



Effects of the Covid-  
19 Pandemic on  
Massachusetts  
School Nurses

June 2020 Survey

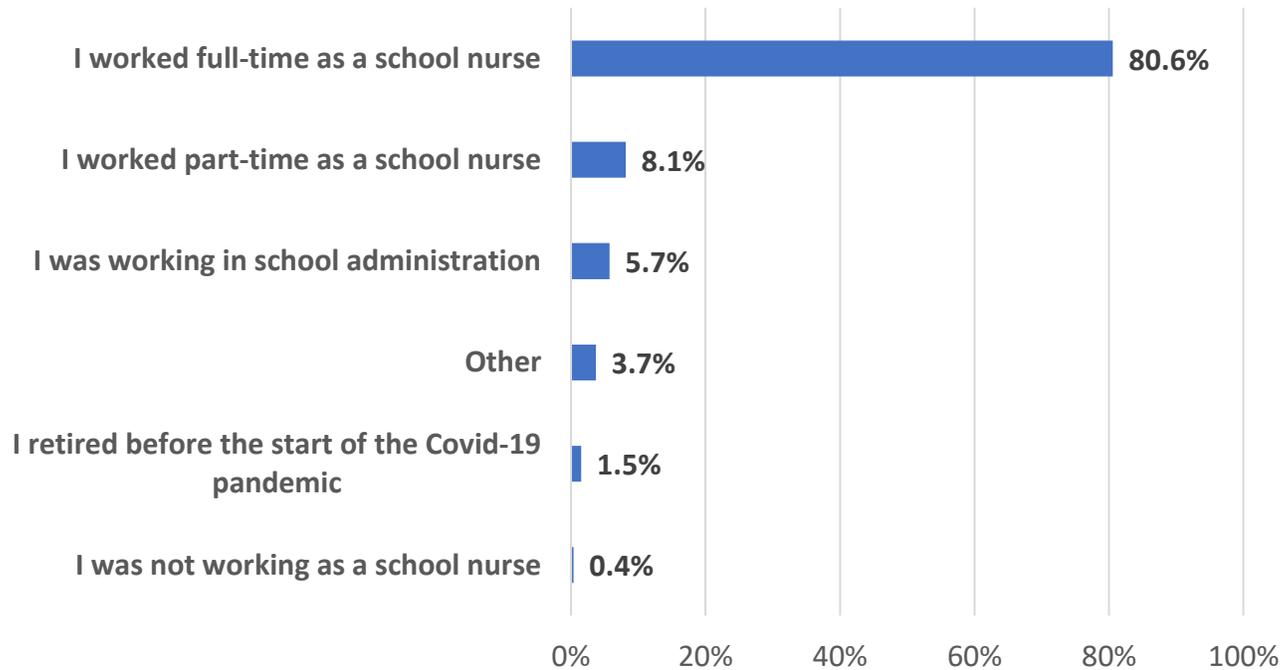
# Demographics and Survey Information

# Survey Information

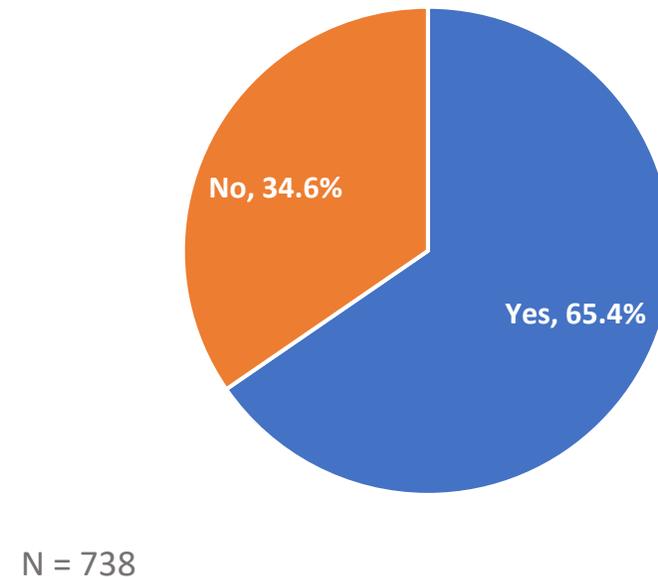
- The survey was open from June 15, 2020 until June 30, 2020.
- 847 responses were recorded. Only individuals who completed more than 40% of the survey were included in the analysis. 788 responses were used in the analysis, 731 respondents completed the entire survey.
- Responses from races of color were too few to perform a statistically relevant analysis. However, instances where the responses from respondents of color differed from the overall sample are noted on a case-by-case basis.
- For the purposes of this analysis, Massachusetts counties have been grouped into these categories:
  - MetroWest: Essex, Middlesex, and Norfolk (N=332)
  - Southeastern: Barnstable, Bristol, Dukes, Nantucket, and Plymouth (N=147)
  - West: Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, Hampshire, Worcester (N=205)
  - Suffolk (N=46)

# Demographics: Job Status and MSNO Membership

## Job Status Prior to the Start of the Covid-19 Pandemic



## Membership in the Massachusetts School Nurse Organization

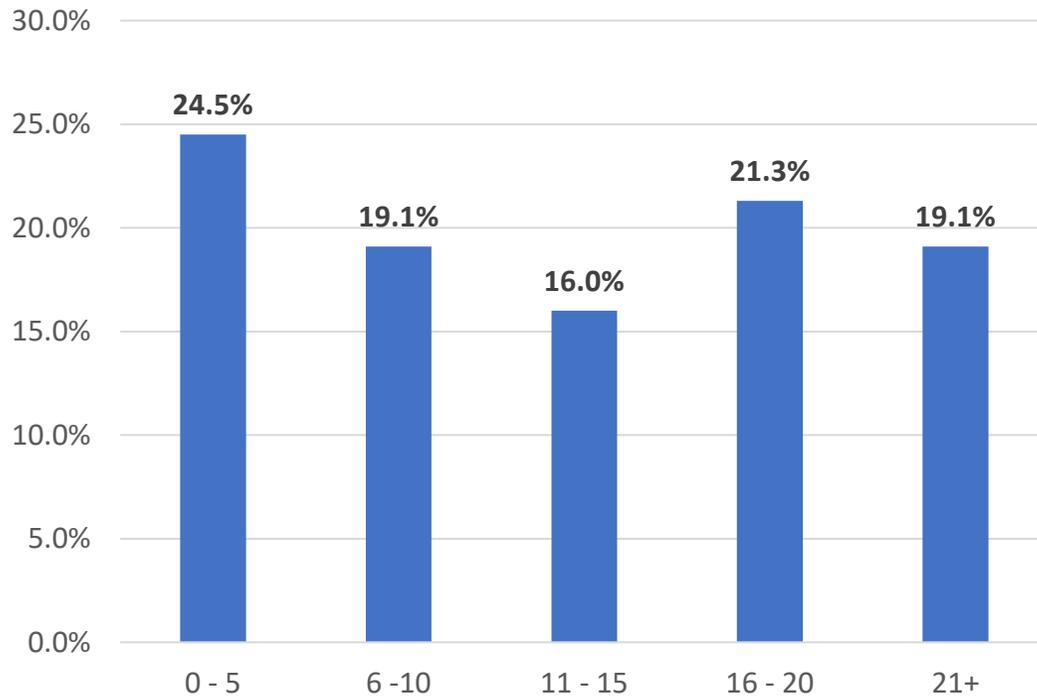


N = 788. The most common "Other" responses were dual roles as a nurse and administrator/Nurse Leader and retired nurses who substitute.

# Demographics: Years As a School Nurse and Number of Schools Covered

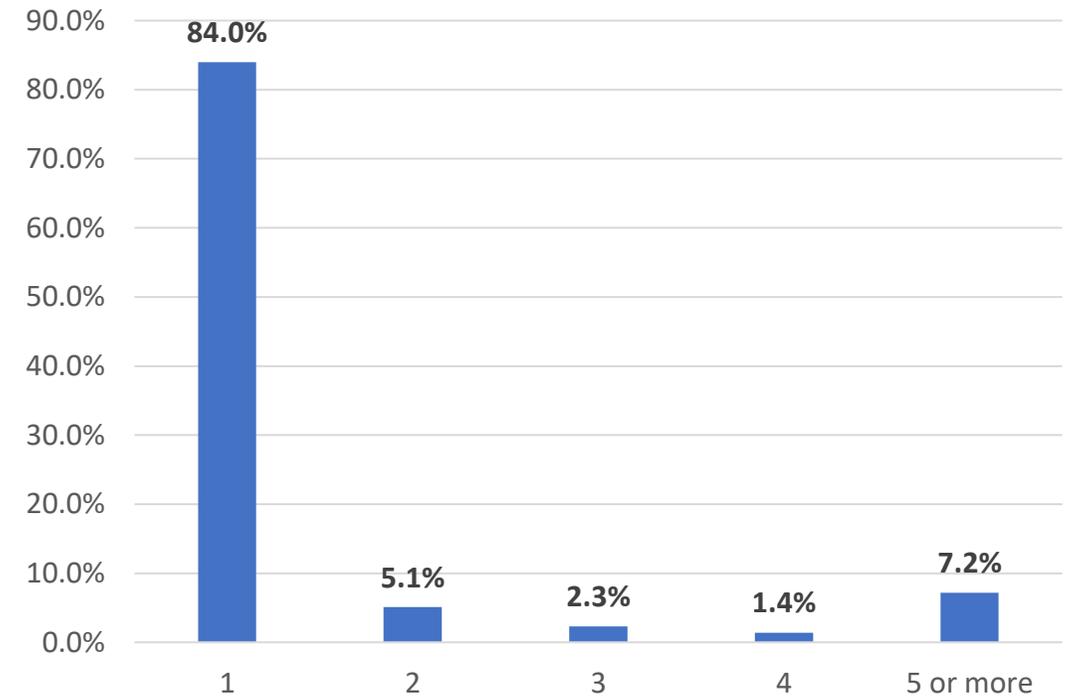
The number of years respondents had worked as a school nurse were evenly distributed across the sample. The vast majority (84%) currently cover 1 school.

