

## Kids & COVID-19: Canadian children are done with school from home, fear falling behind, and miss their friends

*More than half of children 10-17 years old say what they miss most during the shutdown are their friends*

**May 11, 2020** – Canada's children have held a unique position in the COVID-19 outbreak. While kids are statistically the [lowest risk population](#), they have also been especially vulnerable to the effects of the pandemic's resulting shutdown.

Kept home from school, trying to learn online, and worried about the financial and health risks to their parents, children have been anything but buffered from the realities of the last two months.

Are the kids alright?

A new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute canvassed children aged 10 to 17 across the country about their thoughts, expectations, and concerns about these unprecedented times.

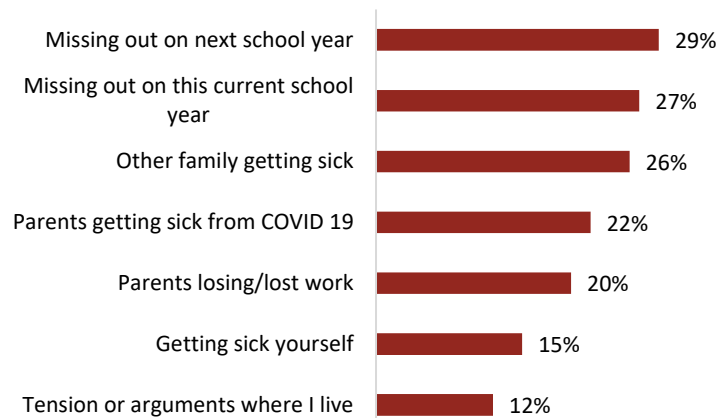
The most common word they use to describe how they've been feeling recently is "bored", chosen by 71 per cent. Significant segments (41%) also say they feel "normal". Older kids are twice as likely as younger ones to say they feel "angry" compared to those aged 10 to 15, and half as likely to say they feel "good".

When it comes to online classes, most say they're keeping up (75%) but are largely unmotivated (60%) and disliking the arrangement (57%). It stands to reason then, that one of the biggest worries for Canada's young people includes missing out on school. Three-in-ten (29%) children identify this as their most major concern, a number that rises among teenagers 16 and 17 years of age. Another major fear: that parents or other family members may get sick.

### More Key Findings:

- Half of children across all age groups say it's their friends they miss the most (54%) as a result of their isolation, while 16 per cent say they miss extracurricular activities like sports or clubs.

**Percentage of Canadian children ages 10 – 17 who say each is a 'big worry' for them (n=650)**



### **METHODOLOGY:**

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from May 1 – 4, 2020 among a representative randomized sample of 650 Canadian children whose parents are members of [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

### **CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

- Asked how they're spending their time in isolation, two similar activities rise to the top of the list: watching movies and TV/streaming media content (88%) and playing video games (74%).
- Older teenagers (ages 16-17) are more likely to be spending isolation staying in touch with their peers, with three-quarters both texting/calling friends (76%) and spending time on social media (75%).
- Asked how they would feel if they had to return to the classroom in the next month, kids are more likely to say they're looking forward to it (36%) than not (26%). That said, nearly four-in-ten (38%) feel just "okay" about the prospect.

### **About ARI**

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

### **INDEX:**

#### **Part One: How are kids holding up?**

- **Ennui is the dominant emotion**
- **Technology takes over during isolation**
- **Friends are what they miss the most**
- **One-in-four say friendships have deteriorated**

#### **Part Two: What's worrying them?**

- **Half are at least a little worried about becoming sick**
- **Kids most concerned about lost school**

#### **Part Three: Homeschooling Blues**

- **Most keeping up, fewer enjoying school from home**
- **Parents trying to help, but many need more assistance**
- **Most at least "okay" with the prospect of returning to class in May**

---

### **CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

## **Ennui is the dominant emotion**

As the COVID-19 pandemic has spread, the lives of most Canadians have changed. Canada’s kids have been isolated from friends and extended family and held home from school [for nearly two months](#).

The Angus Reid Institute decided to go straight to these children to better understand what their hopes and worries are amid the unprecedented shutdown. 650 children were surveyed between the ages of 10 and 17– with the consent of their parents. For more about the age distribution and other demographics, please [view detailed tables](#).

As they did in an earlier survey of grown ups, ARI researchers began by asking the children what words they would use to describe how they’ve been feeling the most in recent weeks. While adults expressed the burdens of worry and anxiety, children primarily and intensely report feeling bored.

