar experience (7%), have left or quit a job (7%), or have had difficulty finding a job (14%)—all due to the coronavirus.

Even those respondents who continue to work during COVID report changes to their work environment: some (17%) are working from home for the first time or are working outside the home with PPE or other protections (12%).

A few respondents (5%) are facing or experiencing housing insecurity and report they have faced eviction or have lost their home or place to stay due to financial hardship during the coronavirus outbreak.

Just under one-third (31%) of respondents report that they have not had any of these experiences during the coronavirus outbreak.

It is notable that the proportion of respondents who report these experiences has remained steady across survey waves. Put differently, although the coronavirus has remained a constant feature, and in many ways has gotten worse from August through December, there are not meaningful changes in the proportion of respondents who report experiencing things such as income or job loss during that time.

**Just under half (46%) of respondents report they are working for pay. Among respondents who are working, some (26%) report their work is seasonal or only during the holidays, and almost two times as many respondents (42%) report working more than one job than did in the 2019 survey (23%).**

Slightly less than half (46%) of respondents report they are currently working, including full-time (17%), part-time (24%), or through a paid internship, apprenticeship, or similar program (5%). The proportion of respondents reporting they are working full-time has remained relatively steady, both overall and across race and gender subgroups, over the course of the three 2020 survey waves.

In the Wave 3 survey, one-quarter (26%) of respondents who are working report that their work is seasonal or only during the holidays, and not year-round. Black (28%) and Hispanic (29%) respondents are more likely to report their current work is seasonal or only during the holidays than are white respondents (20%). Some (11%) respondents also report they are working both a year-round and seasonal job; Hispanic male respondents (18%) are the most likely to report this is the case.

Over the course of the three 2020 surveys, the proportion of respondents who report they are working more than one job has trended upward, from 33 percent in Wave 1 to 38 percent in Wave 2 to 42 percent in Wave 3, which is notably higher than the 2019 survey (23%). Notably, more than half of Black respondents (52%)—including a majority (56%) of Black female respondents—report they are working more than one job for pay, while about one-third (34%) percent of white respondents report this is the case.

**Most respondents who chose to leave their job cite feeling unsafe in their work environment (67%), having to help more with household responsibilities (67%), or having to help more with childcare (55%) or caring for an older adult (51%) at home, as important reasons.**

Two-thirds of (67%) of respondents who chose to leave a job during the coronavirus outbreak report that feeling unsafe in their work environment was a very (41%) or somewhat (26%) important reason. At the same time, many respondents also report that responsibilities at home played a role: two-thirds (67%) of those who left their job report that having to help more with household responsibilities was a very (33%) or somewhat (34%) important reason in leaving their job; a majority (55%) also report that having to help more with childcare responsibilities was a very (33%) or somewhat (22%) important reason; and more than half (51%) also report that having to provide more care for an older family member was a very (33%) or somewhat (18%) important reason in their choice to leave their job. Notably, only about four-in-ten (38%) of respondents report that not liking their job was a very (17%) or somewhat (21%) important reason for them to leave—and one-third (33%) say it was not a reason. While it may not be surprising that most respondents who left their job cite concerns about safety (or the lack thereof) in the workplace as being an important reasons, it is clear that for many respondents, responsibilities at home are also an important consideration in their decision to leave their job.

**Many respondents (41%) are providing care for others in their home. The majority (78%) of respondents providing care report they were providing this care before COVID, but male respondents (23%) are more likely than female respondents (12%) to report that they have started to give care during COVID.**

Many respondents (41%) report they are providing care for someone younger than them in their household (33%), someone older than them in their household (12%), or both (4%). The responsibility of caregiving is falling more heavily on the shoulders of Black (44%) and Hispanic (44%) respondents than it is on white respondents (36%).

The vast majority (78%) of Wave 3 respondents who are providing care for others report that they were already providing this care prior to the coronavirus pandemic. However, female respondents (81%) are more likely than male respondents (74%) to report they were providing this care prior to the coronavirus outbreak, while male respondents (23%) are more likely than female respondents (12%) to report they have started providing care because of the coronavirus outbreak. This is especially noticeably among Black male (24%) and white male respondents (23%). While the responsibility of providing care to others during the coronavirus outbreak has fallen on the shoulders of many respondents, female respondents are more likely to have been bearing this burden during the pre-COVID era than their male peers.

Providing care for others is also impacting many respondents' ability to work for pay, with almost four-in-ten (39%) reporting they cannot work (12%), or that it is extremely (13%) or very (15%) difficult to work, because of their caregiving responsibilities. Black (14%) and white (13%) respondents are twice as likely to feel they cannot work due to caregiving responsibilities than are their Hispanic (7%) peers. While one-third (34%) of respondents report their caregiving responsibilities are not affecting their ability to work for pay, Hispanic male respondents (42%) are the most likely to report these responsibilities are not affecting their ability to work for pay, while Black male respondents (28%) are the least likely.

Caregiving is also impacting respondents' ability to pursue their education, and the impact is felt especially strongly among Black respondents. Among Wave 3 respondents who are providing care for others, some (12%) report they *cannot* go to school or engaged in online/distance learning because of these responsibilities. Many (32%) other respondents report it is *extremely* (17%) or *very* (15%) difficult to go to school or engage in online/distance learning because of these responsibilities. Black respondents (41%) are significantly more likely to report these responsibilities make it difficult to continue their education than are their Hispanic (27%) or white (26%) peers.

Notably, Black male respondents are the most likely to report their caregiving responsibilities are negatively impacting their ability to go to school *or* to work for pay. Due to the coronavirus outbreak, caregiving responsibilities are new for one-quarter (24%) of these respondents, which may be connected to the level of difficulty they are experiencing with these new responsibilities alongside their education and work endeavors.

**The majority of respondents who are in school continue to be engaged in some type of online learning; most report they have had the ability to choose whether they are engaging in online or in-person learning.**

The vast majority (82%) of Wave 3 respondents who are in school report that, since the coronavirus outbreak began, they have been engaging in some type of online learning. Among Wave 3 respondents who have been engaging in some type of online learning, almost four-in-ten (39%) report the classes have been live and interactive, while some (28%) report their classes have not

been live or interactive but rather have involved recorded materials, and others (28%) report they have experience with both types of settings. These proportions are similar to what Wave 2 respondents report, although there is a slight increase in the proportion of respondents who report they are engaged in non-interactive online learning (from 22% in Wave 2 to 28% in Wave 3).

Interestingly, almost three in four (73%) Wave 3 respondents report they have had some type of choice over the type of learning in which they engage. Just over a third (37%) report they had made the decision of what type of learning to take themselves, while some (19%) report either their parents or guardians make the decision, or that they and their parents or guardians have made decision together (18%), while still others (21%) report they do not have any choice about their learning settings. White male respondents (46%) are notably more likely to report they have made this decision on their own, while Hispanic females (30%) are notably more likely to report they do not have any input in the types of classes they take.

### ***LOOKING TO THE FUTURE – LIFE AND CAREER***

**About half (49%) of respondents are optimistic they can achieve the kind of life they want in the future, with levels of optimism noticeably lower compared to 2019 survey respondents. Some respondents report that the outcome of the presidential election and recent news about a COVID vaccine have increased their optimism.**

About half (49%) of respondents are extremely (24%) or very (25%) optimistic they can achieve the kind of life they want in the future. This level of optimism is similar to what respondents in the previous waves of the 2020 survey report, although white female respondents report somewhat lower levels (42%) than before. Notably, levels of optimism among respondents in 2020 are far lower than the 67 percent reported in 2019 (34% extremely, 33% very optimistic). There are double-digit declines among Black (22 points, from 74% to 52%), Hispanic (18 points, from 67% to 49%), and white respondents (13 points, from 58% to 45%).

The recent news about a COVID vaccine has made an impact on some respondents' optimism. About one-third (34%) of respondents report this news makes them more optimistic about their future. This increased optimism is most prominent among white male respondents (41%), and least prominent among Black female respondents (26%). Notably, 29 percent of respondents report that news about the vaccine has no impact on their optimism for the future.

Similarly, many (35%) respondents report that the outcome of the 2020 presidential election makes them more optimistic about achieving the kind of life they want in the future, and Hispanic male respondents (40%), Black male respondents (39%), and Hispanic female respondents (38%) are the most likely to report feeling increased levels of optimism.