Years as a School Nurse



N = 738

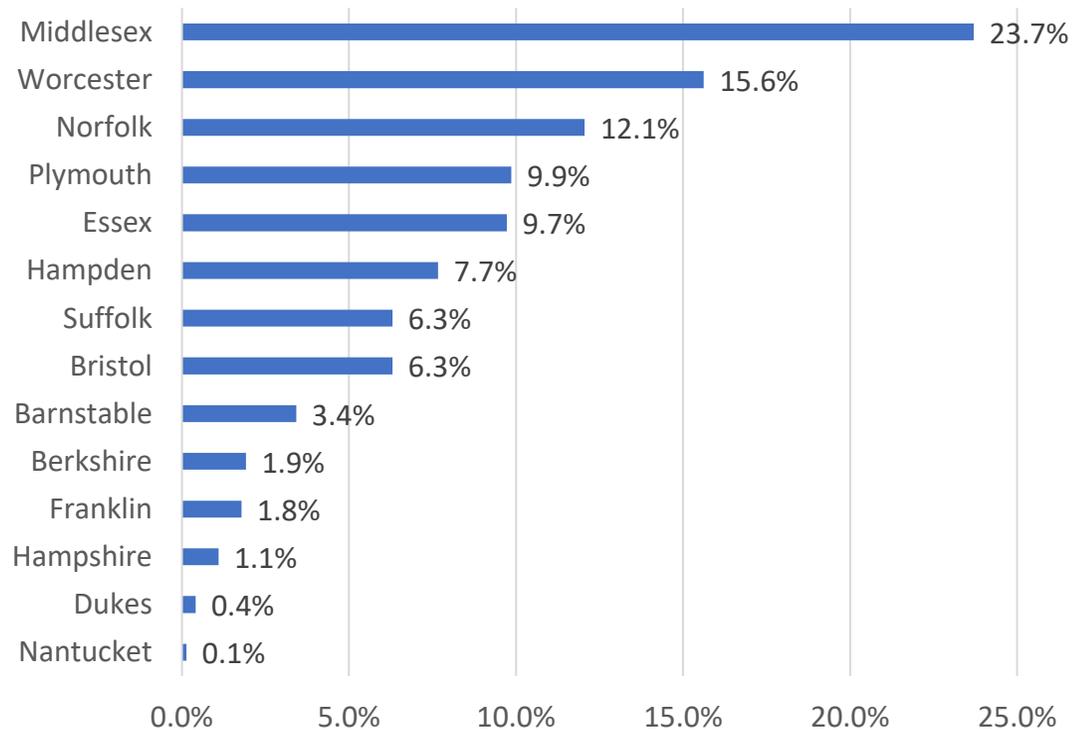
Number of Schools



N = 708. Retired nurses who were not also working as substitute nurses and those who were unemployed prior to the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis were not included.

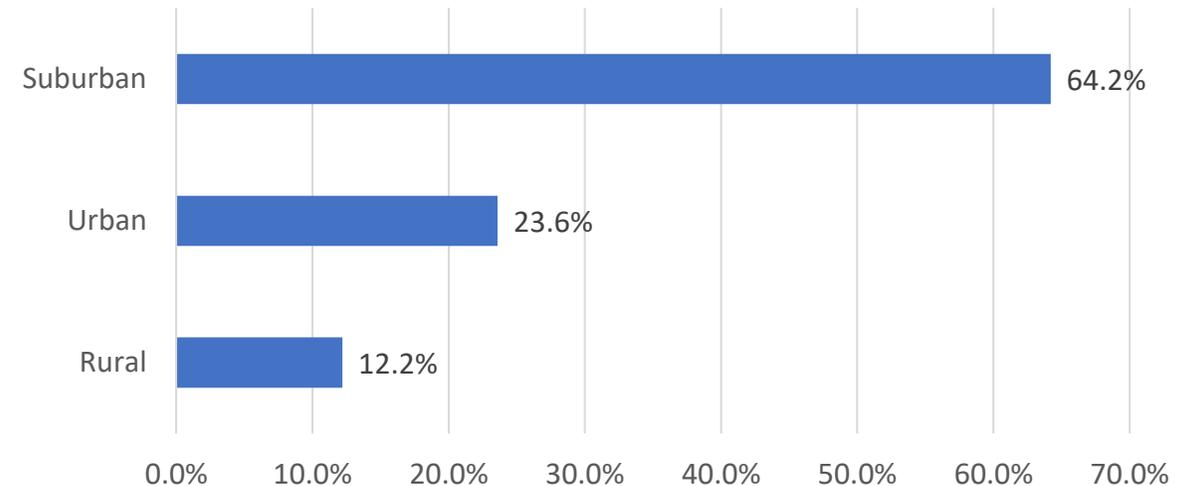
# Demographics: County and District Environment

## Percent of Respondents by County



N = 730

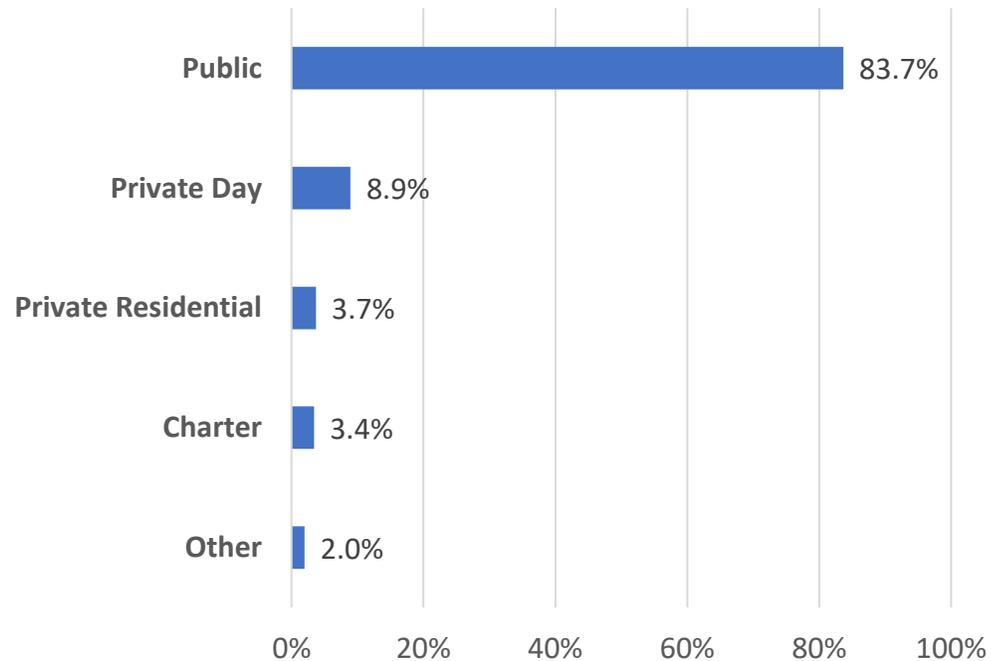
## Percent of Respondents by Environment