### **Related: As COVID-19 affects mental, financial health, who fares better; who is worse?**

Indeed, seven-in-ten expressed feelings of ennui, while the next most experienced feeling was normality. 16- and 17- year-olds are more likely than younger kids to say they are “lonely” or “angry”, while 10- to 12-year-olds are most likely to say they are “good” or “happy”:

<b>How have you been feeling the last couple of weeks? (Up to three responses selected) (All kids)</b>				
	Kids total (n=650)	Age of Child		
		10 – 12 (n=216)	13 – 15 (n=239)	16 – 17 (n=194)
<b>Bored</b>	71%	71%	74%	68%
<b>Normal</b>	41%	42%	38%	42%
<b>Lonely</b>	33%	29%	31%	38%
<b>Good</b>	30%	41%	29%	21%
<b>Sad</b>	17%	16%	16%	19%
<b>Happy</b>	15%	20%	14%	11%
<b>Hopeful</b>	13%	12%	15%	13%
<b>Angry</b>	11%	8%	9%	17%
<b>Grateful</b>	11%	9%	13%	10%
<b>Scared</b>	10%	10%	10%	10%
<b>Energetic</b>	7%	10%	9%	3%
<b>Hopeless</b>	7%	7%	5%	10%

#### **CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

**Technology takes over during isolation**

To fill the hours outside of schoolwork and fight (apparently unsuccessfully) this overwhelming boredom, most are turning to screen time. Canadian children across all age groups canvassed report watching TV, streaming services, or YouTube. Video games and texting are also high up on the list of things to do, with variations by age. Teenagers are more likely to be spending time on social media, while younger kids are more likely to be playing – in decidedly more low-tech ways:

<b>Now thinking about life outside of schoolwork, what are you doing to fill your time? (Select all that apply) (All kids)</b>				
	Kids total (n=650)	Age of Child		
		10 – 12 (n=216)	13 – 15 (n=248)	16 – 17 (n=194)
Watching TV/Netflix/YouTube etc.	88%	93%	85%	85%
Video games	74%	77%	79%	65%
Texting/calling friends	65%	56%	66%	76%
Spending time on social media	58%	33%	67%	75%
Going for walks	55%	64%	52%	49%
Playing with pets	55%	61%	52%	51%
Reading/drawing/music/hobbies	53%	56%	49%	53%
Playing with siblings	45%	60%	41%	33%
Just hanging out	42%	43%	38%	45%
Playing board games	26%	37%	21%	18%

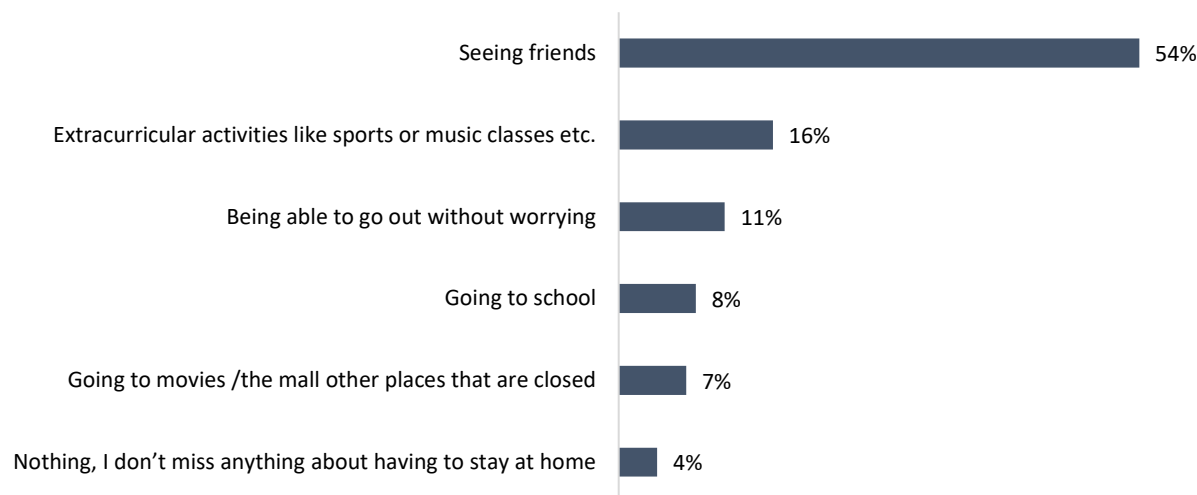
**Friends are what they miss the most**

The focus of societal impacts of the COVID-19 shutdown – such as loneliness and isolation – have understandably centred on Canada’s aged population, in many cases confined to their homes with few visitors – or worse – in long term care facilities, unable to see friends or family.