**Most respondents (57%) report feeling clear about their ideas and goals for their future job. However, the proportion continues to be lower than in the 2019 survey, and many respondents (42%) report their plans for the future have changed, or are likely to change, because of the coronavirus outbreak.**

More than half (57%) of respondents report their goals and ideas for their future career feel very (28%) or somewhat (29%) clear. Younger respondents age 15- to 16-years old (65%)—especially younger Hispanic (72%) and younger Black (68%) respondents—are much more likely to report feeling clear about their future goals than are older respondents.

Nonetheless, there is a notable drop in clarity from 2019 respondents overall (down 18 points from 75%) and also among each racial group: Black (down 19 points, from 77% to 58%), Hispanic (down 17 points, from 76% to 59%), and white (down 18 points, from 72% to 54%) respondents. It is also notable that among 2019 respondents, there are no significant differences in feelings of clarity by age alone, and 15- to 16-year-old white respondents are actually the least likely (67%) to report feeling clear about their future goals. Thus, not only is there a marked decline in clarity among respondents in the current survey, but there are also appear to be shifts in which subgroups feel their future job and career goals are clear.

There is little doubt that the coronavirus has contributed to the declines in clarity from 2019 respondents, as many (42%) Wave 3 respondents report their plans for the future have definitely changed (17%) or are likely to change (25%) due to the coronavirus outbreak. Among those who report their plans have changed or are likely to change, the top selected industries for their new career are healthcare (8% overall) and restaurant/food industry (6% overall)—two essential industries during the coronavirus pandemic. Notably, there is a large 12-percentage point gender gap when it comes to pursuing a new career in healthcare (with 14% of female respondents but only 2% of male respondents reporting this is their choice for a new career industry).

**The majority of respondents (56%) feel the outcome of the presidential election will have a positive impact on their own future. This feeling is especially notable among Black and Hispanic respondents.**

A majority of respondents (56%) feel the election outcome will have a positive impact on their own future, and Black (61%) and Hispanic (60%) respondents are more likely than white (46%) respondents to report feeling this way. As the respondent quotes below illustrate, much of the optimism around the election's impact on their future relates to feelings that the Trump administration pursued policies that were harmful to many segments of society, but there are also feelings that the Biden administration will do more to pursue policies that promote positive change—rather than just stopping policies that cause harm.

*“Trump will no longer be the voice of the white privileged society.”*

- Hispanic female survey respondent, age 16, lower income

*“We hope to see a lot of change in our country, that Black people will get the same respect as the white and privileged people.”*

- Black female survey respondent, age 18, lower income

*“I feel it will have a positive impact on my future because I am a part of the LGBT community.”*

- White male survey respondent, age 18, lower income

*“It will make student loans somewhat less of a burden. It will help my family members gain citizenship. It has made me more politically active.”*

- Hispanic male survey respondent, age 18, lower income

*“Joe Biden is a good representative for human rights and believes in climate change and slowing the effects.”*

- Black female survey respondent, age 20, higher income

*“I feel we have better leadership, with a president with a better understanding of what is going on in the world today and the most sensible plan to come across. Also, I feel because he is less biased and prejudiced toward the American people, he is willing to work with us and not against us.”*

- White female survey respondent, age 21, lower income

However, there are also some negative feelings about the election outcome, and slightly less than one-in-five (17%) of respondents—including 11 percent of Black and 23 percent of white respondents—report feeling the presidential election outcome will have a negative impact on their future. While some of these feelings are rooted in antipathy towards President-elect Biden and his policies, some respondents express a belief there was “fraud” or that the election was “rigged,” while others express concerns about violence around the election results.

*“Biden is not mentally fit to be president, and he wishes to withdraw the Trump tax cuts, which cut taxes on average of \$2,000, and he has lied multiple times to Americans.”*

- White male survey respondent, age 21, lower income

*“There was fraud in the 2020 elections. It’s obvious.”*

- Hispanic female survey respondent, age 18, lower income

*“If Biden gets in there will be war.”*

- White female survey respondent, age 19, lower income

*“I don’t think they will fix anything and people will just get more violent if the president wants to change things.”*

- Hispanic female survey respondent, age 15, lower income

A small proportion (7%) of respondents feel the election outcome will not make a difference for their future. Many of these respondents express feelings of cynicism around politicians and elections, while others strongly believe they alone are able to impact their future.

*“Nothing ever really changes, Americans will continue to care for themselves and put food on their tables. Politicians never make big changes that affect us day to day, we can’t rely on them we have to do what’s best for our families.”*

- Hispanic male survey respondent, age 21, lower income

*“Democrats are apologists to the broken system, and a president elect does not change the status of the [U.S.] Supreme Court which has historically had the most say in legalization.”*

- White survey respondent who identifies differently, age 20, lower income

*“No matter who the president is Blacks don’t have a chance.”*

- Black female survey respondent, age 16, lower income

*“Going to do what I planned on. Politics or not.”*

- Hispanic female survey respondent, age 16, lower income

*“I make my own dreams happen.”*

- Black male survey respondent, age 17, lower income

*“I won’t let it make a difference.”*

- White male survey respondent, age 17, lower income

**A majority (53%) of respondents across all three survey waves report having one main career goal in mind. Among respondents who envision having a side job in the future as well, almost three-quarters (72%) report that side job would be related to their overall career goals in some way.**

Most respondents (53%) in 2020 report they have one main career goal in mind, while about one-quarter (26%) report they also plan to have a side job. The proportion of respondents reporting they have one career goal in mind is 13 points lower than in 2019 (66%), while the proportion reporting they also have a side job in mind is equal (25% in 2019). It is worth noting that a substantial proportion (20%) of 2020 respondents report they are unsure if they will have one main job or also have a side job, and that this figure was nine percent among 2019 respondents. This marked increase in uncertainty in 2020 is likely due in part to the coronavirus.

Among 2020 respondents who envision having a side job, the vast majority (72%) report they believe their side job will help them achieve their main career goal (28%) or that their side job will be related to another career goal they have (44%). Hispanic male respondents (34%) are the most likely to report their side job will help them achieve their main job goals. Still, one-fifth (22%) of respondents feel that they are unlikely to make enough money from their main job and will need an extra job to earn the amount of income they want.

**Most 2020 respondents (62%) feel they know what they want to do for their future career, but only slightly more than one-third (35%) of respondents also feel they know how to achieve that career. This is a noticeable decline from 2019, when almost half (46%) of respondents reported they both knew what they want to do and the steps needed to take to get there.**

Across the three waves of the 2020 survey, just over one-third (35%) of respondents report *I know what I want to do for my work or career, and I also know most of the specific steps I need to take to get there*. Black respondents (40%) are especially likely to report this is the case, while white female respondents (29%) are less likely to do so. Additionally, one-quarter (27%) of respondents across all three waves of the survey report *I know what I want to do for my work or career, but I am not sure of the specific steps I need to take to get there*. By comparison, almost half (46%) of 2019 survey respondents reported that they both know what they want to do and the steps they need to take.

**Job experience and career exploration continue to be important for most respondents, and many who are working report their current job is helpful to learn more about what they do—and do not—want to do for their future career.**

About four-in-ten (41%) respondents who are currently working report their job is related to their chosen career pathway. Black female (54%) respondents are the most likely to report they are currently working in a job related to their career pathway, while white female respondents (27%) are the least likely. At the same time, half (50%) of respondents report they are currently working in a job that is not related to their career pathway.

Work experience and job exploration continue to be important for many respondents, helping to clarify or eliminate possible career options. Among respondents who currently are working in a job related to their pathway, more than six-in-ten (63%) chose the job because they knew it was related to their career path, while about one-third (35%) report that working in that job has helped them decide that they want to pursue a career in their current field. Almost half (49%) of the respondents who are currently working in a job not related to their career pathway knew this was the case when they took the job, and an additional one quarter (25%) of respondents report they needed a job and it did not matter if it was along their pathway or not. However, a sizeable proportion (24%) of respondents took the job believing it would be part of their pathway, but then realized they did not want to pursue that kind of career. Additionally, a majority (60%) of respondents who currently have or previously had a job report that their jobs have provided a great deal of help (29%) or have somewhat helped (31%) them make decisions about their career pathways. It is worth noting that career exploration and experience are helpful regardless of respondent demographics.