N = 703

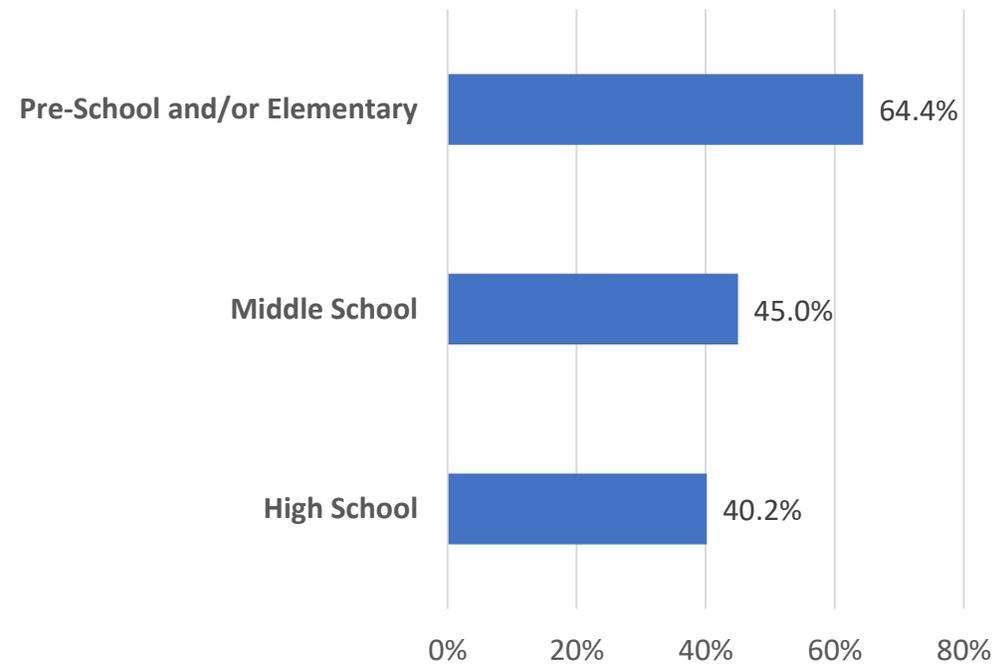
# Demographics: School Environment

## Percent of Respondents Working in Public, Private, or Charter Schools



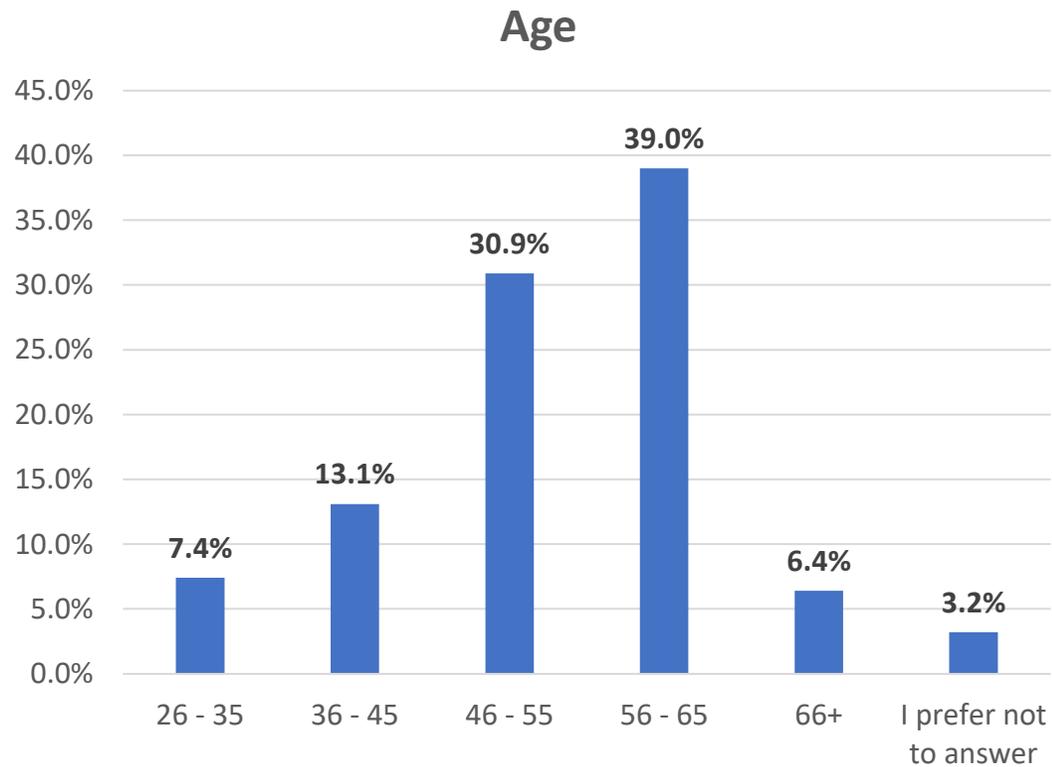
N = 705. Approximately 3% of respondents indicated they worked for more than one type of school. The most common “Other” response was Collaborative school.

## Percent of Respondents Working in Each Grade Level

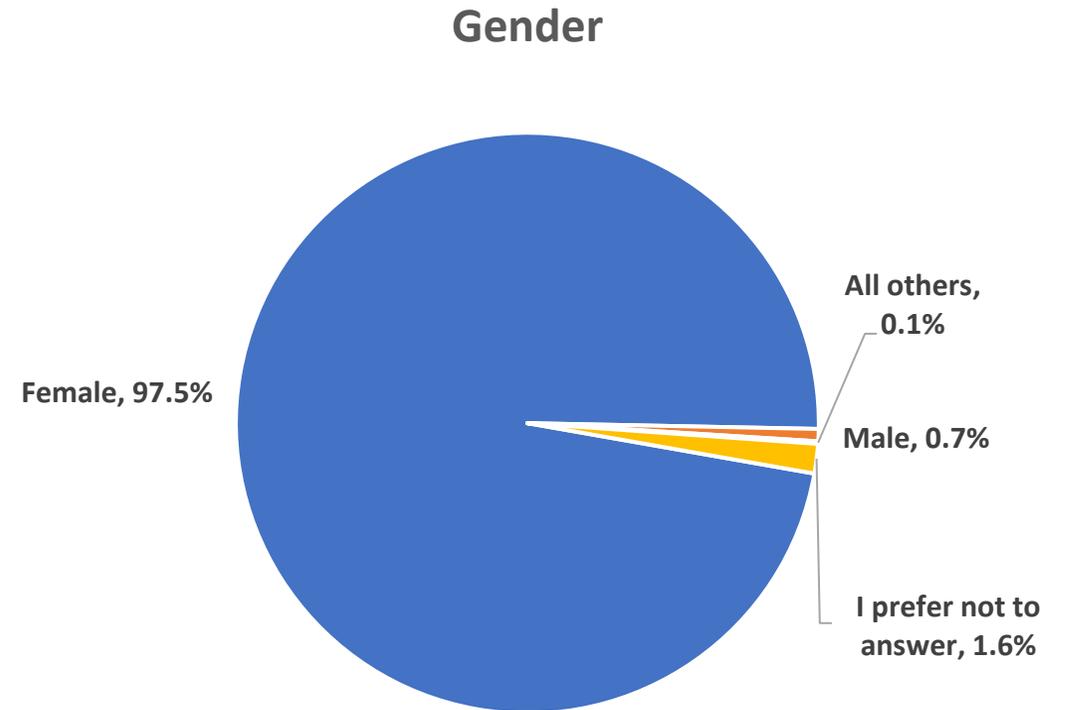


N = 706. Approximately 35% of respondents indicated they worked for more than one grade level.