But children are feeling the solitude as well. Indeed, as noted in the table above, loneliness is the third most-used word kids 10 – 17 use to describe how they’ve been feeling in recent weeks. When asked what they miss most about the lives they were living as recently as two months ago, they keenly feel the lack of time with friends.

Just over half (54%) say this is the worst part about being stuck at home. Missed extracurricular activities run a distant second in terms of things children pine for. One-in-ten (11%) say they just miss being able to go out without worrying:

**What do you miss the most now that you have to stay home?  
(All kids, n=650)**



**Related: Canadians most excited to hug friends, eat out, go back to work when COVID-19 recedes**

Responses to this question are relatively similar across each age group, although older teenagers are much more likely to say that they look forward to being able to go outside without worrying about becoming sick or getting others sick:

<b>What do you miss the most now that you have to stay home? (All kids)</b>				
	Kids total (n=650)	Age of Child		
		10 – 12 (n=216)	13 - 15 (n=248)	16 – 17 (n=194)
Seeing friends	54%	58%	50%	53%
Extracurricular activities like sports or music classes etc.	16%	11%	23%	13%
Being able to go out without worrying	11%	9%	6%	18%
Going to school	8%	6%	9%	7%
Going to movies /the mall other places that are closed	7%	8%	7%	4%
Nothing, I don't miss anything about having to stay at home	4%	5%	4%	3%

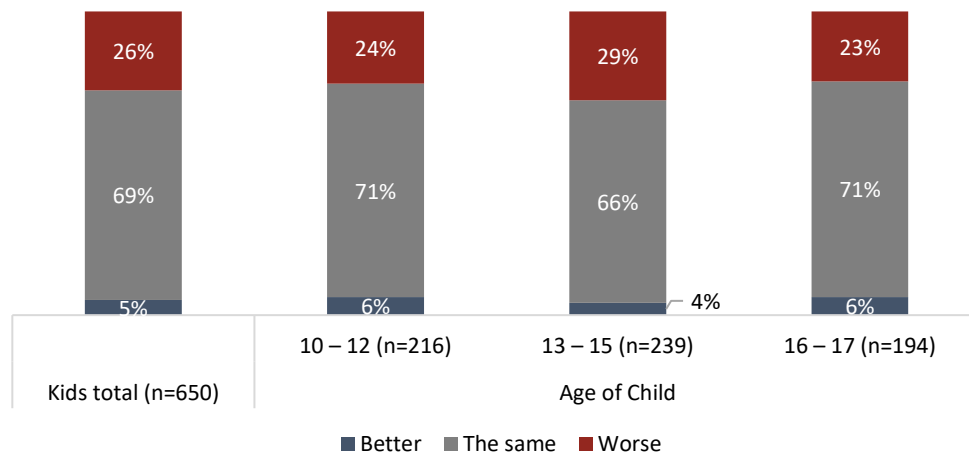
**CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

**One-in-four say friendships have deteriorated**

As one might expect, a significant portion of Canadian kids say relationships with their friends have worsened amidst the stay-at-home orders. Despite staying in touch through mobile communication and social media, one-in-four (26%) say that their friendships have been negatively impacted:

**Would you say that things with your friends are better, the same, or worse than they were since you've had to stay home?  
(All kids)**