**Many 2020 respondents (43%) report that they feel high school is preparing (or prepared) them to be successful in their future work or career. This includes career, vocational, technical or internship programs that allow for hands-on experiences, which most (79%) respondents who participate find helpful. Response levels in 2020 are similar to 2019.**

Across the three waves of surveys in 2020, many (43%) respondents report that high school is preparing or has prepared them to be successful at their future job or career extremely (21%) or very (22%) well. Black male respondents (50%) are the most likely to feel high school has prepared them well, while white female respondents (35%) are the least likely.

Half (50%) of 2020 respondents report that their high school has (or had) career, vocational, technical, or internship programs that offer hand-on experience in different jobs. Most (53%) respondents who go (or went) to a high school where these programs are available report that have participated in them. Hispanic male respondents (59%) are the most likely to report participating in these programs, and white females (47%) are the least likely.

The vast majority (79%) of 2020 respondents who have participated in one of these programs report they find the experience extremely (45%) or very (33%) helpful in learning more about careers they would or would not want to pursue, similar to 2019 (when 81% of respondents reported finding these programs helpful). Hispanic male respondents in 2020 (71%) are somewhat less likely to report finding these programs helpful than are respondents of other race and gender subgroups.

### ***ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE COVID PANDEMIC AND ITS IMPACT***

**Fewer respondents (46%) think the worst is yet to come with the coronavirus compared to August 2020 (52%). However, there is also a decline (9 points) in the proportion of respondents who feel it will take less than two years for things to be mostly back to normal, and only about one-third (36%) of respondents feel that way now.**

A majority (52%) of respondents in Wave 1 of the survey (August 2020) reported that they felt the worst of the coronavirus was still to come. This included a majority or near majority of every race and gender subgroup, except for white male respondents (43%). While many (46%) respondents in the Wave 3 survey still feel the worst is yet to come—including half of Black female (52%) and Hispanic female (51%) respondents—there is also a noticeable decline overall and among each race and gender subgroup in the proportion of respondents who feel this way. The largest change has been among Hispanic female respondents (62% in Wave 1 to 51% in Wave 3).

While there may be less concern that the worst is still to come, there is also a marked decrease in the optimism that things will quickly go back to normal. In Wave 1 of the survey, slightly less than half (45%) of respondents overall thought that things would be mostly back to normal in less than two years. This feeling was most prevalent among Hispanic male respondents (56%) and least prevalent among Black female respondents (33%). These figures have dropped noticeably in Wave 3 of the survey. Now, slightly more than one-third (36%) of respondents overall feel things will be back to normal within the next two years. Black female respondents (27%) continue to be the least likely to feel things will be back to normal in the next two years, while now white male respondents (47%) are the most likely to feel this way (the proportion for white males in Wave 1 was 50%). The largest drops have been among white female respondents (16 points, from 44% in Wave 1 to 28% in Wave 3), Hispanic male respondents (15 points, from 56% to 41%), and Hispanic female respondents (16 points, from 50% to 34%). Notably, male respondents in Wave 3 overall (43%) are significantly more likely than female respondents (30%) to feel things will be mostly back to normal in less than two years, and this trend holds across each racial subgroup as well.

**Black and Hispanic respondents are much more likely to be aware of the higher rates of COVID infections in their own communities compared to white people. However, across race there is less awareness about what is happening in other communities. The least amount of awareness across racial groups is about the impact on Native American communities.**

Black respondents (49%) are significantly more likely to be aware of higher rates of COVID infections among Black people than are Hispanic (36%) or white respondents (38%). Similarly, Hispanic respondents (38%) are significantly more likely to be aware of higher rates of COVID infection among Hispanic people than are Black (26%) or white (18%) respondents. White respondents (40%) are the most likely to report they are unaware of different rates of COVID infections among different demographic groups. Similarly, low proportions of Black (16%), Hispanic (13%) and white (14%) respondents report they are aware of higher rates of infection among Native Americans. Many respondents appear to not be aware of how COVID is impacting communities other than their own.

**The majority (73%) of respondents who are currently working report that they feel safe in their work environment. The proportion of respondents who report feeling safe in their work environment has remained steady across survey waves in 2020.**

The proportion of respondents who report they feel safe in their work environment has remained steady over the three waves of the survey, even as the nation has experienced a series of drops and surges in coronavirus cases. In Wave 3, the majority (73%) of respondents who are working report they feel extremely safe (28%) or somewhat safe (46%) in their work environment, similar to the levels of responses in previous waves. White males (35%) are more likely to feel *extremely* safe at work. Hispanic females (36%) are noticeably less likely than other race and gender subgroups to report they feel *somewhat* safe—and are much more likely to report they feel *somewhat unsafe* (26%, compared to 18% overall). Hispanic females are slightly more likely to report working in a retail store/setting than are other respondents, but it is not clear if it is this setting, store policies, customer behavior, or something else that contributes to diminished feelings of safety at work for these respondents.

**Most respondents are concerned about the coronavirus's impact on the national and local economy, as well as its impact on their future career options and their ability to achieve their career goals.**

Most Wave 3 respondents (62%) are extremely (25%), very (20%), or somewhat concerned (18%) that the coronavirus will have a long-lasting negative impact on jobs and the economy in the country as a whole. This concern is localized as well: a majority (62%) of respondents are also extremely (22%), very (19%), or somewhat concerned (20%) that the coronavirus will have a long-lasting negative impact on jobs and the economy in their local community. A sizeable majority (56%) of respondents also express concern that they will have fewer options available to them for their future job or career because of the coronavirus, and a majority (52%) are also concerned that they may not be able to achieve their goals for their future careers because of the coronavirus.

There are only a few notable differences by demographic subgroups. Hispanic male respondents (63%) are somewhat more likely to report having concerns about fewer options being available for their future jobs or careers. Similarly, older respondents—those ages 19- to 21-years old—are more likely to express concerns about the coronavirus's impact on the national economy (65%) and that the virus may limit their future career options (58%).

There is, however, a strong relationship between respondents' optimism for the future and their concern, and respondents who report they are only a little optimistic or not optimistic at all about achieving the kind of life they want in the future are noticeably more likely than other respondents to be concerned about these impacts. Notably, at least two-thirds of respondents with low levels of

optimism report they are concerned about the coronavirus's impact on each item (75% national economy, 71% local economy, 68% fewer options available, and 67% not able to achieve career goals).

### ***EDUCATION PERSPECTIVES AND FUTURE EDUCATION PLANS***

**The majority of respondents (68%) plan to continue their education, but COVID has caused many to change or alter their plans in some fashion. Just over one-quarter (27%) are planning to delay starting an education program. Concerns about safety, a desire to be close to home/family, and financial considerations loom large for many respondents when considering their future plans.**

A majority (68%) of Wave 3 respondents report they plan to continue their education in the coming years, and almost half (46%) report they plan to attend a four-year college, levels similar to the first two waves of the survey. While the majority of respondents report they plan to continue their education, most Wave 3 respondents (52%) also report that their future education plans have definitely changed (29%) or are likely to change (23%) because of the coronavirus. This is also similar to what Wave 1 respondents reported.

When it comes to how these future plans are changing, a quarter (27%) of Wave 3 respondents report they are planning to delay starting college or a certification, training, or similar program. Relatedly, some (18%) respondents report they are changing their plans for the next semester, such as postponing or delaying a work study or study abroad program, while others (11%) report they are planning on taking at least a semester off. Some respondents also report they are planning on switching to an education option closer to home (13%), switching to a less expensive education option (12%), taking more time to complete their education (8%), switching from a four-year college or university to a two-year college (7%), accelerating their education (6%), switching from a private institution to a public one (5%), or switching from an out-of-state institution to one in-state (4%).

Concerns about safety, a desire to be close to home or family, and financial considerations loom large for many respondents when considering their possible education future plans. Four-in-ten (41%) respondents report that concerns about the safety of in-person learning amid the coronavirus is a strong reason for them to consider changing their future education plans. Additionally, almost four-in-ten (37%) also report wanting or needing to be closer to home or family as a strong reason to consider changing their future education plans, while the same portion (37%) report that cheaper options available online are a strong reason to consider changing their future education plans. Additionally, almost one-third of respondents report that concerns about the affordability of more school due to changes in their (31%) or their family's (31%) financial situation is a strong reason to consider changing their future education plans.