# Demographics: Age and Gender



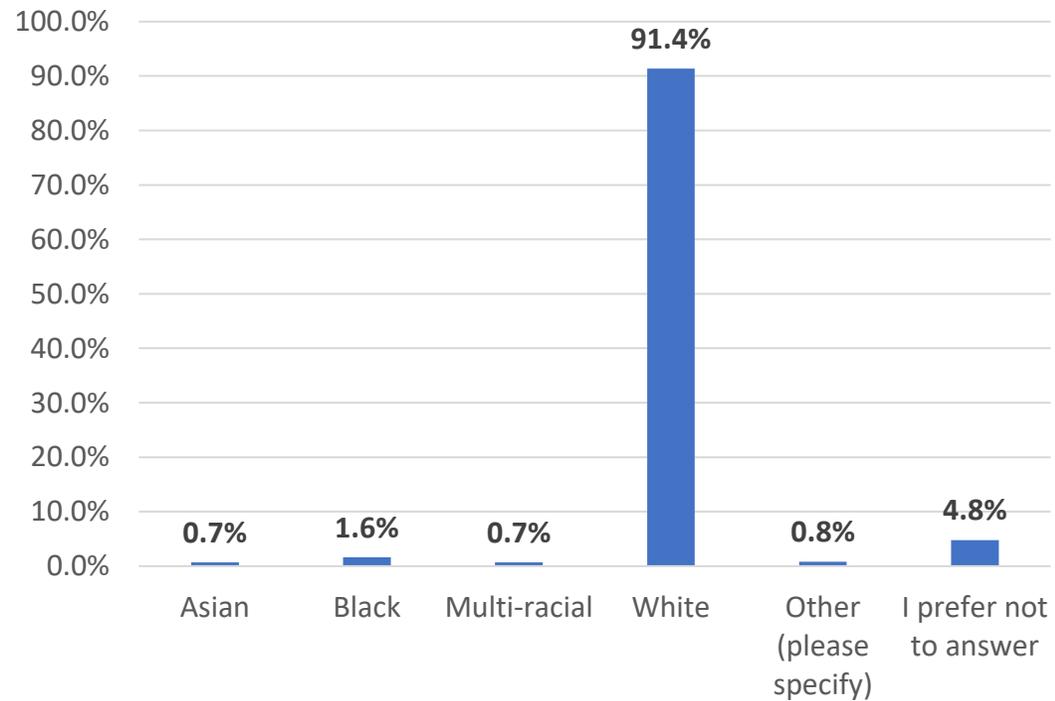
N = 731



N = 731

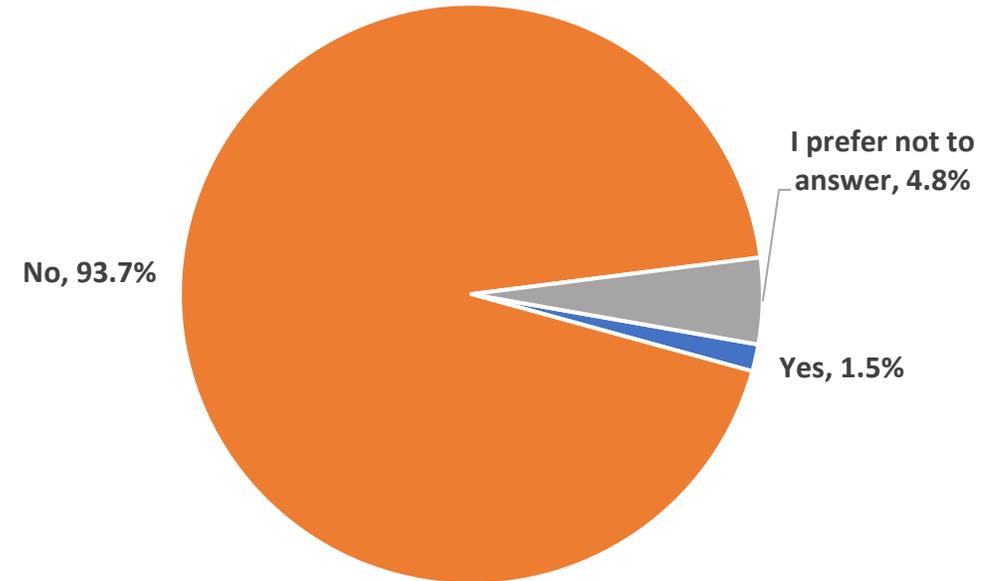
# Demographics: Race and Ethnicity

## Race



N = 731

## Hispanic



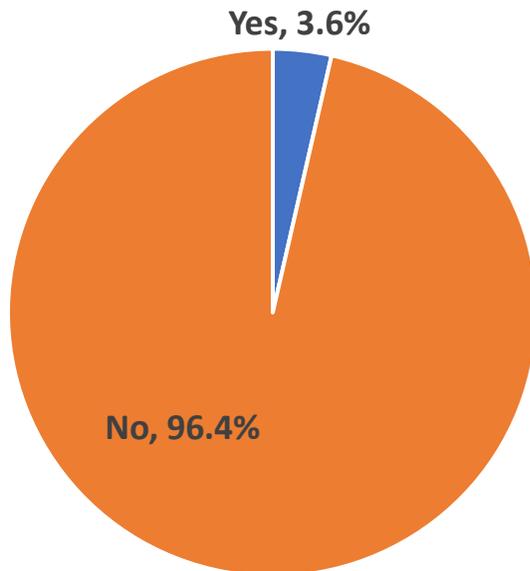
N = 731

# Impact of Covid-19 on Job Security and Retirement

# Layoffs Due to Covid-19

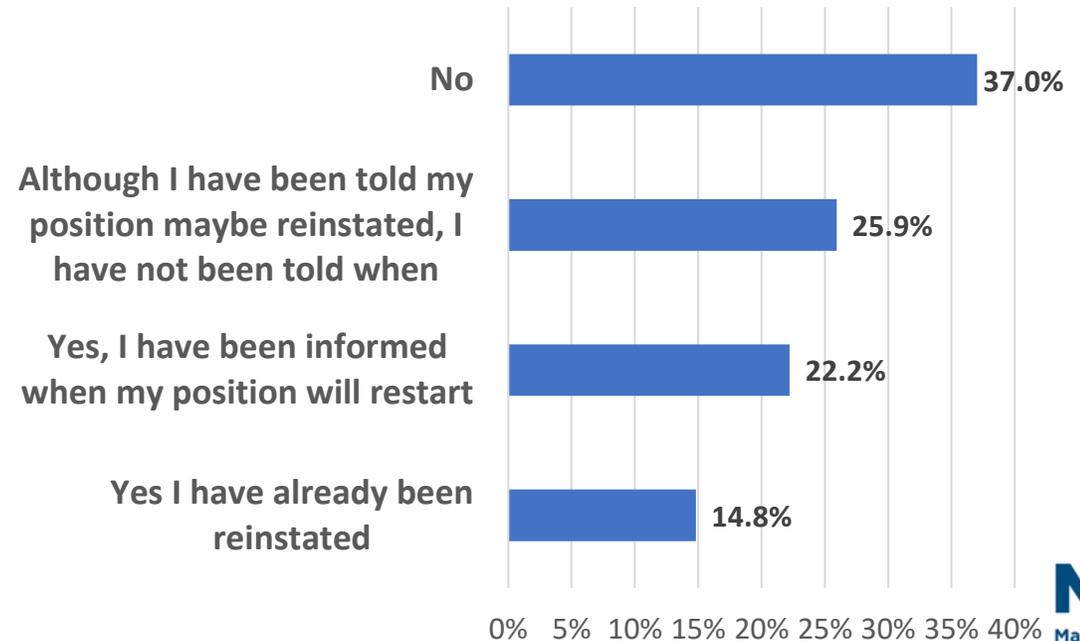
Very few (3.6%) school nurses were laid off due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the majority of these (63%) have either been reinstated or told there is a possibility of being reinstated. Nurses from the southeastern portion of the state, as well as nurses working in middle and/or high school were laid off at a slightly higher rate (6%, 5.4%, 5.6%, respectively). Nurses of color and those identifying as Hispanic had a slightly lower rate of job loss.

Was your position as a school nurse eliminated because of the Covid-19 pandemic?



N = 757

Were you informed there was a possibility your position would be reinstated?

