

## Thinking of the children: Two-thirds of parents feel kids' well-being an afterthought in pandemic decisions

Seven-in-ten say remote learning was hard on their family, one-in-three children had difficulty with studies

**March 21, 2022** – The past two years have proven an immense challenge for parents, as many tried their hand at math, science, and social studies for the first time in decades, hoping to offer some at-home guidance for their household student. Others attempted to balance childcare arrangements and work, leading to frustration and stress.

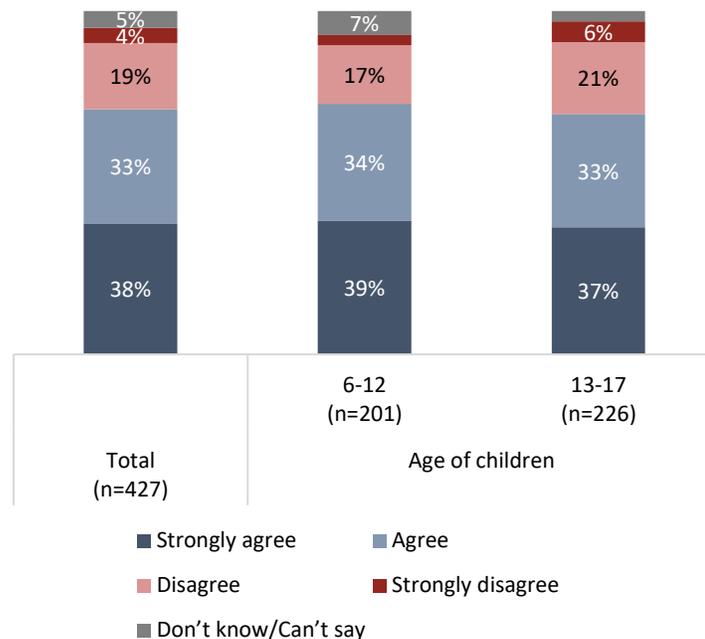
A new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute, in partnership with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, sheds light on these experiences for both parents and children.

Parents are clear – remote learning has been a challenge for their households. Seven-in-ten parents with children between the ages of six and 17 say this. This, as three-quarters say that their children have transitioned to more screen time and less social time compared to the pre-pandemic period.

For one-in-three, scholastic performance has also been an issue. This group of parents – 36 per cent – say their child's performance in school has worsened over the past two years. Half (49%) say their child has maintained a similar level of performance, while 14 per cent have reportedly excelled.

Provincial governments across the country and their handling of schools have been a source of much controversy throughout the pandemic as students have been in and out of classrooms depending on the COVID-19 situation. Parents are more likely to feel like decision makers have missed the mark over the last two years. Two-thirds (67%) say policy makers are not considering their children's well-being enough. This sentiment is stronger among parents with younger school-aged children (72%) than those with teenagers (63%) or children five and under (67%).

### Agree vs. disagree - "Remote learning has been hard on my family" (Among parents with children aged 6-17 in household)



#### **METHODOLOGY:**

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from March 1 – 4, 2022 among a representative randomized sample of 2,550 Canadian adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2 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, President:** 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)

The good news is that parents are – despite the difficulties – twice as likely to agree that their child is coming through the pandemic well (66%) than they are to disagree (29%). A regular schedule at school and a return to normalcy would be much appreciated by many, as two-thirds of parents (65%) say the pandemic has been a significant or severe disruption to their lives. Parents are nearly twice as likely as those without kids (30% to 17%) to say that they have tested positive for COVID-19 since March 2020. Further, they are also more likely to say that their mental health has worsened during this time than those without children in their household (61% vs 53%).

### More Key Findings:

- Those living with children are more likely (65%) than those without (55%) to say the pandemic has brought ‘severe’ or ‘significant’ disruption to their life in the last two years.
- A significant minority (33%) of parents say they don’t feel like they are surrounded by a good support network. This as two-in-five (44%) of those living with children in their household feel like their relationships with friends and family has worsened since March 2020.
- While half (50%) of those living with children in their households feel the last two years have been more bad than good times, one-quarter (25%) of those living with children five and under disagree. That includes one-in-20 who would describe the pandemic as ‘great years’.