These results are similar to what Wave 1 respondent reported, although some proportions are slightly lower among Wave 3 respondents. Additionally, Hispanic male respondents (37%) are more likely to feel concerns about affordability due to changes in their financial situation are a strong reason to consider changing their plans, while white female respondents are less likely than other subgroups to feel the desire or need to be close to home is a strong reason.

**A majority (63%) of 2020 respondents, including majorities across race and gender subgroups, continue to feel that college is (or would be) worth it for them personally. However, fewer respondents feel this way than did in the 2019 survey, and most (52%) 2020**

**respondents also report they are thinking about college differently now than before the coronavirus outbreak.**

About six-in-ten (63%) respondents across all three waves of the 2020 survey—and at least 60 percent of respondents in each race and gender subgroup—report they feel college is or would be worth it for them personally. Nonetheless, this is a significant decrease from the proportion of 2019 respondents (71%) who reported college is worth it for them, and the largest declines have been among Black female respondents (15-point decline, from 78% in 2019 to 63% in 2020) and white female respondents (14-point decline, from 75% in 2019 to 61% in 2020).

The coronavirus outbreak is clearly impacting how some respondents feel about college. Almost one-in-five (19%) 2020 respondents report they are unsure whether college would be worth it for them (in 2019 this figure was 12%). A majority (52%) report they are thinking about college differently now than before the coronavirus outbreak. Notably, this change has been in both directions—some respondents who used to think college would be worth it no longer feel that is the case (30%), while others who used to think college would not be worth it now think it would be (22%). However, Black (33%) and Hispanic (32%) respondents are more likely than white respondents (27%) to report they no longer think college is worth it for them, personally, after previously thinking it would be.

**A majority (51%) of respondents who have attended college feel weighed down by student debt, although the proportions of respondents who feel this way are lower than in 2019. Nonetheless, many respondents (42%) report they are concerned about college debt, and more than one-third (35%) of respondents report they are more concerned about college debt now than before the coronavirus outbreak.**

A majority (51%) of Wave 3 respondents who are attending or have attended college report they feel weighed down by student debt a huge amount (21%) or a fair amount (31%). This is particularly true for Black female respondents, 60 percent of whom report they feel weighed down by student debt (this is seven-points higher than the next closest subgroup, white females, at 53%). However, both the proportions for respondents overall and by race and gender subgroups are lower than in 2019, when more than six-in-ten (62%) of respondents reported college debt is weighing them down (67% of Black female respondents and 60% of white female respondents reported feeling weighed down by student debt in 2019).

Despite the fact somewhat fewer respondents feel weighed down by college debt, many (42%) still report they are extremely (24%) or very (18%) concerned about having college debt (note that this question is asked of all respondents, not only those who are in or have attended college). Additionally, many respondents report their concern about college debt has increased during the coronavirus outbreak: across the three waves of surveys in 2020, more than one-third (35%) of respondents report they are more concerned about college debt now than before the coronavirus. By contrast, almost one-in-three (28%) respondents report they are just as concerned now as before the outbreak, and one-fifth (19%) report they are less concerned (18% are unsure). This increased concern is especially notable among Hispanic female respondents, 41 percent of whom report they are more concerned about college debt now.

**One-quarter (25%) of respondents currently in school report they are considering changing their program of study because of the coronavirus. Some report they are planning to pursue options they have more interest in, while others report they want better career opportunities in the future.**

Some (25%) respondents who are currently in school report that they are considering changing their program of study—for example, their major—in response to the coronavirus outbreak. Black male respondents (31%) are more likely to report this is this case, while white female respondents (17%)

are less likely to report they are planning on changing their program of study. A sizeable proportion (17%) of respondents in school also report that they are unsure about whether they are considering changing their program of study, but respondents ages 15- to 16-years-old (20%) and ages 17- to 18-years-old (21%) are more likely to report being unsure than are respondents ages 19- to 21-years-old (13%).

When it comes to reasons for changing their program of study, many respondents report that they are planning to pursue something they are more interested in, while others are looking for better future career opportunities, including being more likely to find a job as an essential worker who can work remotely.

*"I'm more interested in journalism than cinema."*

- Black male survey respondent, age 18, lower income

*"I have found more interest in chemistry."*

- Hispanic female survey respondent, age 17, higher income

*"I want my job to be essential. As unfairly as the essential workers were treated and the risks they endured, at least they had jobs. Computer science I can do from home too if COVID lasts forever."*

- White female survey respondent, age 17, lower income

*"Everything has changed. Even the way business is conducted. I think I'll have a better career if I change my goal."*

- Hispanic male survey respondent, age 15, lower income

**Many respondents (44%) are taking or considering an online program to learn new skills, and a majority (63%) of those who report this say it will be in addition to a college degree.**

Many respondents (44%) are also taking (16%), planning to take (13%), or thinking about taking (16%) an online training program to develop new skills for their career. Black male respondents (21%) are more likely than respondents from other subgroups to report they are currently taking such a program.

Notably, the majority of respondents (63%) who are or may be taking an online program report they plan to do this in addition to getting a college degree. While some (24%) report this program will be instead of a college degree, for most respondents these types of classes appear to represent an upskilling opportunity rather than a substitute for formal higher education, as the following respondent quotes illustrate.

*"While I study at a university I can specialize in another subject or study."*

- Hispanic male survey respondent, age 16, lower income

*"Having new skills increases my chances of getting a good job sooner than if I learned them after school."*

- White male survey respondent, age 18, lower income

*"Certain skill sets would be nice to have with my major of linguistics."*

- Black female survey respondent, age 18, lower income

## ***SUPPORT STRUCTURES AND CONNECTIONS***

**Almost half of 2020 respondents (48%) feel it will mostly be up to them to achieve the kind of job or career they want. However, most (65%) also report they have someone they talk to about their life goals, although fewer respondents report this is the case than did in 2019 (74%).**

About half (48%) of 2020 respondents report feeling it will be mostly up to them to achieve the kind of job or career they want, a level that is slightly lower than in the 2019 survey (54%). In 2020, Black male respondents (42%) are the least likely to report they feel it will be mostly up to them, similar to 2019 when they were also the least likely to report it would be mostly up to them. However, the proportion of respondents who report they feel they will get help to achieve the kind of career they want has remained fairly consistent—37 percent in 2019 compared to 34 percent in 2020. The proportion of respondents who are unsure about whether it will be mostly up to them or whether they will get help from others has doubled from six percent in 2019 and 13 percent in 2020.

Nonetheless, most respondents (65%) report they have someone they talk to about their life goals, but the proportion who report this is the case in 2020 is lower than in 2019 (when 74% of respondents reported they have someone they talk to about their life goals). In 2020, Hispanic female (70%) and lower-income white female (69%) respondents are slightly more likely to report having this type of person in their life. From 2019 to 2020, the largest declines have been among Black female respondents (18 points, from 80% to 62%), white female respondents (12 points, from 81% to 69%), and Black male respondents (11 points, from 73% to 62%).

Many 2020 respondents talk to someone about their life goals, including: a parent or guardian (46%), a friend (26%), another family member around their age (17%), a partner, spouse, or significant other (12%), or another adult family member (12%). Hispanic female and white female respondents are slightly more likely to report they talk to a parent or guardian (51% Hispanic female respondents, 52% white female respondents), friends (31% Hispanic female respondents, 30% white female respondents), and a partner/spouse/significant other (16% Hispanic female respondents, 18% white female respondents).

**Just under two-third of respondents (63%) report having conversations with their parents or guardians about next steps after high school. These conversations are mostly related to future education or job and career plans, and the vast majority of respondents (80%) report they find these conversations valuable.**

A majority (63%) of respondents report their parents do (or did) regularly talk to them about the next steps after high school. A plurality (41%) of respondents who have (or had) these conversations report the conversations involved both parties and that they and their parents or guardian talk (or talked) about the same amount, although white male (33%) and Black male (34%) respondents are the least likely to report this is the case.

