

Elmo's Just Checking In: How Are You Doing?

The State of Well-Being Report

A young girl in a pink hoodie, Elmo, and a woman in a yellow shirt are sitting on a large grey rock by the edge of a pond. They are looking across the water towards a dense line of trees. The scene is bright and sunny. A yellow arch and a green bar are overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

SESAME WORKSHOP

The State of Well-Being Report

When Elmo tweeted, “Elmo is just checking in! How is everybody doing?” on social media, the consensus was clear: people are struggling.

Leveraging its five-decade history of addressing the most pressing needs of children and families, Sesame Workshop—the global impact nonprofit behind Sesame Street—partnered with The Harris Poll to shed light on the mental health crisis, launching a first-of-its-kind index on the state of well-being in America.

This new index will allow us to keep a pulse on the well-being of Americans and their families and contribute to our collective understanding of what drives well-being today.

Read the press release [here](#).



Study Methodology

- The results for the Sesame Workshop State of Well-Being Report 2024 survey are based on 2,012 online interviews. The survey was conducted among the general population, ages 16 years and older. The data was weighted to be representative of the general U.S. population.
- An additional oversample of educators was surveyed, with a total of 289 online interviews. Educators were defined as any preschool or K-12 teachers, classroom instructors, or in-school educational professionals (e.g., principals, counselors, etc.).
- We have defined generational cohorts as follows: Teen (16-17 years of age), Gen Z (18-27 years of age), Millennials (28-43 years of age), Gen X (44-59 years of age), Boomers+ (60+ years of age).
- All fieldwork for this survey took place in May 2024. The survey was 15 minutes in length.

Executive Summary: How Americans See Well-Being

Americans rank mental health on par with economic stability in terms of importance:

- When asked what we should prioritize for the future well-being of our country, Americans indicated that economic stability isn't enough—and is not alone as a first priority—but must be accompanied by investment in mental health and education: They want to see the prioritization of economic stability (80%) matched by mental health (77%) and high-quality education opportunities (76%)

Financial, physical, and mental health barriers strain people's well-being, and pandemic aftermath is still in effect

- Majorities of Americans (79%) say their own well-being is negatively impacted by at least one factor
 - 1 in 3 parents say their or their family's well-being is negatively impacted by mental health issues; the number jumps to over 1 in 2 for teens
 - A quarter of parents cite lacking access to high-quality education / learning opportunities as a source of negative impact
 - 61% of parents report their family is still experiencing negative effects from the COVID-19 pandemic

Americans lack optimism when it comes to our nation's well-being

- Americans aren't optimistic about the nation's well-being and think that leaders and institutions should prioritize well-being. Fewer than half feel a sense of optimism around the well-being of Americans (42%) or the state of early childhood education (42%)
- Americans feel we're at a crossroads and want to choose the path towards societal well-being: 81% agree, "Leaders of our institutions need to reorient their priorities around well-being"

Executive Summary: How Americans See Well-Being

Most Americans describe the average adult and child today as anxious

- 51% think that the average child is anxious
- 56% describe their fellow Americans as anxious

Adults are perceived as more difficult than children in today's society

- While both adults and children have anxious in their top three traits, people perceive children more positively than adults, calling children curious and smart, while adults are difficult

Americans' perceptions of others curb their sense of well-being

- While 93% report practicing kindness, only 55% say the average American is kind (38 pt gap)
- While 90% report practicing resilience, only 59% feel the average American is resilient (31 pt gap)
- Parents describe their children significantly more positively than Americans view the average child, differing by over 30 percentage points
- 70% of Americans say, "I often worry that the world is an unkind place for children"



Executive Summary: A Reason for Hope



Americans say getting honest about mental health and asking for help is critical

- 67% of all Americans say, “I wish my parents had been more honest with me about their mental health struggles”
- 79% of parents agree with that statement – suggesting that today’s parents are looking to break the silence around mental health with their own children

There is a stark generational divide around mental health

- 82% of Gen Z and Millennials agree, “I wish I had been taught more about how to understand and manage my emotions as a child,” compared to only 65% of respondents from older generations.
- That number jumps even higher to 84% of parents, signaling a major generational shift around the appreciation of speaking openly and honestly about emotional well-being from a young age.
- 63% of Gen Z and Millennials say that “Schools should focus on social and emotional skills just as much as academics,” as opposed to focusing on only academics the majority of the time (vs. 58% of older generations)—this goes up even higher to 71% for educators

Media has a notable role to play according to parents and educators

- Over 8 in 10 Americans feel media plays an important role in promoting kindness: 84% say it’s important to have more kindness-focused characters in children’s shows, going up to 93% of educators
- Parents especially believe that “Media can help teach children about how to understand and manage their emotions” (82% vs. 74% Total)