### 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: Those living with kids report higher rates of COVID infection

#### Part Two: How (parents say) kids have fared over the two years

- **School a challenge for one-in-three**
- **More time on screens, less time with friends**
- **Teenage sleep problems, difficulty coping overall for nearly half**

#### Part Three: But are the parents alright?

- **Majority of parents feel policy makers aren’t thinking of the children**
- **Younger parents much more likely to have had a good or great two years**
- **Despite difficulties, majority say their children coming through the pandemic well**

---

### CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 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)

## Part One: Those living with kids report higher rates of COVID infection

In addition to the challenges of caring for and living with children during the pandemic – travails that included school and daycare closures, balancing home offices with home schoolrooms, and worrying about the mental health of children separated from their peers – those living with children also report higher rates of COVID-19 infection.

Three-in-ten from households with someone under the age of 18 say they personally caught COVID-19 at some point in the last two years. That’s nearly double the rate (17%) of respondents without children at home. Those living with younger children say they were infected at a higher rate than those living with teenagers:

| Here’s a list of different ways that COVID-19 has impacted many Canadians over the last two years. Which, if any, did you experience? |                    |                            |                 |                        |                 |                  |
|---|--------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
|   | Total<br>(n=2,550) | Kids under 18 in household |                 | Age of child           |                 |                  |
|   |                    | Yes<br>(n=662)             | No<br>(n=1,888) | 5 and under<br>(n=185) | 6-12<br>(n=222) | 13-17<br>(n=255) |
| Other close friend or family member infected  | 54%                | 61%                        | 52%             | 72%                    | 53%             | 61%              |
| Immediate family member infected  | 36%                | 44%                        | 33%             | 49%                    | 41%             | 43%              |
| Personally infected with COVID-19   | 20%                | 30%                        | 17%             | 33%                    | 35%             | 24%              |

## Part Two: How (parents say) kids have fared over the two years

To say the least, the pandemic has been disruptive for parents and their school-aged children. Throughout the last two years, schools shifted to online learning for weeks at a time at the direction of governments trying to prevent the spread of COVID-19, while enriching extracurricular activities have often been the victim of restrictions. Even when schools have been open, kids and parents were often subjected to yo-yoing between in-person and online learning when there were positive cases in the classroom or outbreaks at school occurred.

### School a challenge for one-in-three

Little wonder then, that parents are more likely to report their children to be struggling rather succeeding at school, compared to before the pandemic. One-third (36%) of parents say their kids are not performing as well at school, while half (49%) say things are about the same. Few parents (14%) say their children have experienced scholastic improvement:

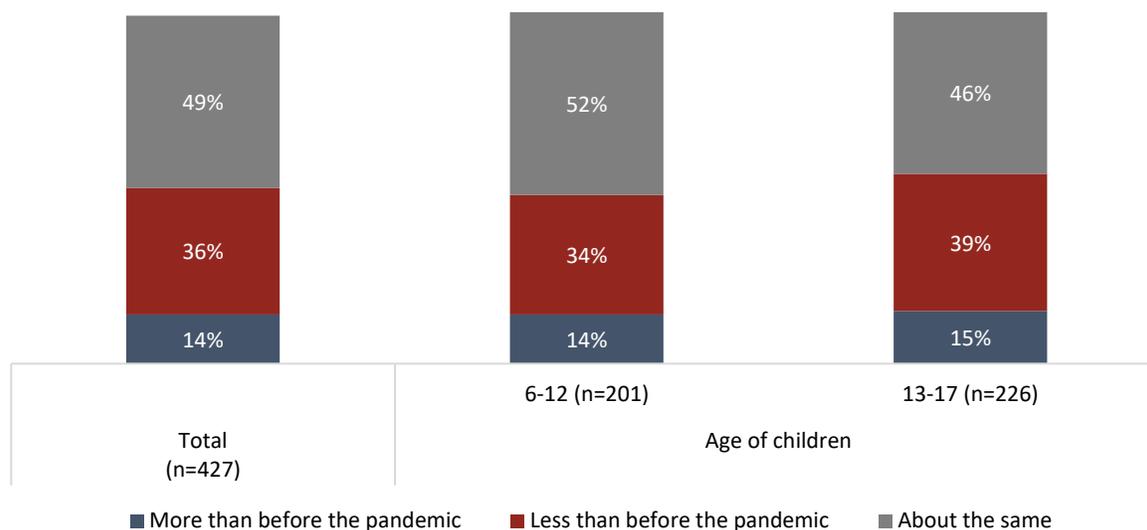
#### CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 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)