Seven-in-ten (70%) respondents who have had these conversations report they are about going to college or getting more education, while almost half (49%) percent report they talk to the parent or guardian about getting a job, and many (47%) report the conversations include talking about finding a career. White male (60%) and Black male (61%) respondents are less likely than other race and gender subgroups to report these conversations are about going to college or continuing their education. Black male respondents (40%) are also less likely than other subgroup to report these conversations are about getting a job.

The vast majority of respondents, both overall and by race and gender subgroups, report they find these conversations helpful: fully 80 percent of respondents report these conversations are very (48%) or somewhat (32%) helpful for them personally. By contrast, only a few (5%) respondents report these conversations are not helpful at all.

**Most respondents (62%) report seeking information or advice on their future career. However, the proportion of respondents who engage in these activities is lower than in 2019 (75%). Just under half of respondents (49%) report they have a mentor or have had one in the past.**

A majority (62%) of Wave 3 respondents report that they have looked for information or advice with their job, work, or career. Hispanic female respondents (69%) are more likely to report looking for information or advice. Notably, there is a 13-percentage point drop in the proportion of respondents who report they have looked for information in 2020 when compared to 2019 (75%), and there is a similar drop among race and gender subgroups as well. The only subgroup for which there is not a double-digit decline from 2019 to 2020 is white male respondents, who still experience a six-point drop (from 68% to 62%). Thus, while a majority of respondents are still looking for advice around future career during the COVID-era, the proportion is still lower than among 2019 respondents.

Many (49%) respondents also report they currently have a mentor (21%), have had one in the past (19%) or both (9%). Black respondents (55%)—and especially Black male respondents (58%)—are noticeably more likely to report they have or have had a mentor in their life.

**A majority of respondents feel personal attributes—such as skills, confidence, and a clear sense of what they want to do—are important to have for their future career. However, most respondents also feel that interpersonal relationships are important, and many report knowing people who have the kind of career or do the kind of work they are interested in, and feel like they could ask for advice from these people.**

Most (70%) respondents report they feel career/job skills are extremely (42%) or very (28%) important to have for their future career. Similarly, most also report they feel confidence is important (69%), and that *a clear sense of what I want to do* is important (66%). Although a strong majority of Black female respondents (60%) do feel confidence is important to their future work or career, the proportion for this race and gender subgroup is noticeably smaller than others. It is notable that respondents are placing the most importance on these personal attributes—things over which they have direct influence—rather than other factors.

At the same time, most respondents also report feeling that interpersonal relationships are important to their future career. For example, a majority of respondents report feeling *connections* are important (63%) to their future career, that *knowing people like me who have that kind of job, work, or career* is important (59%), that *relationships* are important (59%), and that *networks* (55%) and *mentors* (55%) are each important to their future career.

Notably, fewer respondents (46%) report feeling *social capital* is important to their future careers than are these other relationships, but there are some differences by gender and race: male respondents (52%) are more likely than female respondents (41%) to feel social capital is important, while both Hispanic (51%) and Black (48%) respondents are more likely than white respondents (40%) to feel social capital is important to their future careers. These findings are similar to the 2019 survey, where less than half (46%) of respondents reported social capital is important to their future career, and where this feeling was also stronger among male (48%), Hispanic (48%), and Black (50%) respondents than it was among female (44%) or white (38%) respondents. The 2020 survey did not ask respondents about their associations with *social capital* (or any other term in this question), though previous research conducted around this topic suggests that the term is more ambiguous and signals almost a monetized, transactional quality to the relationship for many young people, compared to terms like *connections*, *networks*, and *relationships*.

In addition to feeling like these interpersonal relationships are important, more than four-in-ten (43%) respondents also report that they know someone who has the kind of career or does the kind

of work they are interested in, and a majority (83%) of these respondents feel they would be able to ask for advice from this person.

**Six in ten (60%) respondents who have previously had a job report it has helped them make decisions about their career track.**

Most (60%) respondents who currently have or previously had a job report that their jobs have provided a great deal of help (29%) or have somewhat helped (31%) them make decisions about their career pathways. White respondents (24%)—and especially white female respondents (22%)—are noticeably *less* likely to report their previous work experience has helped them a great deal. Respondents who are extremely (46%) or very optimistic (29%) about achieving the kind of life they want in the future, or respondents who feel their future career goals are very (41%) or somewhat (30%) clear, are also noticeably more likely to report their previous job experience has helped them make decisions about their career track.

***IDENTITY AS AN ASSET***

**Although all respondents primarily or exclusively identify as Black, Hispanic, or white, some respondents report they are more than one race or ethnicity.**

Respondents must primarily identify as being Black, Hispanic, or white to be eligible to participate in the surveys, but some respondents report they belong to more than one racial or ethnic category. Across 2020 surveys, eight percent of white respondents also report being Hispanic and two percent also report being Black. Similarly, six percent of Black respondents also report being Hispanic and seven percent also report being white. Fourteen percent (14%) of Hispanic respondents report also being white, and three percent also report being Black.

**Male respondents (33%) are more likely to see their gender as an asset, while more female respondents (30%) feel their gender both helps and limits them. Perceptions around gender as a limit are also connected to awareness of the differential impact of COVID-19, having a trusted adult to talk to, and optimism about future life.**

One-third (33%) of male respondents report they feel being a male helps them, compared to only 21 percent of female respondents who feel being a female helps them. Notably, there are consistent differences by gender of the same race, with a 14-percentage point difference between white male (31%) and female (17%) respondents, a 13-percentage point difference between Black male (36%) and female (23%) respondents, and a 12-percentage point difference between Hispanic male (34%) and female (22%) respondents.

Male respondents (27%) are also more likely to report they feel their gender will have no real effect on where they can go in life than are female respondents (20%). There are significant differences between Hispanic male and female respondents (30% and 19%, respectively), and also white male and female respondents (33% and 25%, respectively).

Females respondents, by contrast, are more likely to feel their gender limits them (19%), or that their gender both helps and limits them (30%), than are male respondents (10% and 16%, respectively). There are similarly notable differences between genders of the same race on these measures as well, including a 19-percentage point difference between the proportion of Hispanic female (33%) and Hispanic male (14%) respondents who feel their gender both helps and limits them.

These results—including many double-digit differences between genders of the same race—are similar to what 2019 respondents reported.

Notably, perceptions around gender as a limit are also connected to awareness of the differential impact of COVID-19, having a trusted adult to talk to, and optimism about future life. More specifically, respondents who report their gender limits them are: more likely to be aware of the differential impact of COVID-19 in Black, Hispanic, and Native American communities; are more likely to report they do not have a trusted adult to talk to about life goals; and are less likely to report feeling optimistic about achieving the kind of life they want in the future. Importantly, these findings are true even after accounting for other respondent characteristics and attitudes, such as race, gender, income, and concerns about COVID-19's impact on the future.

**White respondents are much more likely to report their race helps them (40%) or has no real impact on where they can go in life (28%). Black and Hispanic respondents are much more likely to report their race limits them, although a sizeable proportion also feel their race both helps and limits them. Feeling that race is a limit is also related to finding value in conversations around racial justice with family members.**

Four-in-ten (40%) white respondents feel being white helps them, compared to about one-quarter of Black (25%) or Hispanic (23%) respondents who feel their race or ethnicity help them. By contrast, only eight percent (8%) of white respondents feel their race limits them, while 26 percent of Black and 21 percent of Hispanic respondents feel this way. Hispanic females (27%) are noticeably more likely than Hispanic males (15%) to report they feel their race or ethnicity limits them, though this is the only substantial difference between gender in the same race. While one-fifth (21%) of respondents overall feel their race or ethnicity has no real effect on where they can go in life, this feeling is more prominent among white respondents (28%) than among Black (15%) or Hispanic (20%) respondents.

These overall patterns—that Black and Hispanic respondents are more likely than white respondents to feel their race limits them in some way—match what respondents in the 2019 survey reported, but there are some interesting differences. For example, white female respondents in 2020 (43%) are much more likely to report they feel their race helps them than were white female respondents in 2019 (35%). The corollary to this is that substantially fewer white female respondents in 2020 (25%) report their race has no effect on where they can go in life compared to 2019 respondents (39%). As the proportions for white male respondents are much more similar across years—there is a two-percentage point increase in the proportion of white males who feel their race helps them from 2019 to 2020 (34% to 36%)—the results suggest white female respondents are more aware of how their race can be an asset in their futures. Although the survey did not ask respondents if their attitudes had changed, the events of 2020, including those around race in America, may have played a role in shaping these attitudes.