**Part Two: What’s worrying them?**

**Half are worried about becoming sick**

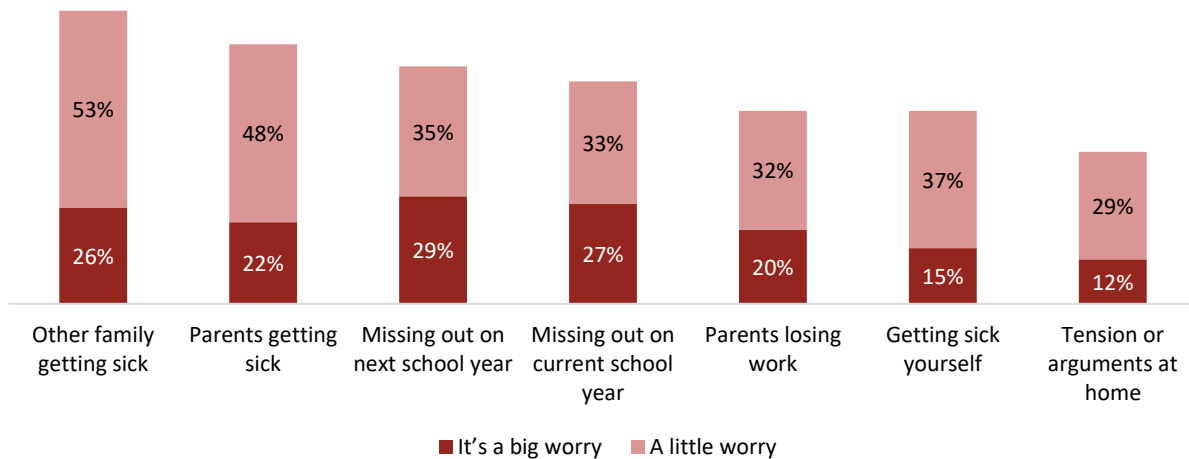
While adults in this country have counted personal health, lost work and lost income among their greatest fears through these weeks, it should come as little surprise that children worry too: about lost learning time, about their own health and about their parents’ circumstances.

Indeed, while half are at least a little worried about becoming sick from COVID-19 (despite early conclusions the infection appears to attack children less frequently and less aggressively), they are much more concerned about the risk of infection to other members of their family:

**CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

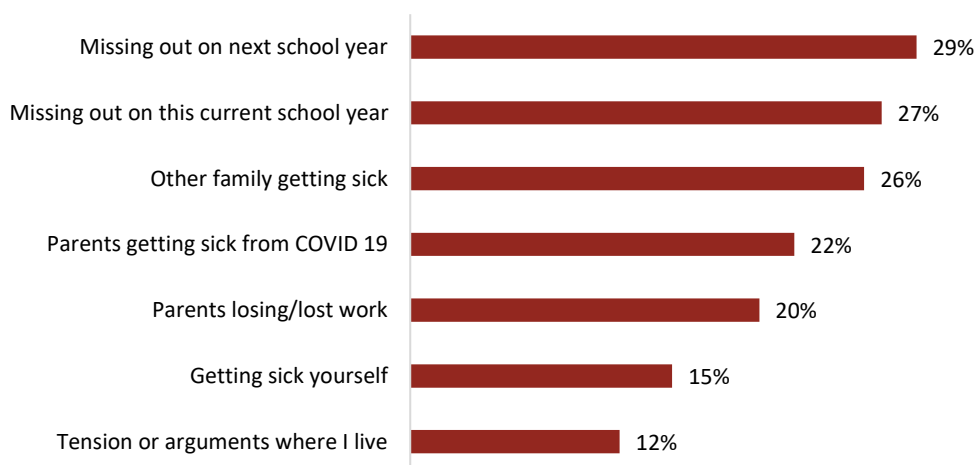
Canadian children 10 – 17 who say each is a 'big worry' or a 'little worry' for them (n=650)



**Kids most concerned about lost school**

But when the analysis narrows in on what worries children aged 10-17 the most, uncertainty surrounding school appears to be paramount. Asked about their “big worries” (as opposed to little ones) three-in-ten (29%) put the prospect of missing out on more school next year at the top of the list, just ahead of concerns about this current school year (27%):

Canadian children 10 – 17 who say each is a 'big worry' for them (n=650)



**CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

Big worries about losing class time this year and next are higher among teenagers, whose graduation or preparation for graduation are affected. Across all age groups, fear that their parents or other relatives may become sick with COVID-19 also represents a big worry:

Canadian children 10 – 17 who say each is a 'big worry' for them (All kids)				
	Kids total (n=650)	Age of Child		
		10 – 12 (n=216)	13 – 15 (n=239)	16 – 17 (n=194)
Missing out on next school year	29%	23%	30%	35%
Missing out on this current school year	27%	17%	30%	34%
Other family getting sick	26%	26%	23%	28%
Parents getting sick	22%	21%	24%	21%
Parents losing work	20%	14%	23%	22%
Getting sick yourself	15%	15%	13%	15%
Tension or arguments at home	12%	9%	12%	13%

### Part Three: Homeschooling Blues

#### Most keeping up, fewer enjoying school from home

The Spring term of the 2020 school year will be memorable for classrooms abruptly moved into living rooms, bedrooms, and basements, with the main thread of connection to curriculum, classmates and teachers being an internet connection. Indeed, more than four-in-five children surveyed by ARI say they are going to school online ([see detailed tables here](#)).