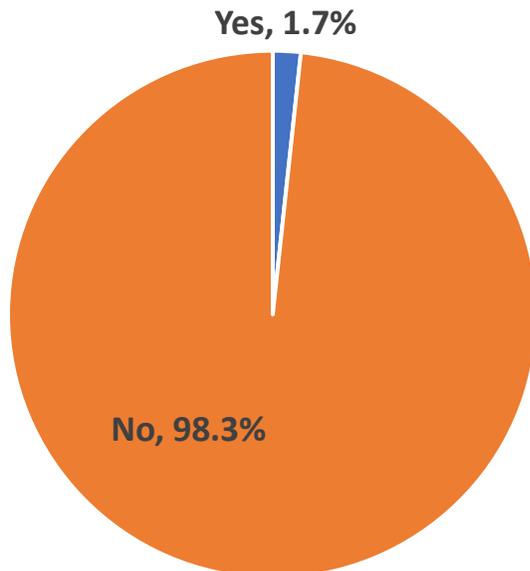


N = 27

# Furloughs Due to Covid-19

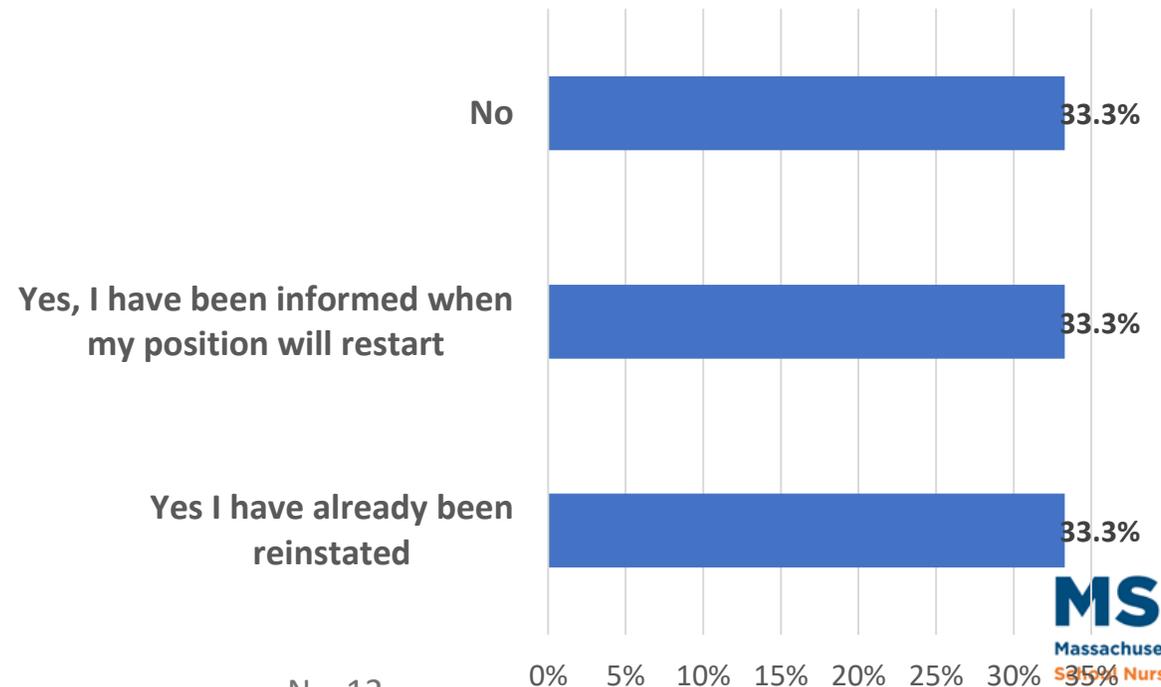
On average, less than 2% of school nurses reported being furloughed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This number is driven in part by the very low rate of furloughs in the MetroWest portion of the state (0.7%), since the Southeastern, Western, and Suffolk counties all reported higher furlough rates (2.4%, 2.6%, 5%, respectively). Nurses of color reported being furloughed at twice the average rate (3.7%), possibly due to the higher number of these respondents working in Suffolk county.

Were you furloughed from your position as a school nurse because of the Covid-19 pandemic?



N = 717

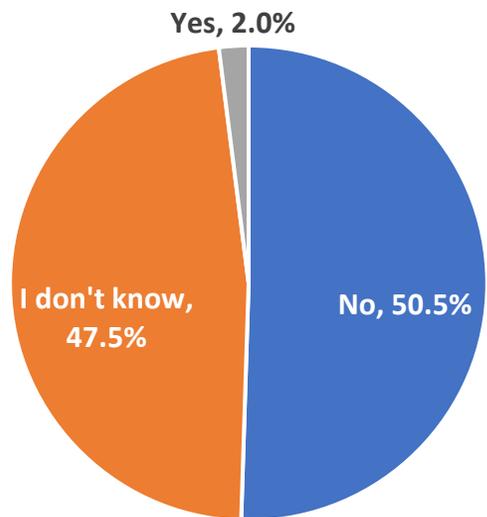
Have you been notified when you will be reinstated?



N = 12

# Effect on Retirement Benefits

## Have Your Retirement Benefits in the MTRS Been Affected Because of the Covid-19 Pandemic?



N = 650. Ninety-four respondents selected N/A.

- Surveyed school nurses expressed a high amount of uncertainty about the effect of Covid-19 on their retirement, with 47.5% stating they were uncertain about whether the pandemic would effect their MTRS benefits.
- Respondents in the Southeastern counties were more likely to respond “Yes” when asked whether their benefits would be effected, likely due to the higher percentage of lay-offs in that part of the state.
- School nurses in Suffolk county expressed a higher than average level of uncertainty (60.5%) about the effect on their retirement benefits, possibly owing to the higher percentage of nurses furloughed in that county and the uncertainty about whether their positions would be reinstated.

# Additional Points on Job Security

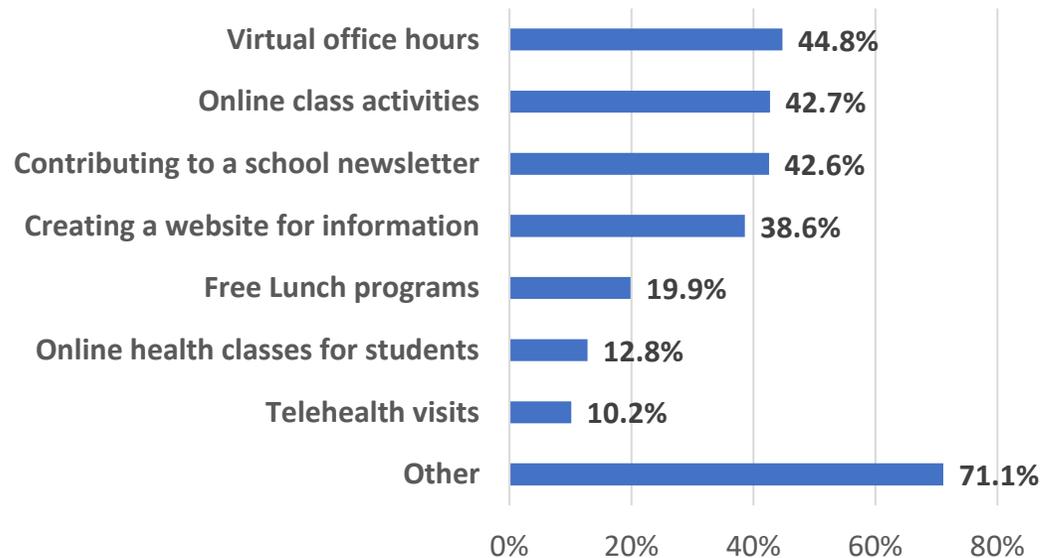
- When prompted, the most common concern cited among surveyed school nurses was the possibility of job loss for themselves or their colleagues should schools remain virtual in September.
- Only 20% of surveyed school nurses indicated they had heard about other districts in the state that had laid off nurses. Brookline, Taunton, Rockland, Pembroke, Randolph, Weymouth, and Raynham were the most frequently named districts.

# The Role of School Nurses During Distance Learning

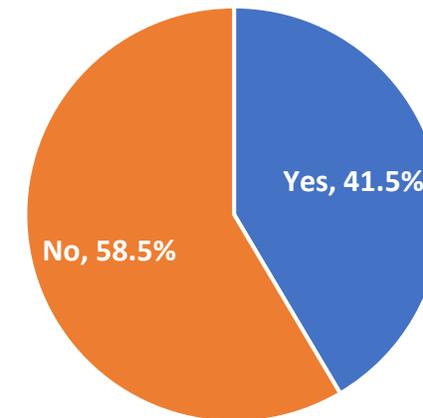
# School Nurses' Activities During Distance Learning

Virtual office hours were the most common distance learning activity, according to respondents. High school nurses were the most likely to participate in this activity (52%). Elementary school nurses were the most likely to participate in teacher planned classroom activities (52%). Nurses in Suffolk county were nearly twice as likely to participate in Free Lunch programs (37%).

### School Activities During Distance Learning



### Percent of Respondents Involved in Community Contact Tracing

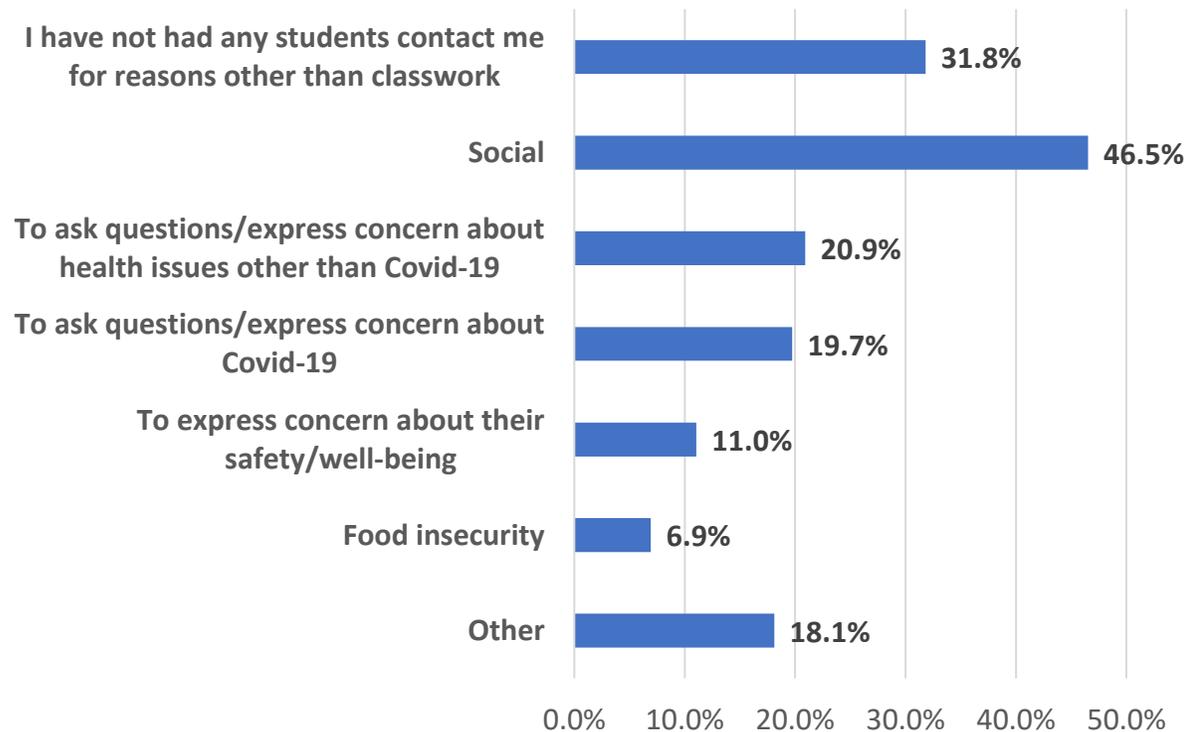


N = 679. Common responses for "Other" included continuing with regular meetings, paperwork, and interactions, working with BoH/contact tracing, helping with reopening plans, and professional development.