Additional regression analysis of the 2020 survey data also finds that feelings around race as a limit are connected to finding value in conversations with family members about racial justice issues. More specifically, respondents who feel their race limits them are more likely to find these conversations with family about racial justice valuable than are respondents who do not feel their race limits them. Notably, these findings are true even after accounting for respondent characteristics and attitudes, such as race, gender, and support for racial justice protests.

**Many respondents (42%) report they get advice or guidance about how to be in the world as a person with their race and gender identity. Black respondents (56%) are the most likely to report getting this type of advice, and white respondents (31%) are the least likely.**

More than four-in-ten (42%) respondents report they get advice or guidance about how to be in the world as a person with their race and gender identity. Black male respondents (61%) are the most likely to report this is the case, followed by Black female respondents (51%). By contrast, white

female respondents (55%) and white male respondents (51%) are the most likely to report they do not get advice or guidance about how to be in the world as a white female or white male, respectively.

These trends are very similar to what 2019 respondents report. However, it is important to note there is a decline between surveys in the proportion of Black female respondents who report they get advice (14 points, from 65% in 2019 to 51% in 2020). There is also a notable increase in the proportion of white male respondents who report they do get advice on how to be in the world (from 24% in 2019 to 32% in 2020). Additionally, there are noticeable decreases in the proportion of white male (62% to 51%) and white female respondents (62% to 55%) who report they do not get advice and guidance from 2019 to 2020.

**Some (16%) respondents have at least one parent who was born in another country, and there are a mix of feelings among respondents as to whether this is a benefit or drawback to their future education and work endeavors.**

Some (16%) respondents report one (6%) or both (11%) of their parents were born in a country other than the United States. Among these respondents, almost one-in-five (19%) see this as a benefit to their schooling and work, while others (14%) see it as a drawback. Many see it as both a benefit and a drawback (29%), or as neither a benefit nor a drawback (20%). About one-fifth (18%) of respondents are unsure. Black female (6%) and Hispanic male (6%) respondents are the least likely to see this as a drawback, and white male respondents (14%) are the least likely to see this as a drawback.

**Four-in-ten (40%) respondents report speaking a language besides English in their home. A majority of these respondents (57%) feel this is a benefit to their future school and work.**

Many (40%) respondents report they speak a language other than English in their home, and most of these respondents speak Spanish (33%). French (4%) is the next most spoken language. The majority (57%) of respondents who speak another language in their home see this as a benefit to their school or work. However, some (9%) see it as a drawback, while still others see it as both a benefit and a drawback (19%) or neither a benefit nor a drawback (8%). Although many (46%) Black respondents feel speaking another language in the home is a benefit, they are less likely to feel this way than Hispanic (59%) or white (58%) respondents. Hispanic respondents (6%) are also the least likely to see speaking another language in the home as a drawback, in comparison to Black (13%) and white (13%) respondents.

## ***RACIAL JUSTICE AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT***

**Most respondents continue to pay attention to (63%), support (64%), and be engaged on (69%) racial justice issues, although there is a slight decline across groups in engagement between August and December. Black and Hispanic respondents are especially likely to find conversations with friends, family, or coworkers valuable. Black and Hispanic respondents are also more likely to say public discussions about racial justice are helping their communities, though a significant plurality of white respondents also feel this way.**

Although protests and marches around racial justice and police brutality were more prevalent during the summer than late fall of 2020, survey respondents report similar levels of engagement on this issue from August to December: a majority (63%) of Wave 3 respondents report they have given a great deal (33%) or some (30%) attention to recent conversations around policing and racial justice, a similar finding to Wave 1 (36% great deal of attention, 31% some attention). Black (65%) and Hispanic (65%) respondents are somewhat more likely to self-report they have been paying attention to these conversations than are white respondents (59%). Black female (68%) and

Hispanic female (68%) respondents are the most likely subgroups by race and gender to report they have been paying attention.

Most (64%) respondents also report they strongly (37%) or somewhat (27%) support the protests around racial justice. Support is highest among Black female (72%), Black male (69%), and Hispanic female (69%) respondents, just as it was in the previous two waves of the 2020 survey. Although a majority (52%) of white male respondents express support for the protests, they are still the least likely race and gender subgroup to do so. While these patterns match with previous survey waves, support has declined slightly, both overall and among race and gender subgroups, from Wave 1 in August. The declines range from three points among white females (from 62% in Wave 1 to 59% in Wave 3), to seven percentage points (among several race and gender subgroups).

Many respondents also feel racial justice is much more important to them now than before these conversations and protests, especially Black respondents and Hispanic female respondents. Almost four-in-ten (39%) Wave 3 respondents—including a majority of Black female (53%) respondents and slightly less than half of Hispanic female (48%) and Black male (44%) respondents—report racial justice is much more important to them now than before the recent conversations and protests. Notably, the proportion of Black female and Hispanic female respondents reporting racial justice is much more important to them now has risen from August to December (up 15 points from 38% in Wave 1 for Black female respondents and up 13 points from 35% in Wave 1 for Hispanic female respondents).

A majority of Black (53%) and Hispanic (53%) respondents in Wave 3 also feel these conversations and protests are having a very or somewhat positive impact on their communities. Although many (40%) white respondents also feel this way, there is also a proportion of them (15%) who feel the conversations and protests are not having any impact on their communities. Almost one-in-five (18%) respondents overall are unsure about the impact of these conversations and protests on their community.

Notably, a significant portion of respondents also continue to be engaged on the issue. More than one-third of Wave 3 respondents report they have been talking about racial justice with their family (38%) or their friends (34%), and about three-in-ten report posting their own thoughts (30%) or sharing other people's posts (29%) about racial justice online or on social media. Some (17%) also report engaging in in-person activities (such as an in-person march, protest, rally, or similar event). Black respondents (21%), and especially Black female respondents (24%), are the most likely to report they have engaged in some type of in-person engagement around racial justice issues.

One-third (33%) of Wave 3 respondents—including 40 percent of Hispanic female respondents—report they would want to attend a racial justice march or protest in person but would not do so because of the coronavirus. Notably, about one-fifth (22%) of respondents—including 26 percent of Black respondents—report they would attend a march or protest in person. However, white respondents (40%) and Hispanic male respondents (40%) are more likely to report they would not be interested in attending a march or protest in person.

From Wave 1 to Wave 3, there is a slight decrease in the proportion of respondents who report they are having conversations with their family (44% in Wave 1 to 38% in Wave 3) or friends (40% to 34%), while similar proportions report having conversations with coworkers (11% in Wave 1 and 10% in Wave 3). Nonetheless, many respondents who have these conversations find them to be very valuable. Fully half (50%) of Wave 3 respondents who are having conversations with their family report they find the conversations *very* valuable. Black female (68%), Black male (60%), and Hispanic female (54%) respondents are the most likely to report these conversations with family are *very* valuable for them personally. Similarly, more than half (52%) of respondents who are having

conversations with friends—including a majority of Black female (57%), Hispanic female (55%), and Black male respondents (53%)—find them *very* valuable.

**More than four-in-ten (41%) respondents report the protests around racial justice and police violence has impacted the way they are thinking about their future education and career goals.**

Many (41%) respondents report that the protests around racial justice and policing have impacted the way they are thinking about their future education and career goals. Black respondents (45%)—especially Black female respondents (46%)—are the most likely to report this is the case, but many Hispanic (41%) and white (38%) respondents also report they are thinking about their future education and career plans differently due to these protests.

**Many respondents continue to see promoting change in different issue areas as an opportunity rather than a burden. Hispanic female respondents are especially likely to feel it is an opportunity to promote change across a variety of issues.**

Almost half of the respondents in the Wave 3 survey strongly agree it is an opportunity rather than a burden to be involved in promoting change on gender equality (47%) or racial justice issues (46%). More than four-in-ten respondents strongly agree it is an opportunity to be involved in promoting change on voting rights (45%), equal rights for LGBTQ people (43%), climate change/protecting the environment (41%), and on immigrants and immigration rights (40%). A lower portion say this regarding gun violence (31%).