Among those “going to school online” most (75%) say they feel they are keeping up. That doesn’t, however, mean that they’re enjoying it. In fact, close to six-in-ten (57%) say that they dislike it, and the same number say they feel unmotivated (60%).

---

#### CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

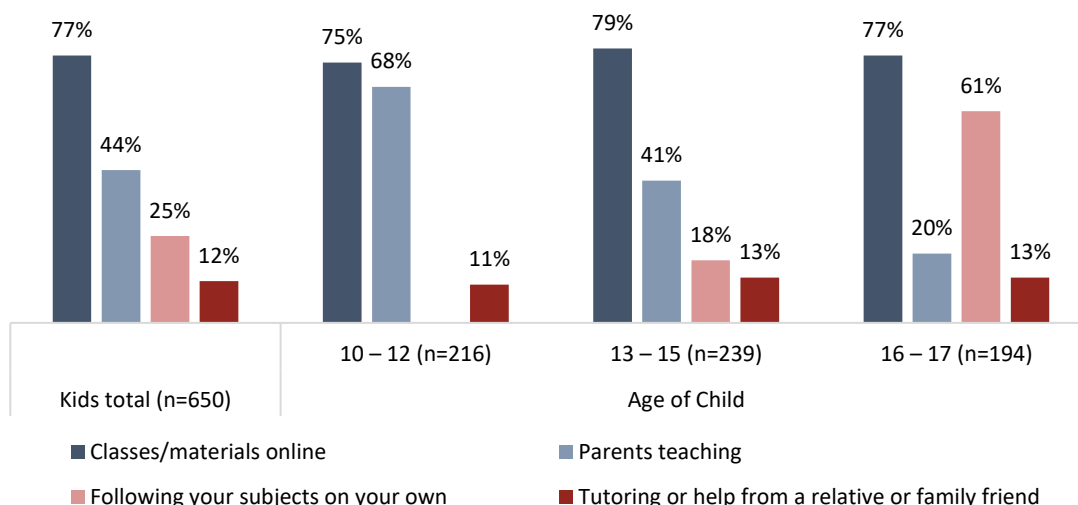


How has your online schooling been going so far? (Only those doing online school asked)				
	Kids "attending" school online total (n=536)	Age of Child		
		10 – 12 (n=187)	13 – 15 (n=192)	16 – 17 (n=158)
<b>Keeping up or Falling behind?</b>				
Keeping up	75%	79%	70%	75%
Falling behind	25%	21%	30%	25%
<b>Enjoying it or Disliking it?</b>				
Enjoying it	43%	51%	35%	43%
Disliking it	57%	49%	65%	57%
<b>Are you Motivated or Unmotivated</b>				
Motivated	40%	46%	34%	41%
Unmotivated	60%	54%	66%	59%
<b>Are you Busy or Not that busy?</b>				
Busy	37%	29%	37%	46%
Not that busy	63%	70%	63%	54%

**Parents trying to help, but many kids want more assistance**

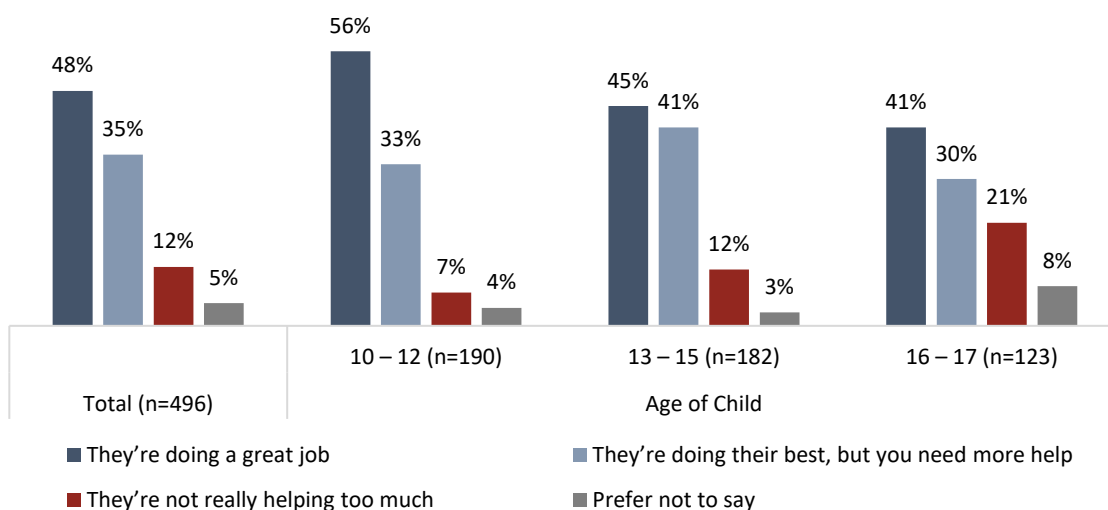
As for parental assistance, younger students are more likely to be receiving help, while grown up involvement drops off as age increases:

**And how else are you learning while you're at home? (All kids)**



While the intensity of parental involvement may drop off among older students, the grown ups are nonetheless being relied upon for at least an occasional nudge. Three-quarters (76%) of children say that they are asking parents for help. But reviews about that assistance are mixed. Half (48%) say that they are getting great help, but one-in-three (35%) acknowledge that while their parents may be trying their best, it's not quite the assistance these young learners need:

**And how are your parents doing so far in helping you with your school work? (Among kids with parents helping)**



**CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl

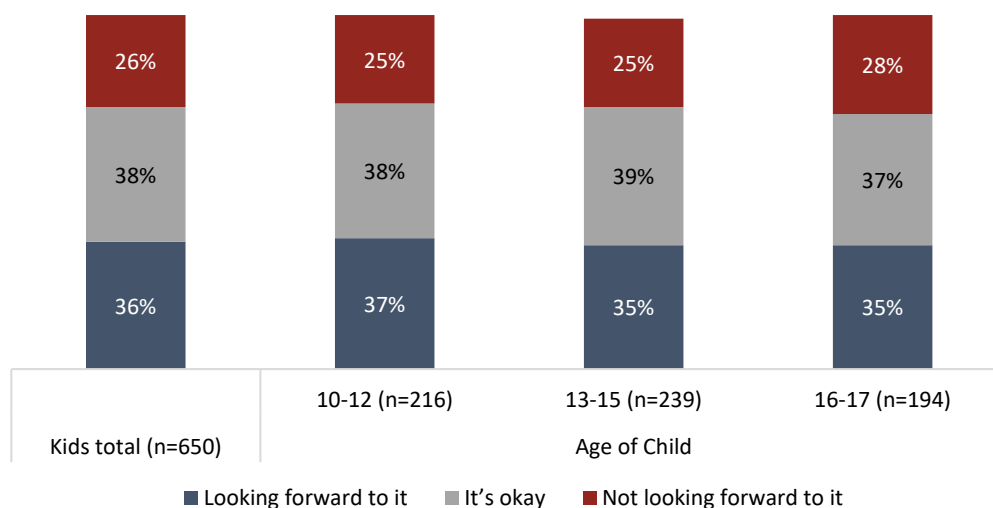
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

**Most at least “okay” with the prospect of returning to class in May**

Provincial approaches for returning students to school are not uniform. In [Quebec](#), children in daycare or elementary school outside of Montreal are scheduled to return on May 11, with the Montreal area following suit on May 25. In [Alberta](#), on the other hand, classes are cancelled for the remainder of the year. [British Columbia](#) announced last week that it will begin to open some schools on a voluntary basis as early as this week in some districts, while planning a full reopening for September.

Asked a hypothetical question about how they would feel about going back in the coming weeks, just over one-in-three from each age group say they’re looking forward to it, while near-pluralities across each age group offer the quintessential “it’s okay”. For one-quarter, the prospect is not something they welcome:

**What if you had to go back to school in the next month. How would you feel about that? (All kids)**



**Notes on Methodology**

The Angus Reid Institute interviewed 650 children whose parents are members of the Angus Reid Forum from households across the country. Interviewees were drawn from key demographic groups such as official language spoken, household income and education levels and household composition. Parents and/or guardians were asked first if they have children between the ages of 10 and 17, and then if they consented to having their child participate in the survey. The data are intended to provide a national snapshot of children’s views, experiences and opinions on the subject of COVID-19. The questionnaire is [available here](#).

*For detailed results by age, [click here](#).*

**CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)