Would you say your child(ren) does the following things more frequently, less frequently or about the same now compared to before the pandemic:

**Performing well at school**

(Among parents with children aged 6-17 in household)

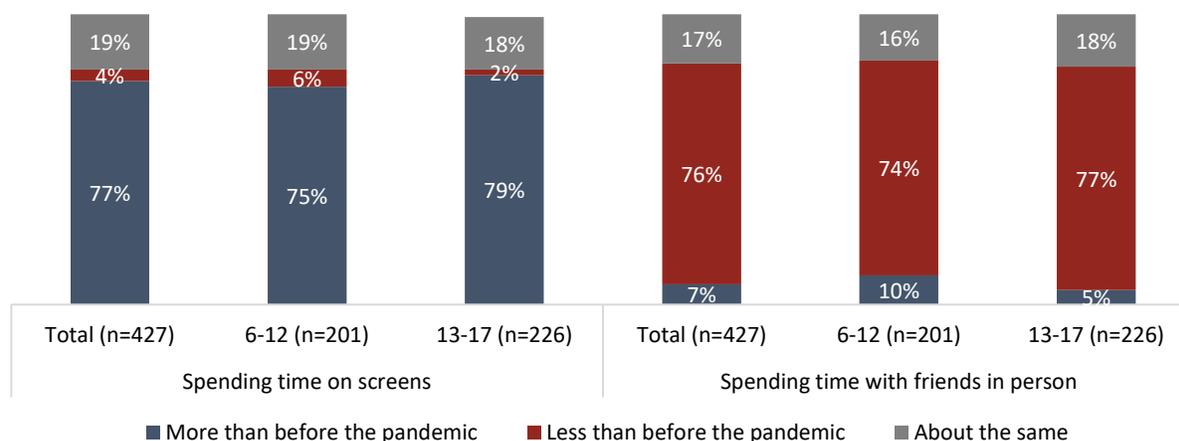


**More time on screens, less time with friends**

At times, visiting friends was against COVID-19 restrictions. The shift in behaviour and experience for Canadian children has thus been significant. Three-quarters of parents (77%) say their children are spending more time on screens now than they did before the pandemic, while a similar number (76%) say their kids are spending less time with their friends in person:

Would you say your child(ren) does the following things more frequently, less frequently or about the same now compared to before the pandemic?

(Among parents with children aged 6-17 in household)



**CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, President: 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)

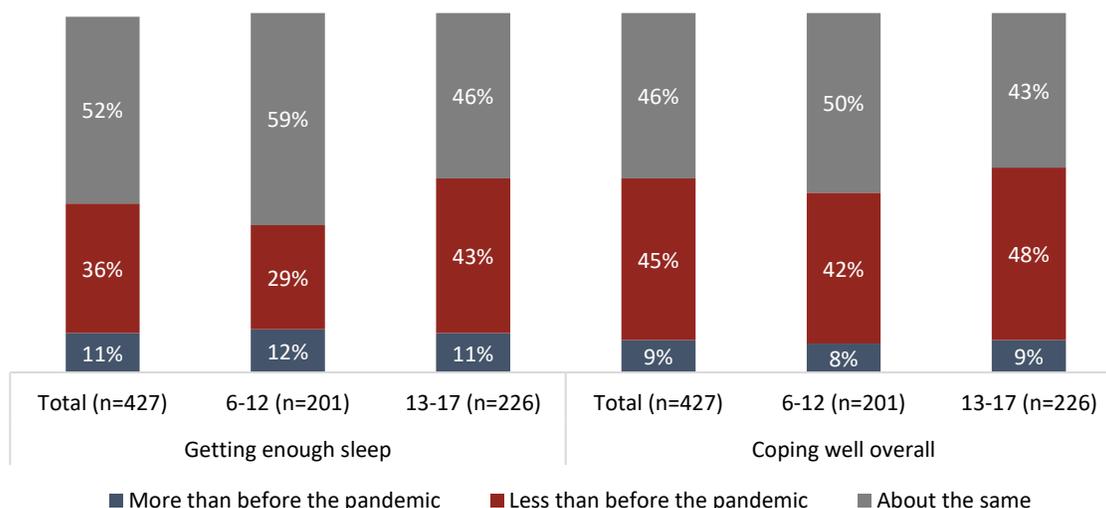
**Teenage sleep problems, difficulty coping overall for nearly half**

Regular bedtimes have been affected by the pandemic. A study early in the pandemic found young kids in Chinese households locked down to prevent the spread of the virus were going to bed and waking up later when compared to kids studied pre-pandemic. They were also less likely to take daytime naps. Another study found “an alarming” number of pandemic-related sleep problems in children and adolescents.