Female respondents (52%) are significantly more likely than male respondents (41%) to strongly agree promoting change on gender equality is an opportunity. Hispanic female (57%) and Black female respondents (53%) are also much more likely than their male peers in the same racial subgroup to feel this way (43% Hispanic male, 38% Black male). In a similar vein, about half of Black (49%) and Hispanic (49%) respondents, strongly agree it is an opportunity to be involved in promoting change on racial justice issues, while four-in-ten (40%) white respondents also strongly agree this is the case.

Looking at additional differences by gender, female respondents (49%) are also more likely than male respondents (41%) to strongly agree it is an opportunity to be engaged in promoting change on voting rights issues. This is also true for LGBTQ rights, where just under half (46%) of female respondents strongly agree being engaged on change is an opportunity, compared to just under four-in-ten (38%) male respondents.

In addition to the differences previously discussed around racial justice, there are also differences by racial subgroups in their perception of the opportunity to be involved in change on gun violence, immigration rights, and climate change. Black (35%) and Hispanic (32%) respondents are more likely to strongly agree it is an opportunity to be engaged in promoting change around gun violence than are white respondents (26%). Hispanic respondents (49%) are more likely than Black (39%) or white (32%) respondents to strongly agree it is an opportunity to be engaged in promoting change around immigration rights. Hispanic respondents (47%) are also more likely than Black (39%) or white (37%) respondents to strongly agree it is an opportunity to be engaged in promoting change on issues related to climate change.

Notably, Hispanic female respondents are the most likely to strongly agree being involved in promoting change is an opportunity across every issue area. In many issue areas, such as gender equality, racial justice, and voting rights, Black females are a close second, but this is not always the case: when it comes to immigration rights, the proportion of Hispanic females (56%) who strongly

agree it is an opportunity to be engaged in promoting change on the issue is 15-percentage-points higher than the second most likely groups (a tie between Hispanic male and Black female respondents, 41% each). White male respondents are often—but not always—the least likely to strongly agree being engaged in promoting change is an opportunity in any given issue area.

The proportion of Hispanic female respondents in Wave 3 strongly agreeing it is an opportunity to be involved in promoting change in each issue area is very similar when compared to the Wave 1 data. Thus, while Hispanic female respondents have largely remained consistent in viewing the possibility to be engaged in promoting change as an opportunity, there have been changes across waves among other race and gender subgroups, and generally the proportion of respondents who strongly agree being engaged in promoting change is an opportunity has dropped slightly across waves. The consistency of responses from Hispanic female respondents suggests many in this group are likely to continue to strongly agree that being engaged in promoting change in these issue areas is an opportunity rather than a burden.

**Most (68%) respondents ages 18-21 report they are registered to vote. Of those registered, the vast majority (79%) report voting in the 2020 presidential election. Black female respondents (87%) are the race and gender subgroup most likely to report voting, while Black male respondents (69%) are the least likely.**

A majority (68%) of Wave 3 respondents age 18 or older self-report that they are registered to vote (the survey did not ask about citizenship status or eligibility to register to vote). White male respondents (57%) are slightly less likely than respondents of other race and gender subgroups to report they are registered to vote.

Of those who report they are registered to vote, almost four-in-five (79%) self-report that they voted in the 2020 presidential election. Female respondents (83%) are somewhat more likely to report they voted than are male respondents (74%), and there are differences by gender among Black and Hispanic respondents. Black female respondents (87%) are the race and gender subgroup most likely to report they voted, while Black male respondents (69%) are the least likely. Although it is somewhat smaller, there is also a noticeable difference in the proportion of Hispanic female (80%) and Hispanic male (74%) respondents who report they voted. Although they are the least likely to report being registered, eight-in-ten (80%) white male respondents who are registered to vote report they did so, essentially equivalent to the proportion of white female respondents (83%) who report they voted.

**The 2020 presidential election has also increased many (43%) respondents' desire to be engaged in campaigns or campaigning for social change in the future. Black respondents (50%) are the most likely to report increased interest in campaigning for social change in the future due to the 2020 presidential election.**

Many (43%) respondents report their interest in campaigning for change in the future has greatly (21%) or somewhat (22%) increased as a result of the 2020 presidential election. Black respondents (50%) are the most likely to report their interest has increased, although sizeable proportions of Hispanic (43%) and white (37%) respondents also feel this way. However, some (16%) respondents report the election has decreased their interest in future campaigning. An additional one-fifth (19%) of respondents report the election has not impacted their interest in engaging in future campaigns, although this feeling is more muted among Black respondents (12%) than Hispanic (21%) or white (24%) respondents. The 2020 presidential election has clearly stirred an interest in many respondents to be engaged in campaigning for social change in the future.

### ***HIGH SCHOOL PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES***

**Many 2020 respondents (43%) report feeling that high school is preparing or prepared them to be successful in their future work or career.**

Many (43%) of the respondents across all three waves of surveys in 2020 report that high school has prepared them to be successful at their future job or career extremely (21%) or very (22%) well. Black male respondents (50%) are the most likely to feel high school has prepared them well, while white female respondents (35%) are the least likely; response levels for other race and gender subgroups are similar to the proportions overall.

**Some respondents report feeling that their thoughts and opinions are (or were) often solicited by their high school teachers and administrators. However, only about half of respondents report that their opinions are (or were) respected by teachers (55%) or administrators (49%), while less than half (47%) report their opinions can (or could) influence what happens in the classroom or school.**

A slight majority (55%) of respondents strongly (26%) or somewhat (29%) agree that *in my high school, student voices, opinions, and concerns [are/were respected] by teachers in the school*. Almost half (49%) also agree that their voices, opinions, and concerns are (or were) respected by high school administrators. However, less than half (47%) agree that student opinions and concerns affect (or affected) what happens in the high school. The only notable difference between race and gender subgroups is a 10-percentage point difference in the proportion of white male (54%) and white female (44%) respondents who agree their opinions and concerns are respected by administrators.

In general, less than half of respondents report that their high school teachers and administrators frequently solicit (or solicited) input and opinions from students like them, as the following table illustrates:

**Table 1: For each item below, please tell us how often you feel your high school [teachers/administrators—for example, the principal] [ask/asked] for input or opinions from students like you.**

Asked for input on:	Teachers	Administrators
Content for a specific class	54%	44%
General curriculum requirements	45	40
Academic schedule	42	36
Discipline policies for the school	42	39
Changes to extracurricular activities	39	35
Grading policies for the school as a whole	39	38
Grading policies in a specific class	37	34

*\*Table entries represent the percentage of overall respondents answering All of the time or Often. Items are ranked from greatest to least by Teachers.*

However, there are some differences by race. For example, white respondents are less likely to report teachers ask for input from students like them on the academic schedule (34%), discipline policies for the school (36%), changes to extracurricular activities (33%), or grading policies for the school (31%). Similarly, white respondents are also less likely to report administrators ask for input from students like them on the academic schedule (30%). Notably, the proportion of Black and Hispanic

respondents who report their teachers or administrators ask for input from students like them is the same or greater as the proportion of white respondents for every item.

While most respondents report they are (or were) able to frequently or often have input on their high school through surveys from teachers (60%) or administrators (55%) asking for their feedback, there is also evidence that some respondents are willing to take the initiative and proactively engage someone to seek change in their high school. For example, slightly more than half (54%) of respondents report they frequently (23%) or sometimes (31%) go to a teacher and ask them to do something differently. A similar proportion (53%) report they frequently (22%) or sometimes (30%) go to a school counselor or advisor and ask them to do something differently. Half (50%) report they frequently (21%) or sometimes (29%) go to the school administration and ask them to do something differently. Additionally, almost half (49%) also report they frequently (22%) or sometimes (27%) go to the school board and ask them to do something differently. However, once again white respondents are less likely than their Black or Hispanic peers to report they are able to have input on things at their high school through these various mechanisms.

**CONCLUSION**

This survey is the third in a series of surveys GSSR is conducting to track how Black, Hispanic, and white youth from lower-income households are being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic—especially their attitudes and feelings around their future career and life goals. The next survey, which will take place in the first quarter of 2021, will once again help provide further insight into how these young people are adapting to an unprecedented global phenomenon few could imagine having to navigate.