N = 672

# Reasons Students Have Contacted School Nurses During Distance Learning

## What Types of Contact Have You Had with Students During Distance Learning?

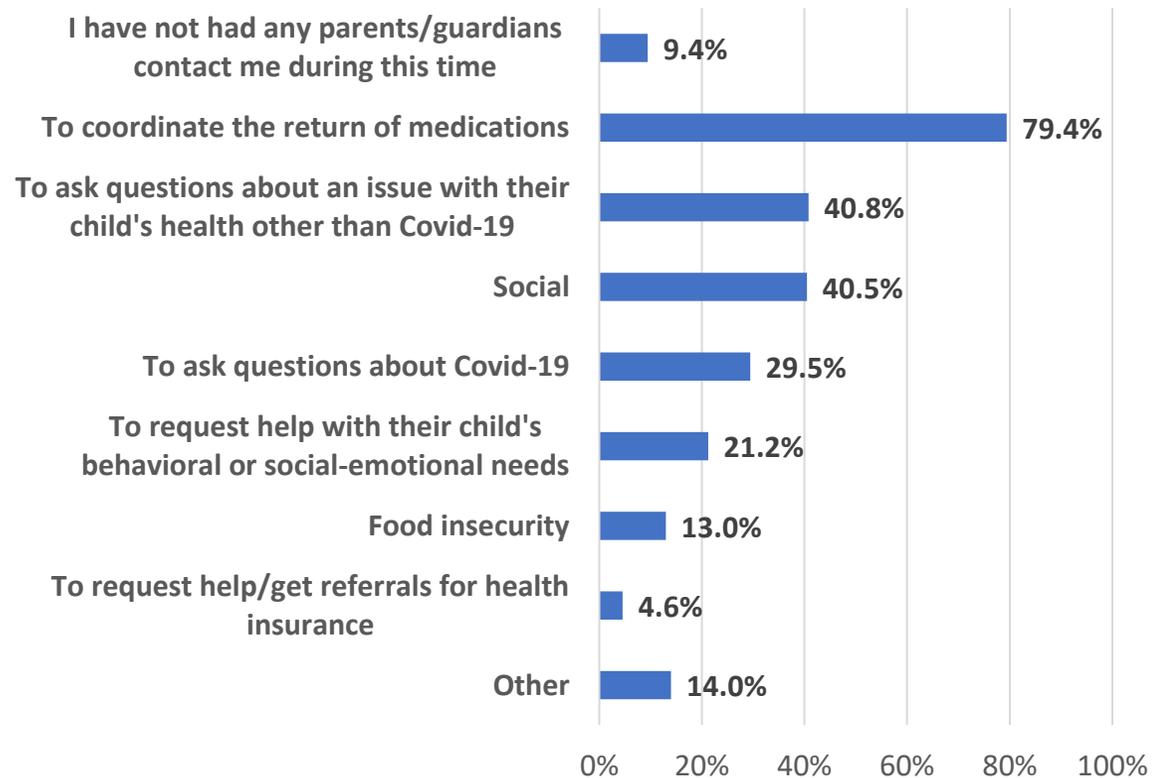


N = 679

- More than 31% of respondents indicated that they had not been contacted by students outside of classroom activities since the beginning of distance learning. Nurses in high schools indicated they were more likely to have been contacted by students.
- Overall, nurses in Suffolk county reported the highest amount of contact from students. Notably, 18.4% of Suffolk county nurses said they had had a student contact them due to food insecurity, 26% had a student contact them with questions about Covid-19, and 18% had a student contact them to express concern for their safety or well-being.

# Reasons Parents Have Contacted School Nurses During Distance Learning

## What Types of Contact Have You Had with Parents During Distance Learning?



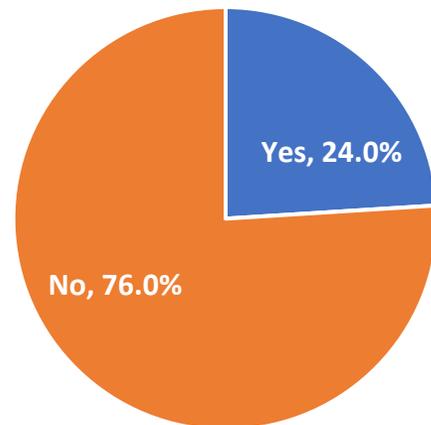
N = 679, The most common "Other" responses included questions about immunizations, kindergarten registration, and paperwork for sports or summer school.

- Eighty percent of school nurses indicated that their contact with parents had decreased during distance learning, with 4.4% indicating their contact had increased.
- Not surprisingly, the percentage of nurses who had been contacted by parents/guardians decreased in the older grades, with 11.4% of high school nurses indicating they had no contact with parents during this time.
- Nurses in Suffolk county and the Southeastern counties were significantly more likely to be contacted by a parent due to food insecurity (34.2% and 21.1%, respectively)
- Nurses in Suffolk county were more than twice as likely to be contacted for help with health insurance (10.5%)

# Monitoring of Students with Chronic Conditions During Distance Learning

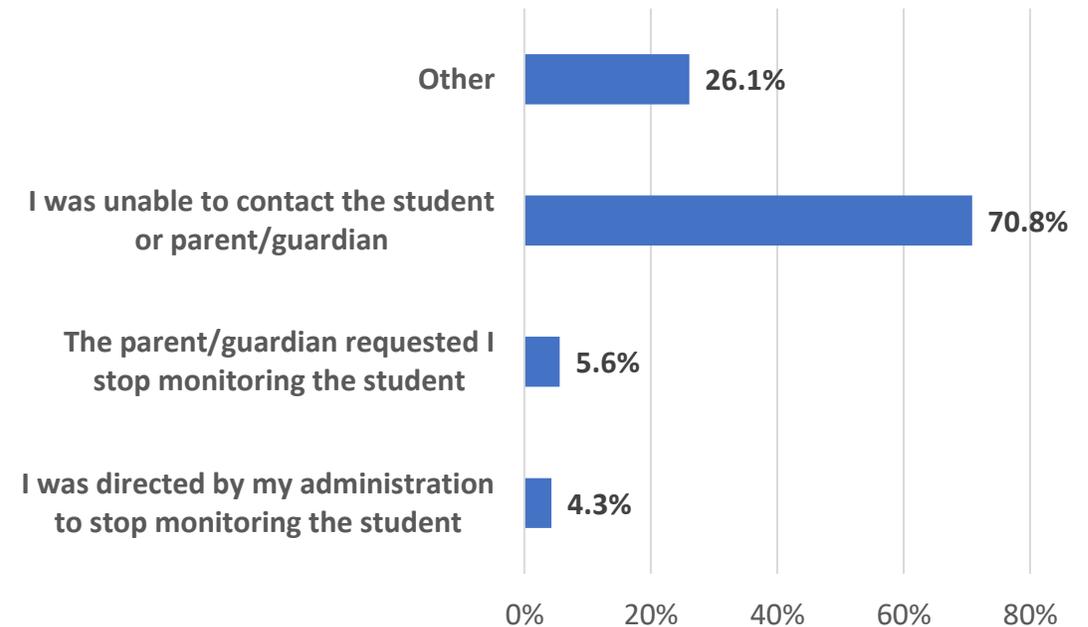
Nearly a quarter of surveyed nurses indicated they were unable to continue monitoring a student during distance learning. Nurses in Suffolk county were more likely to have had difficulty monitoring students, with 42% responding they were unable to continue to monitor a student they wished to check on.

