

# Survey of College Student Mental Health in 2020

October 22, 2020

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## Summary of Findings

JED conducted an online survey with nearly 200 college and graduate students from across the country<sup>1</sup> about their emotional readiness for the fall 2020 semester, given the uncertainties accompanied by COVID-19. The study found:

- A combined 63% of students say that their emotional health is worse than before the COVID-19 pandemic (*Chart 1*) and 56% of students are significantly concerned with their ability to care for their mental health (*Chart 2*).
- A high proportion of students are dealing with anxiety (82%), followed by social isolation/loneliness (68%), depression (63%), trouble concentrating (62%), and difficulty coping with stress in a healthy way (60%). One in five (19%) students have had suicidal thoughts in the past month (*Chart 3*).
- Concerns about racial equity related to rallies or protests is top of mind for students at this time with 61% of students feeling extremely or very concerned about racial unrest in this country. Thirty-four percent of students are concerned about the effects of racial unrest in their own communities (*Chart 2*).

These findings are critical given that in-person restrictions are continuing across college campuses and other schools in the nation and cases of COVID-19 have spiked this fall. Mental health concerns have been documented since the onset of the pandemic<sup>2</sup> and can be expected to continue for the duration of the pandemic.

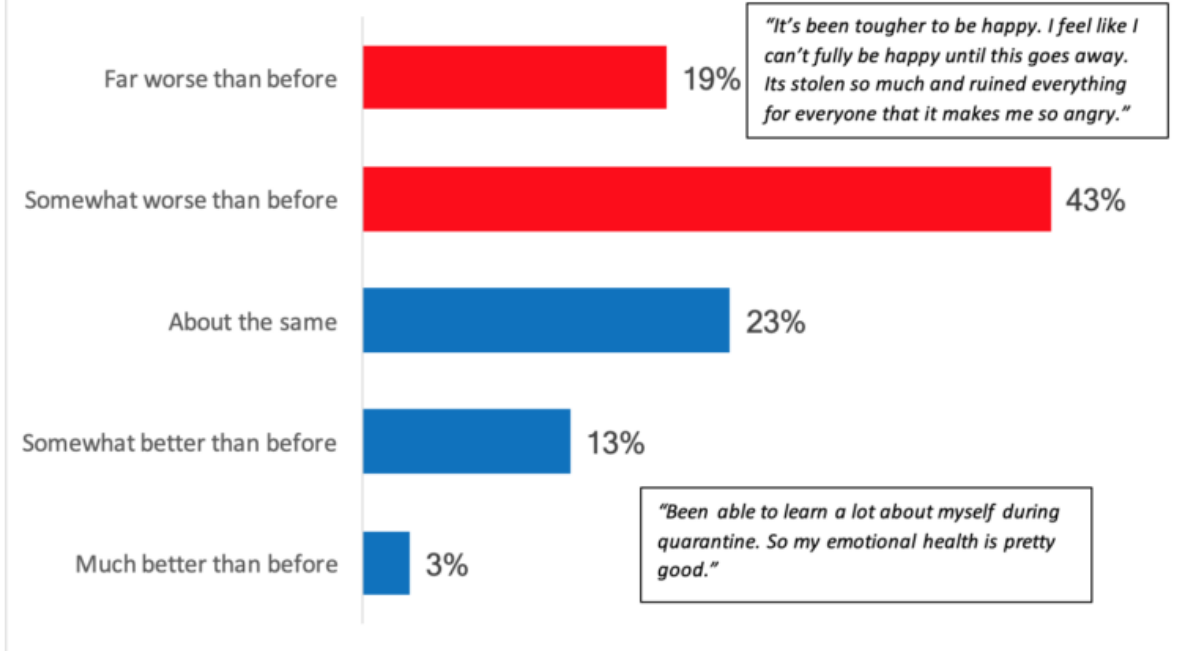
Some students are getting help and support for their emotional health, but not enough:

- 30% of students are turning to counseling, 48% are turning to a support system of friends, and 39% are turning to a support system of family. (*Chart 4*)
- A minority of students (16%) report that their mental health is better now, than before the pandemic. For some, the pandemic has been a time for self-reflection and an opportunity for resilience (*Chart 1*).