**APPENDIX: ONLINE SURVEY METHODOLOGY**

GSSR conducted four separate nationwide online surveys among young people ages 15- to 21-years-old, with the first survey conducted in September 2019 prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the second survey conducted during the pandemic in August 2020, the third also conducted during the pandemic in September 2020, and the fourth, also during the pandemic, conducted in December 2020. Parents or guardians of youth under age 18-years-old provided written consent prior to minors participating in the surveys.

In the surveys, Black and Hispanic respondents of all income levels were eligible to complete the survey. By contrast, white respondents were eligible to complete the survey if they self-identify as growing up in a household with an annual income of less than \$75,000 before taxes. White respondents unsure of their annual household income were eligible to complete the survey if they report growing up in a *very low-income*, *low-income*, or *middle-income* household.

*Pre-COVID-19 Survey (September 2019)*

GSSR conducted a nationwide online survey among 2,638 young people ages 15- to 21-years-old from September 16<sup>th</sup> to September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019. Respondents include:

- 370 white females, 386 white males
- 486 Black females, 451 Black males
- 499 Hispanic females, 398 Hispanic males
- 528 youth ages 15-16
- 676 youth ages 17-18
- 1,434 youth ages 19-21

Among Black respondents, eight percent report growing up in *very low-income* households, 24 percent report growing up in *low-income* households, 50 percent report growing up in *middle-income* households, and 15 percent report growing up in *high-income* (11%) or *very high-income* (4%) households. Seventy-five percent (75%) report growing up in households with an annual income of less than \$75,000 before taxes, and 18 percent report growing up in households with an annual income of \$75,000 or more before taxes (7% are unsure).

Among Hispanic respondents, seven percent report growing up in *very low-income* households, 25 percent report growing up in *low-income* households, 52 percent report growing up in *middle-income* households, and 14 percent report growing up in *high-income* (12%) or *very high-income* (2%) households. Seventy-seven percent (77%) report growing up in households with an annual income of less than \$75,000 before taxes and 15 percent report growing up in households with an annual income of \$75,000 or more before taxes (8% are unsure).

Among white respondents, ten percent report growing up in *very low-income* households, 28 percent report growing up in *low-income* households, and 56 percent report growing up in *middle-income* households. Ninety percent (90%) report growing up in households with an annual income of less than \$75,000 before taxes. The remaining ten percent of white respondents are unsure of their specific annual household income, but nevertheless report growing up in *very low-income*, *low-income*, or *middle-income* households.

The margin of error for n=2,638 respondents is +/- 1.9 percentage points and is higher for subgroups. Please note that due to rounding, a sum may appear to be one point more or less than its parts.

COVID-19 Survey Wave 1 (August 2020)

GSSR conducted a nationwide online survey among 1,305 young people ages 15- to 21-years-old from August 8<sup>th</sup> to August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Respondents include:

- 209 white females, 204 white males
- 203 Black females, 205 Black males
- 204 Hispanic females, 220 Hispanic males
- 272 youth ages 15-16
- 390 youth ages 17-18
- 643 youth ages 19-21

Among Black respondents, seven percent report growing up in *very low-income* households, 16 percent report growing up in *low-income* households, 54 percent report growing up in *middle-income* households, and 15 percent report growing up in *high-income* (12%) or *very high-income* (3%) households. Seventy percent (70%) report growing up in households with an annual income of less than \$75,000 before taxes and 18 percent report growing up in households with an annual income of \$75,000 or more before taxes (12% are unsure).

Among Hispanic respondents, six percent report growing up in *very low-income* households, 20 percent report growing up in *low-income* households, 59 percent report growing up in *middle-income* households, and ten percent report growing up in *high-income* (7%) or *very high-income* (3%) households. Sixty-six percent (66%) report growing up in households with an annual income of less than \$75,000 before taxes and 23 percent report growing up in households with an annual income of \$75,000 or more before taxes (11% are unsure).

Among white respondents, ten percent report growing up in *very low-income* households, 24 percent report growing up in *low-income* households, and 53 percent report growing up in *middle-income* households. Eighty-six percent (86%) report growing up in households with an annual income of less than \$75,000 before taxes. The remaining 14 percent of white respondents are unsure of their specific annual household income, but nevertheless report growing up in *very low-income*, *low-income*, or *middle-income* households.

The margin of error for n=1,305 respondents is +/- 2.7 percentage points and is higher for subgroups. Please note that due to rounding, a sum may appear to be one point more or less than its parts.

COVID-19 Survey Wave 2 (September 2020)

GSSR conducted a nationwide online survey among 1,272 young people ages 15- to 21-years-old from September 22<sup>nd</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Respondents include:

- 209 white females, 207 white males
- 206 Black females, 206 Black males
- 208 Hispanic females, 203 Hispanic males
- 345 youth ages 15-16
- 264 youth ages 17-18
- 663 youth ages 19-21

Among Black respondents, nine percent report growing up in *very low-income* households, 19 percent report growing up in *low-income* households, 49 percent report growing up in *middle-income* households, and 16 percent report growing up in *high-income* (12%) or *very high-income* (4%) households. Seventy percent (70%) report growing up in households with an annual income of less

than \$75,000 before taxes and 20 percent report growing up in households with an annual income of \$75,000 or more before taxes (10% are unsure).

Among Hispanic respondents, six percent report growing up in *very low-income* households, 21 percent report growing up in *low-income* households, 53 percent report growing up in *middle-income* households, and 13 percent report growing up in *high-income* (11%) or *very high-income* (2%) households. Sixty-seven percent (67%) report growing up in households with an annual income of less than \$75,000 before taxes and 20 percent report growing up in households with an annual income of \$75,000 or more before taxes (13% are unsure).

Among white respondents, eight percent report growing up in *very low-income* households, 25 percent report growing up in *low-income* households, and 56 percent report growing up in *middle-income* households. Eighty-five percent (85%) report growing up in households with an annual income of less than \$75,000 before taxes. The remaining 15 percent of white respondents are unsure of their specific annual household income, but nevertheless report growing up in *very low-income*, *low-income*, or *middle-income* households.

The margin of error for n=1,272 respondents is +/- 2.7 percentage points and is higher for subgroups. Please note that due to rounding, a sum may appear to be one point more or less than its parts.

#### COVID-19 Survey Wave 3 (December 2020)

GSSR conducted a nationwide online survey among 1,203 young people ages 15- to 21-years-old from December 14<sup>th</sup> to December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Respondents include:

- 205 white females, 196 white males
- 206 Black females, 184 Black males
- 204 Hispanic females, 184 Hispanic males
- 254 youth ages 15-16
- 378 youth ages 17-18
- 571 youth ages 19-21

Among Black respondents, eight percent report growing up in *very low-income* households, 20 percent report growing up in *low-income* households, 48 percent report growing up in *middle-income* households, and 17 percent report growing up in *high-income* (13%) or *very high-income* (3%) households. Seventy-one percent (71%) report growing up in households with an annual income of less than \$75,000 before taxes and 16 percent report growing up in households with an annual income of \$75,000 or more before taxes (13% are unsure).

Among Hispanic respondents, eight percent report growing up in *very low-income* households, 21 percent report growing up in *low-income* households, 55 percent report growing up in *middle-income* households, and 11 percent report growing up in *high-income* (8%) or *very high-income* (3%) households. Seventy percent (70%) report growing up in households with an annual income of less than \$75,000 before taxes and 18 percent report growing up in households with an annual income of \$75,000 or more before taxes (12% are unsure).

Among white respondents, 14 percent report growing up in *very low-income* households, 25 percent report growing up in *low-income* households, and 48 percent report growing up in *middle-income* households. Eighty-four percent (84%) report growing up in households with an annual income of less than \$75,000 before taxes. The remaining 16 percent of white respondents are unsure of their specific annual household income, but nevertheless report growing up in *very low-income*, *low-income*, or *middle-income* households.

---

The margin of error for n=1,203 respondents is +/- 2.8 percentage points and is higher for subgroups. Please note that due to rounding, a sum may appear to be one point more or less than its parts.