Executive Summary: A Reason for Hope



Americans believe in the power of kindness and resilience—despite thinking they are the only ones doing it

- 90% agree, “Nurturing kindness in children has a positive ripple effect, building a brave and caring society for generations to come”

Americans feel that promoting kindness and resilience is vitally important to society

- Strong majorities of Americans say it’s important for society to promote kindness (85%) and resilience (83%), with over a third (42% and 35%, respectively) saying it’s extremely important
 - 82% agree, “My well-being would improve if society was kinder”—increasing to 89% when asked about children
 - 72% agree, “My well-being would improve if I had the tools to be more resilient”—increasing to 88% when asked about children

People to want support families in need

- 85% of Americans agree, “We need more community and institutional support for children experiencing difficult family situations”
- Kindness fuels happiness: 91% of Americans agree, “Doing kind things for others makes me feel happier” and 78% gave emotional support to someone in the past 3 months

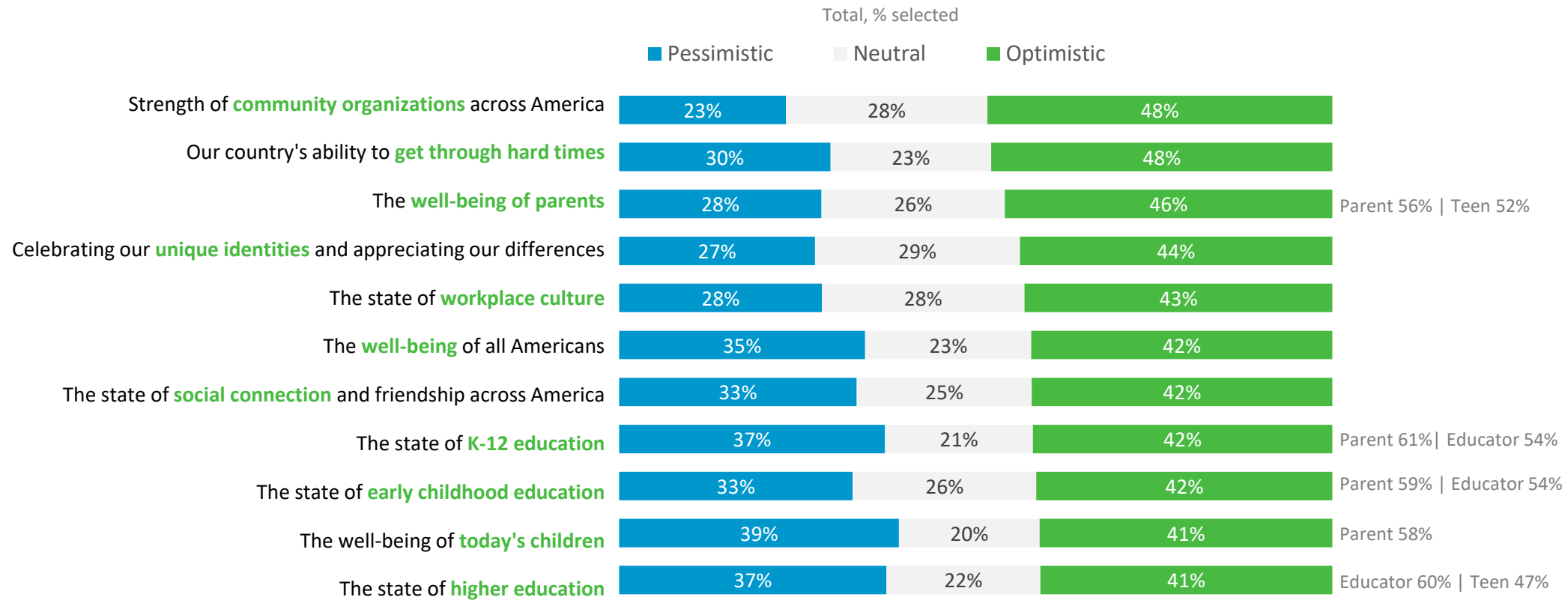
1. The State of Well-being



Collectively, Americans struggle to remain optimistic about society

The strength of community organizations and our country's resilience drive the most optimism

How optimistic or pessimistic are you about these areas of US society?