**Have There Been Students with Chronic Health Conditions Who You Wished to Continue Monitoring but Were Unable to Check On?**



N = 672

**Why Were You Unable to Continue to Monitor the Student?**

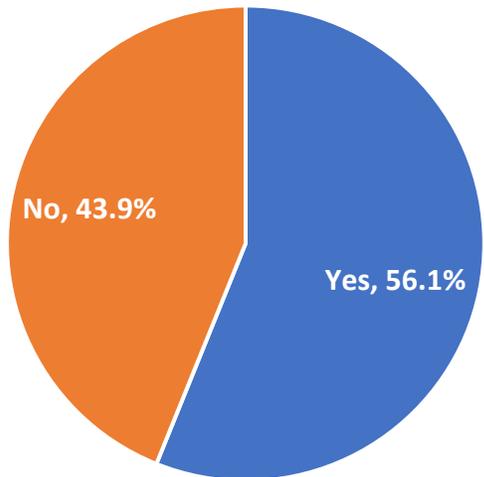


N = 161. The most common "other" response was lack of follow up by parents/guardians.

# Student Safety During Distance Learning

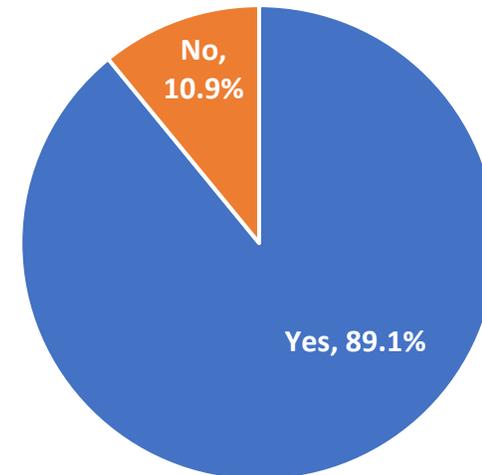
More than half of surveyed nurses indicated they were concerned there were students that were less safe due to the increased time at home. Nurses in the Southeastern part of the state were most likely to have this concern, with two-thirds (67%) responding they were concerned about one or more students. In all cases, school nurses overwhelmingly felt they had the resources and support to deal with this issue if necessary.

**Are There Students You Are Concerned May Not Be Safe Due to Their Increased Time at Home?**



N = 672

**Do You Feel You Have the Resources and Support You Need to Act on That Concern Should It Become Necessary?**

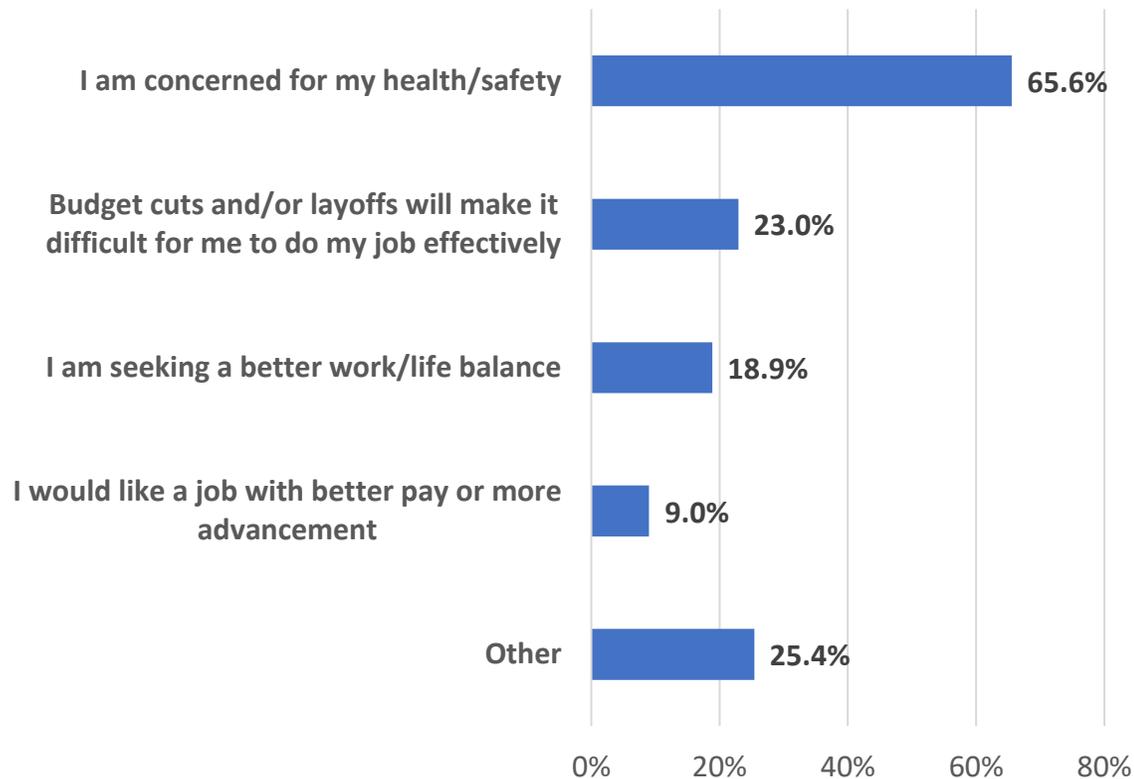


N = 377

# The Role of School Nurses in School Re-Opening Planning

# Reasons School Nurses Have Considered Leaving Direct Care

## Reasons School Nurses Have Considered Leaving Direct Care

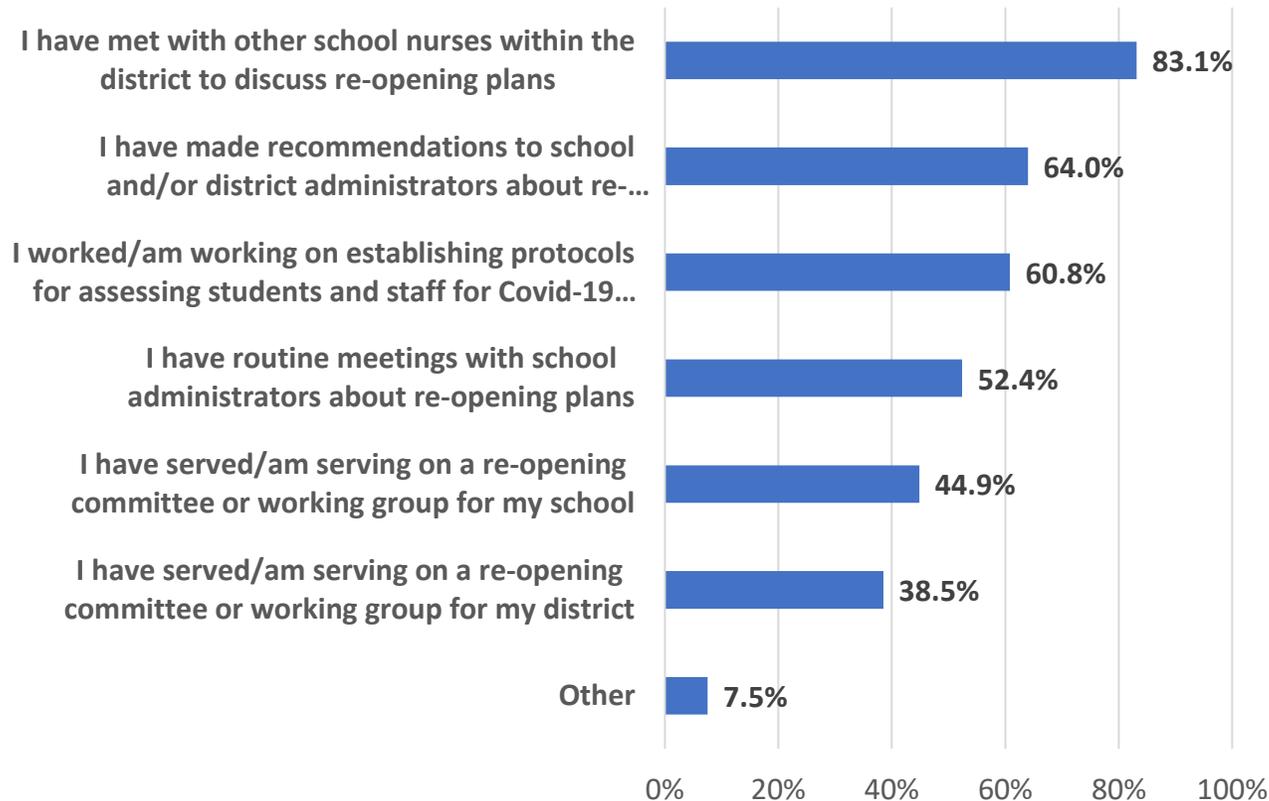


N = 122. The most common “other” responses included displeasure about not being included in planning, concern about the health of their family, and the need to take care of their children or other family members

- Only 18% of surveyed school nurses indicated that they have considered leaving direct care nursing because of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Approximately two-thirds of those nurses who have considered leaving direct care nursing cited concern about their health as a reason.
- Nurses in the MetroWest portion of the state were significantly less likely than average to be looking for an improved work/life balance (10%), while nurses working in Suffolk county were more likely to list this as a reason to consider leaving direct care nursing (28%).