Closer to home, half of Canadian parents say their kids are getting about as much sleep as they did before the pandemic, while one-third (36%) say their children’s sleeping habits have worsened over the last two years. Parents of teenagers are more likely to report the latter.

When it comes to how they feel their children are dealing with life overall, as many parents say it’s about the same as before the pandemic (46%) as it is worse. Few (9%) parents have noticed an improvement. Parents of teenagers, again, are more likely to report their child is not coping as well overall as before the pandemic. Half (48%) say this, a larger proportion than the parents of six- to 12-year-olds who say the same (42%):

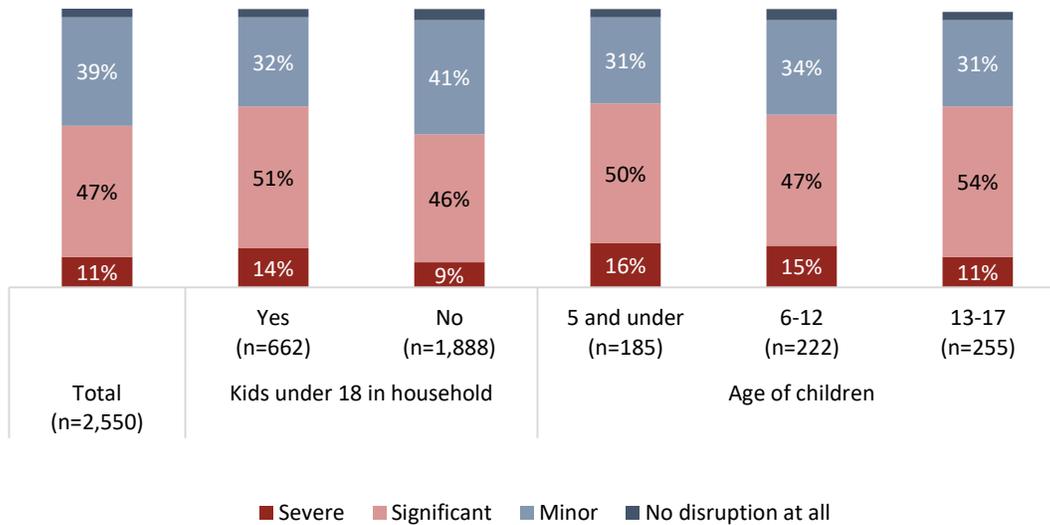
**Would you say your child(ren) does the following things more frequently, less frequently or about the same now compared to before the pandemic?  
(Among parents with children aged 6-17 in household)**



**Part Three: But are the parents alright?**

Parents have not only been navigating the tribulations of the pandemic for their children, they have also had to live through their own ups and downs, managing two sets of disruptions: those that affect their children, and those that affect adults. Those living with children in their households are more likely to report ‘severe’ or ‘significant’ pandemic-related disruption than those without (65% vs 55%):