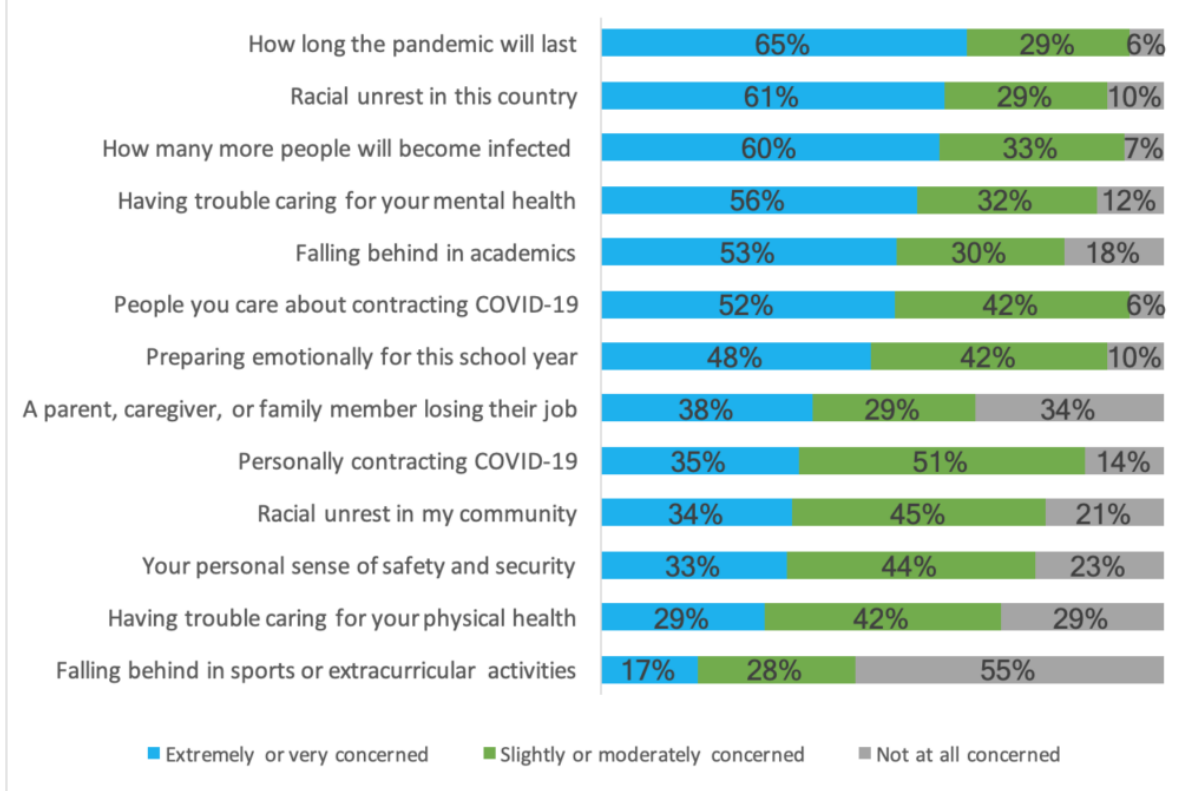
Students need more support from their school administrations and communities to persist through the physical and emotional stressors of this current time. **Mental health should be a top priority for schools.**

- 71% of students say they would utilize telemental health services at their school if they had access to them (*Chart 5*). Support groups and regular check-ins with school administrators would also be of interest to students during this time.

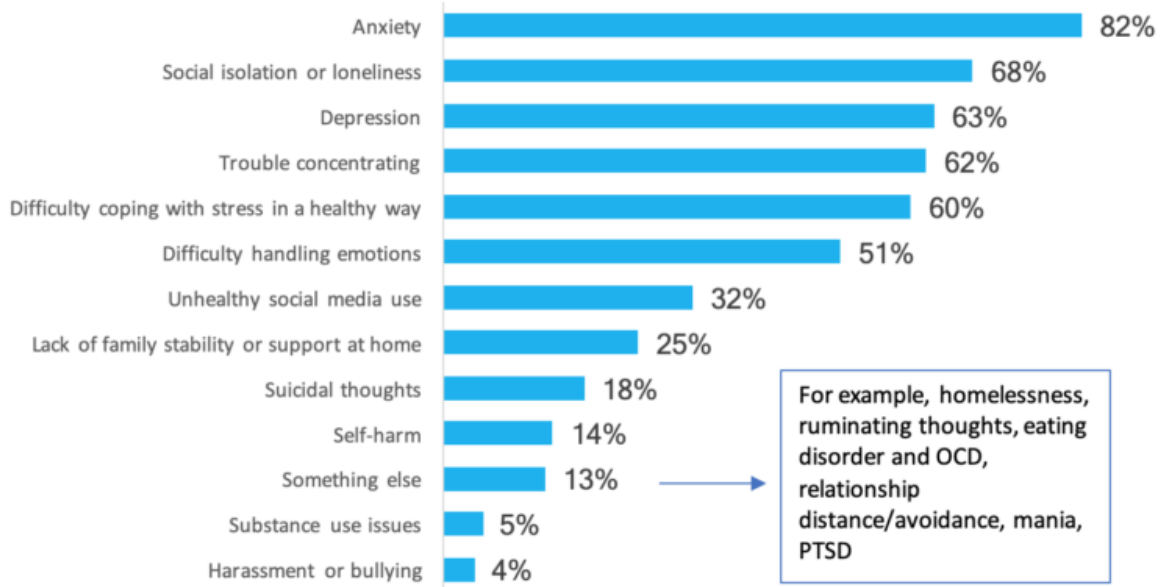
**Chart 1: How would you say your emotional health has been, compared to before the COVID-19 outbreak?**



**Chart 2: How much are you concerned with the following...**



**Chart 3: Which of the following mental or emotional health challenges have you experienced in the past month?**



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<sup>1</sup> JED reached out to a large e-mail list of students to participate in an online survey about their readiness to start the Fall 2020 semester and their mental health concerns during this current time. The survey fielded from August 16-30, 2020. Responses included 182 undergraduate (90%) and graduate students (10%) from 79 colleges and universities across the U.S.

<sup>2</sup> Active Minds Student Mental Health Survey, 2020 (<https://www.activeminds.org/active-minds-student-mental-health-survey/>), Healthy Minds Network & ACHA Survey, 2020 ([https://healthymindsnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Healthy\\_Minds\\_NCHA\\_COVID\\_Survey\\_Report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://healthymindsnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Healthy_Minds_NCHA_COVID_Survey_Report_FINAL.pdf))

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