# School Nurses' Role in Re-Opening Planning

## How School Nurses Have Been Involved in Re-opening Planning

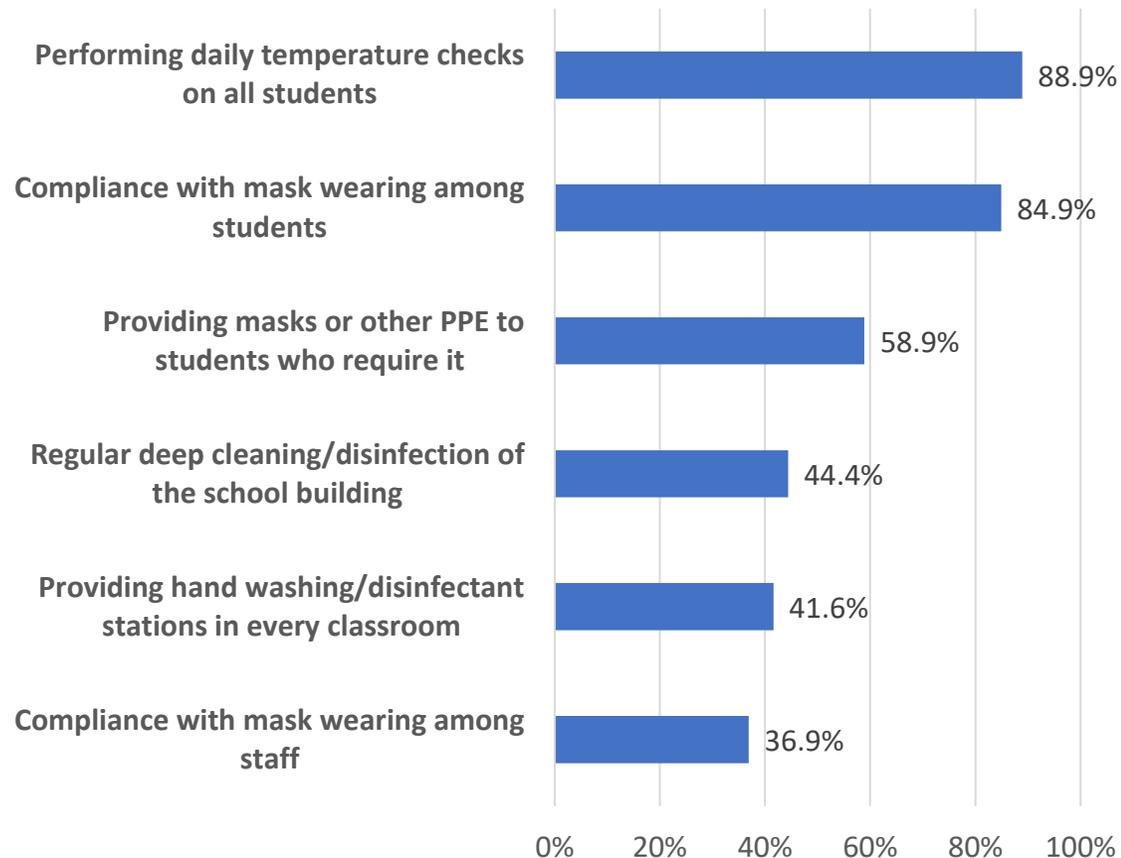


N = 439

- Approximately 65% of surveyed school nurses indicated that they have been involved in their school and/or district's re-opening planning. Less than 10% indicated that they did not believe re-opening planning had started.
- Nurses in Suffolk county were significantly more likely to serve on a re-opening group for their school (59.1%) than other regions, and less likely to serve on a district wide committee or working group (22.7%).

# Nurses' Opinion on Ease of Implementation for Possible Re-Opening Guidelines

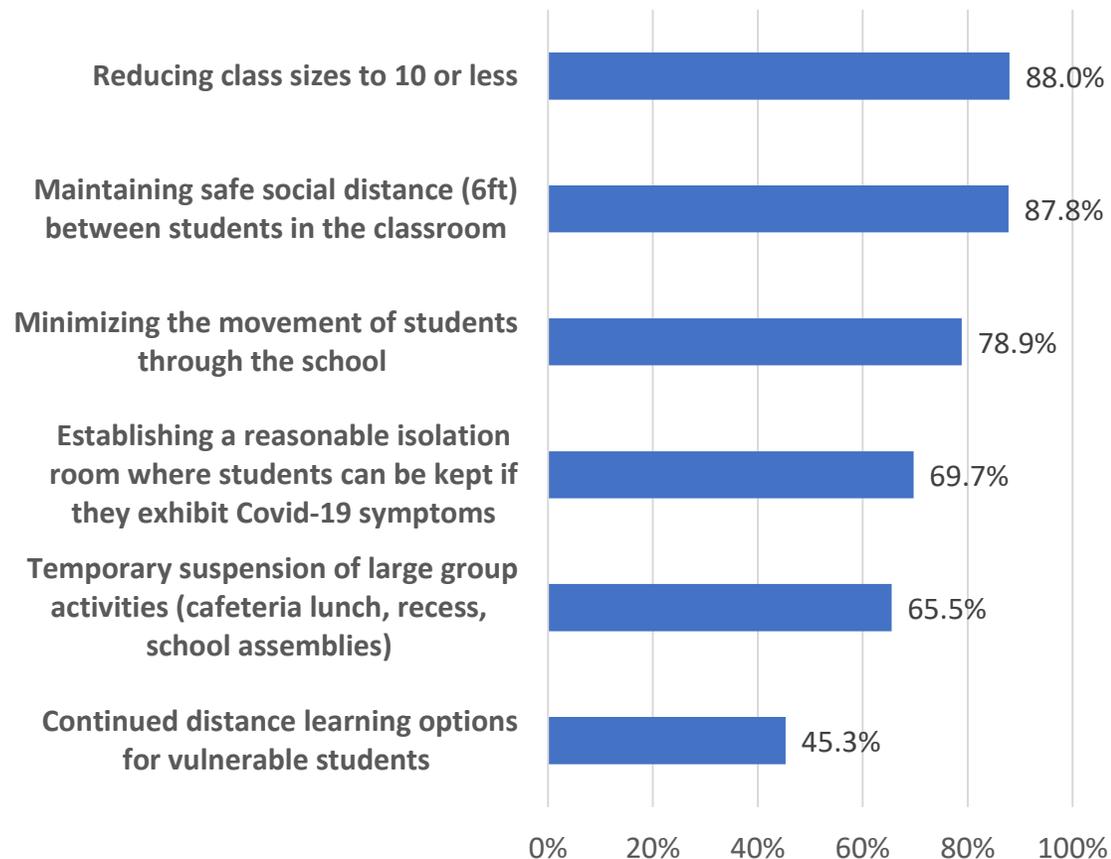
## Percent of Nurses Who Believe Re-Opening Guidelines Will Be Extremely or Somewhat Difficult –Screening, Cleaning, and PPE



- Nearly all surveyed nurses indicated that they felt daily temperature screenings would be difficult to implement.
- Eighty-five percent of nurses stated that getting students to be compliant with mask wearing would be difficult. Not surprisingly, nurses working in preschool and/or elementary schools were the most likely to view this as difficult (89.1%), while nurses in high schools were slightly more optimistic about mask compliance (21.4% felt it would not be difficult).
- Surveyed nurses felt that cleaning and disinfection protocols, including hand washing stations and regular deep-cleaning of schools would be among the easiest guidelines to implement.

# Nurses' Opinion on Ease of Implementation for Possible Re-Opening Guidelines

## Percent of Nurses Who Believe Re-Opening Guidelines Will Be Extremely or Somewhat Difficult – Social Distancing



N = 664

- Most surveyed nurses indicated they felt effective social distancing protocols in a school setting would be difficult to implement.
- Nurses in the preschool/elementary and middle school settings were most concerned about maintaining proper distance (defined in this survey as 6 ft) between students, while nurses in the high school setting were most concerned about minimizing the movement of students through the school.
- Most surveyed nurses felt that it would not be difficult to continue to offer distance learning options for vulnerable students, with only 45% indicating they felt it would be extremely or somewhat difficult.

# Additional Points on Reopening Planning

- Eighty percent of surveyed nurses indicated that they were concerned about the availability of sufficient PPE for themselves and their staff.
- When prompted to express any additional thoughts they have on re-opening in September, nurses consistently noted that the guidelines that have been suggested may be difficult or impossible to implement. Of particular concern were the ability to properly isolate students with symptoms, securing the necessary equipment, budget, and staff to handle a potential increased workload, parents sending students to school despite having symptoms, and making sure classrooms and bathrooms were cleaned properly.
- Surveyed nurses who chose to comment were split on whether in-person class was the wisest course of action in September. Some nurses felt that schools should be opened, without mask or screening protocols, and cases should be dealt with as they arise. Others felt that if stringent guidelines were necessary, it was an indication that schools were not ready to be re-opened.