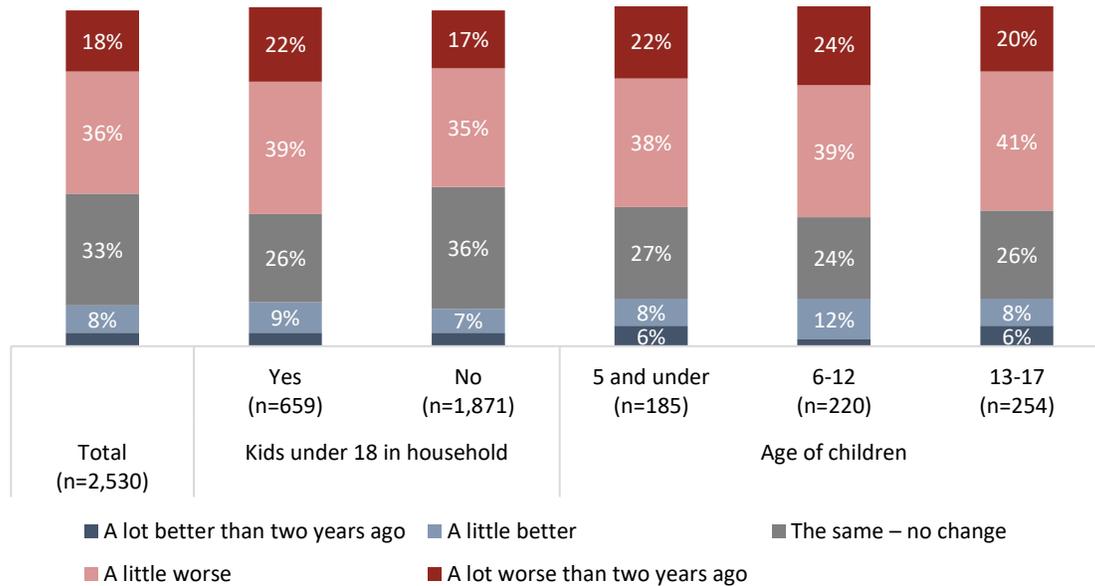
**Would you say the pandemic-related disruption in your life has been:**



For many, the last two years have been filled with a disproportionate amount of mental health struggles. Three-in-five of those living in households with kids say their mental health has deteriorated over the course of the pandemic. That is significantly more than the half (53%) of those living without children in their household who say the same:

Overall, when it comes to the following aspects of your life, you would say things are better, worse or unchanged since March 2020:

**Your mental health**  
(Excluding not applicable)



Perhaps one of the most significant drains on mental health for families during the pandemic has been remote learning, which provides a less stimulating learning environment for kids while placing a burden on parents to accommodate children doing their education at home. Before school returned last fall, nine-in-ten of parents with school-aged children preferred in-class over online learning, including more than two-thirds who ‘absolutely’ preferred their kid to be back in the classroom.

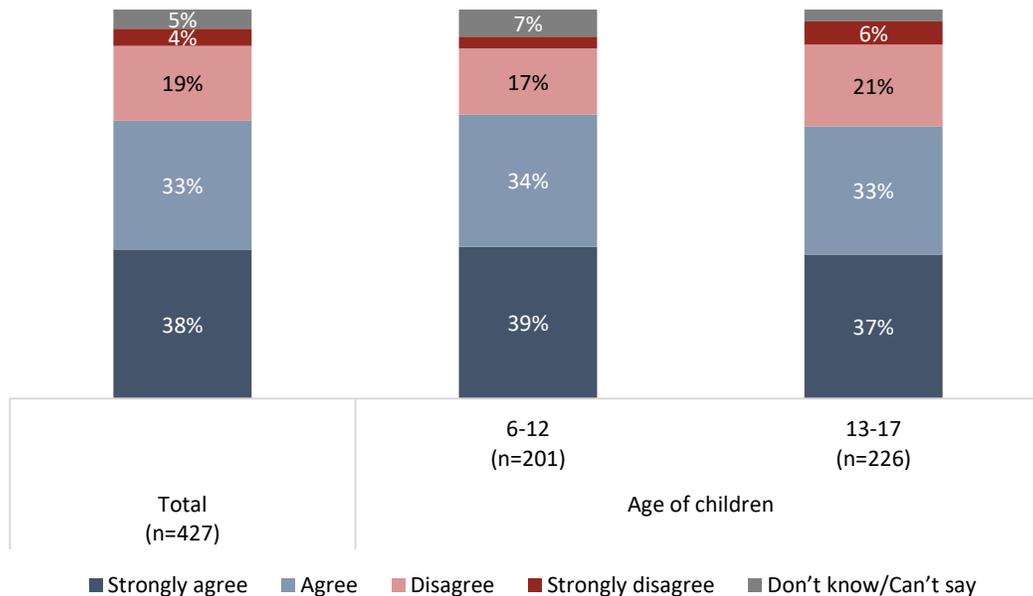
**Related: [Parents strongly prefer in-class learning to online](#)**

Seven-in-ten (71%) parents with school-aged children say remote learning was hard on their family. Parents with younger children are more likely to disagree than those with teenagers:

**CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, President: 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)

**Agree vs. disagree -  
"Remote learning has been hard on my family"  
(Among parents with children aged 6-17 in household)**



**Majority of parents feel policy makers aren't thinking of the children**

The debate over whether kids should have been in school at the height of COVID-19 waves is divided along competing views: the worry over viral infection in classrooms versus the importance of in-person learning for the mental health and social development of children. In January, approaching half (46%) of parents said both aspects need to be considered equally, while those who said the social development for kids in classroom environments was the key factor (38%) outnumbered those who wanted governments to prioritize reducing the spread of the virus (16%) by more than two to one.

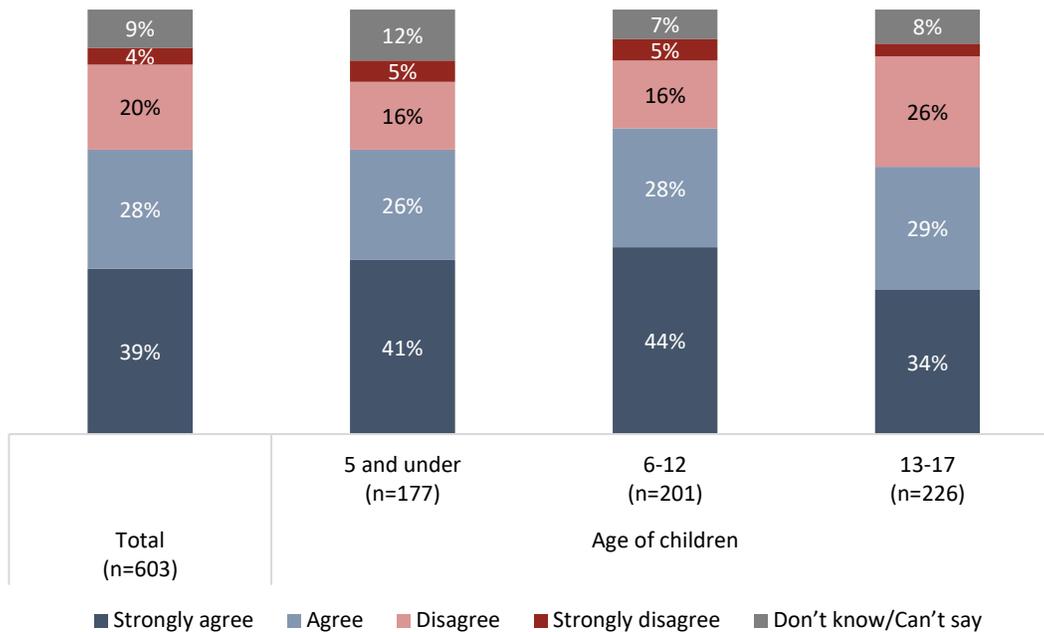
**Related: Parents concerned about consequences of keeping kids out of school**

Though there is differing opinion on what the balance is, overall, parents don't believe governments and other decision makers have struck it. Two-thirds of parents (67%) say policy makers are not considering their children's well-being enough. One-quarter (24%) disagree. Parents of younger school-aged children (72%) are more likely to believe the government aren't thinking of the children enough than parents of teenagers (63%):

**CONTACT:**

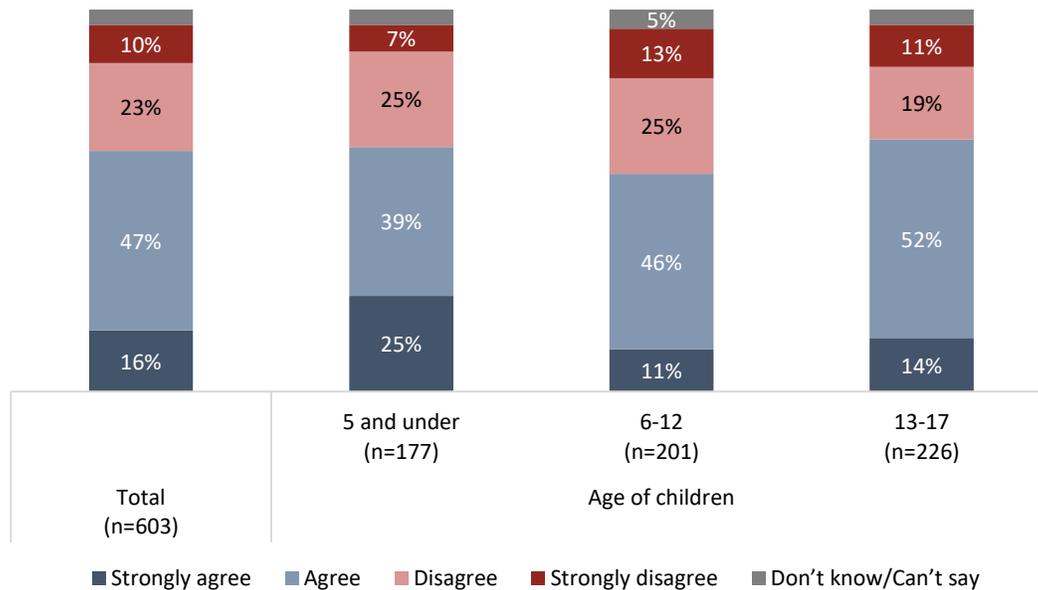
Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

**Agree vs. disagree -  
"Decision makers are not considering our children's well-being enough"  
(Among parents with children under 18 in household)**



A majority of parents feel like they have been surrounded by a good support network during the pandemic, but a significant minority, one-third, disagree. There is also a gap between those with children in the first half of their compulsory education and other parents. Parents of six- to 12-year-olds are the least likely to feel surrounded by a support network (57%), and most likely to feel isolated (38%):

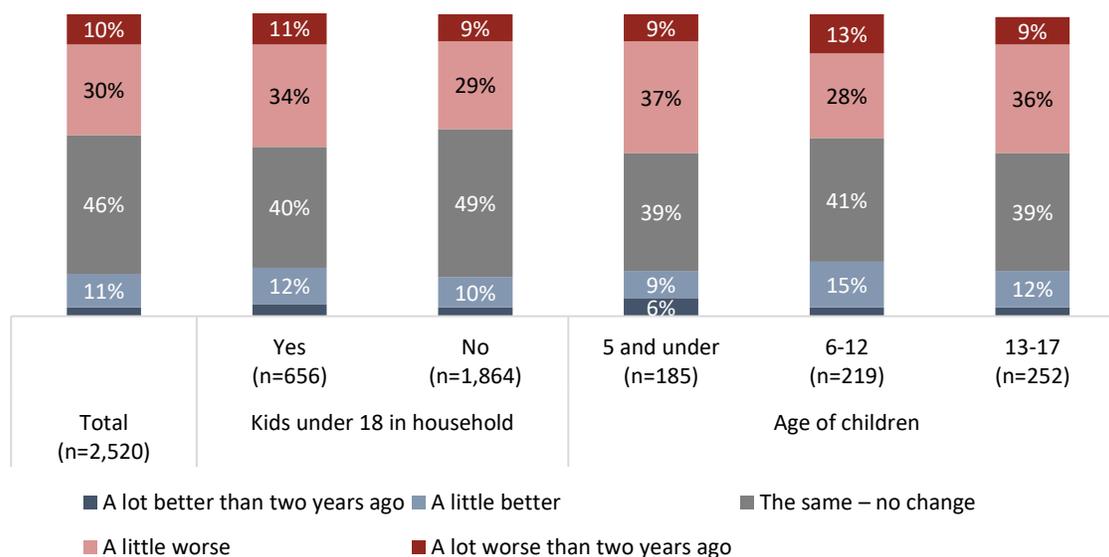
**Agree vs. disagree -  
"As a parent, I have had a good support network around me"  
(Among parents with children under 18 in household)**



Throughout the pandemic, there have been significant barriers placed on relationships outside of the household – people who might comprise a parent’s wider support network – through restrictions on gathering and socializing. Those living with children are more likely to feel like their relationships with friends and family has worsened since March 2020 than those without. More than two-in-five (44%) with kids under 18 in their household say this:

Overall, when it comes to the following aspects of your life, you would say things are better, worse or unchanged since March 2020:

**Relationships with friends and family**  
(Excluding not applicable)



**Younger parents much more likely to have had a good or great two years**

The last two years have been difficult, challenging families at school, at work and at home. But there have been blue skies during months of storm clouds.

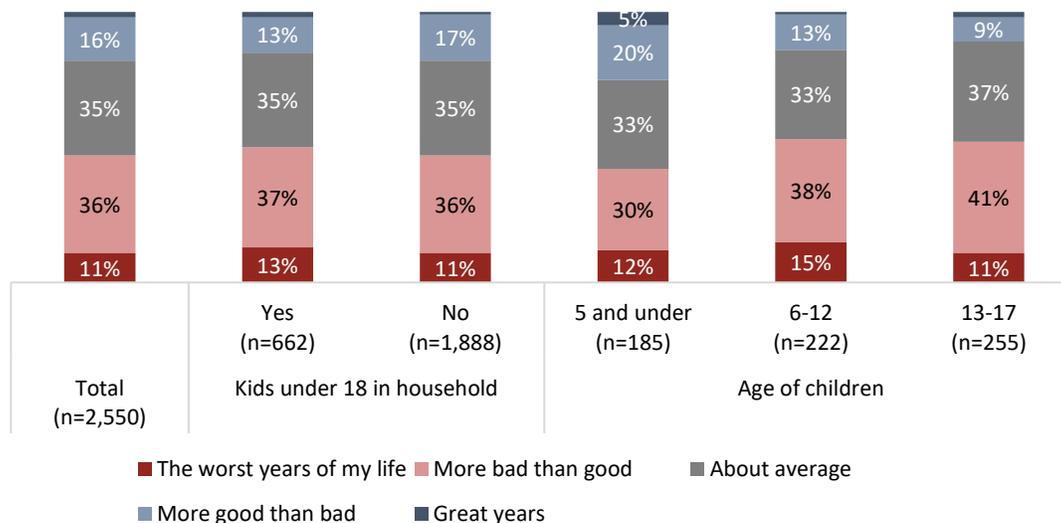
**Related: A silver lining: Four-in-five say the pandemic’s made them reflect on what’s important**

Parents with kids five and under are the most likely to offer a positive sentiment of the pandemic: one-quarter (25%) say there’s been more good than bad since 2020, including one-in-20 (5%) who call them great years:

**CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, President: 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)

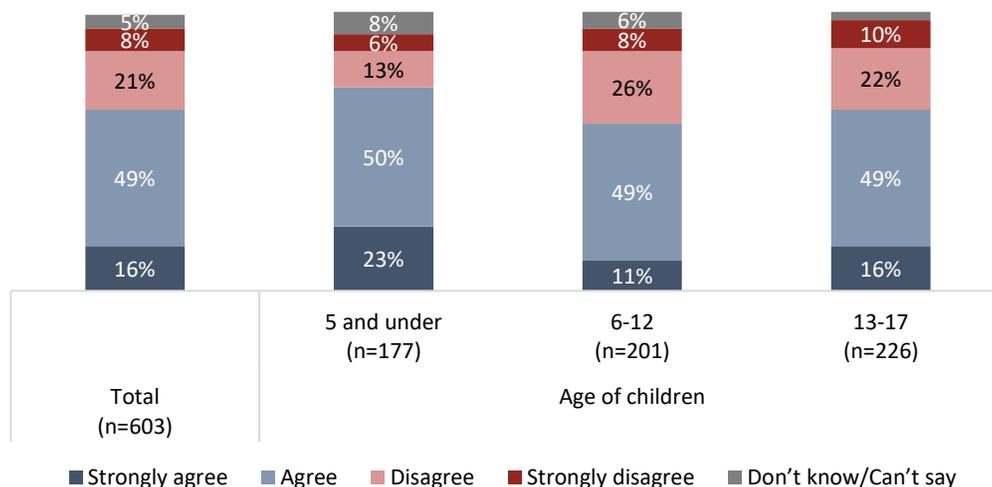
**And now – thinking about all aspects of your life over the last two years, how would you describe them:**



**Despite difficulties, majority say their children coming through the pandemic well**

While the pandemic has had some serious negative effects, parents are optimistic their child is coming out on the other side of it alright. Two-thirds (66%) of parents with kids under 18 in their home say their kids are coming through the pandemic quite well. Parents of six- to 12-year-olds (34%) and teenagers (32%) are more likely to disagree than those with kids five and under (19%):

**Agree vs. disagree -  
"My child(ren) are coming through the pandemic quite well"  
(Among parents with children under 18 in household)**



**CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, President: 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)

*For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).*

---

**CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, President: 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)