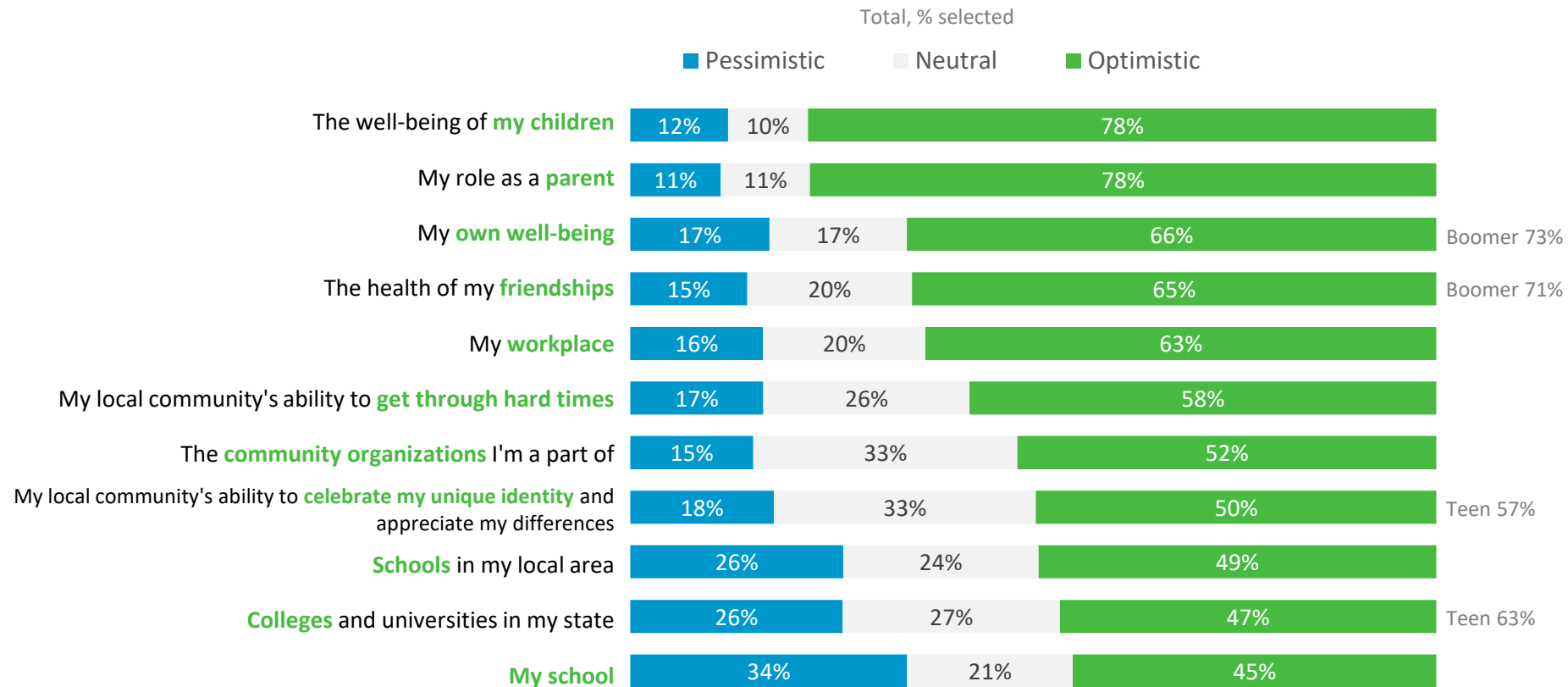
Optimism was **higher** across the board for:

- Millennials
- Black and Hispanic
- Parents
- Educators

Individually, Americans are optimistic about their personal outlook

The well-being of children and individual wellbeing, along with the role of parenting, drive the most optimism

How optimistic or pessimistic are you about these areas in **your life**?



Optimism was **higher** across the board for:

- Millennials
- Black and Hispanic
- Parents
- Educators

Q2. How optimistic or pessimistic are you about the following areas of your life? (Total, n=2,012)

Financial, physical, and mental health barriers strain people's well-being

Nearly 1 in 3 Parents say their or their family's well-being is negatively impacted by mental health issues; parents are also more likely to 'lack access to education' and substance abuse

Top negative impacts on people's well-being today

Total, % selected

 **41%**

Personal finances / economic security

Gen X 51%

 **28%**

You/your family's current physical health

Boomer 35%

 **27%**

You/your family's current emotional / mental health

Teen 54%
LGBTQIA+ 41%
Parents 32%

 **23%**

The effects of climate change

LGBTQIA+ 33%

 **23%**

Not having a strong network of friends or family

LGBTQIA+ 41%
Teen 39%

 **23%**

Racism or discrimination

Black 47%
AAPI 36%



Other negative impacts on well-being:

16%	Substance abuse	Gen Z 24% Parents 21%
15%	Not being able to be your authentic self	Teen 44% LGBTQIA+ 31% Gen Z 22%
14%	Lacking access to high-quality education / learning opportunities	Parents 25%
21%	None of the above	

79% cite at least one factor as negatively affecting their well-being

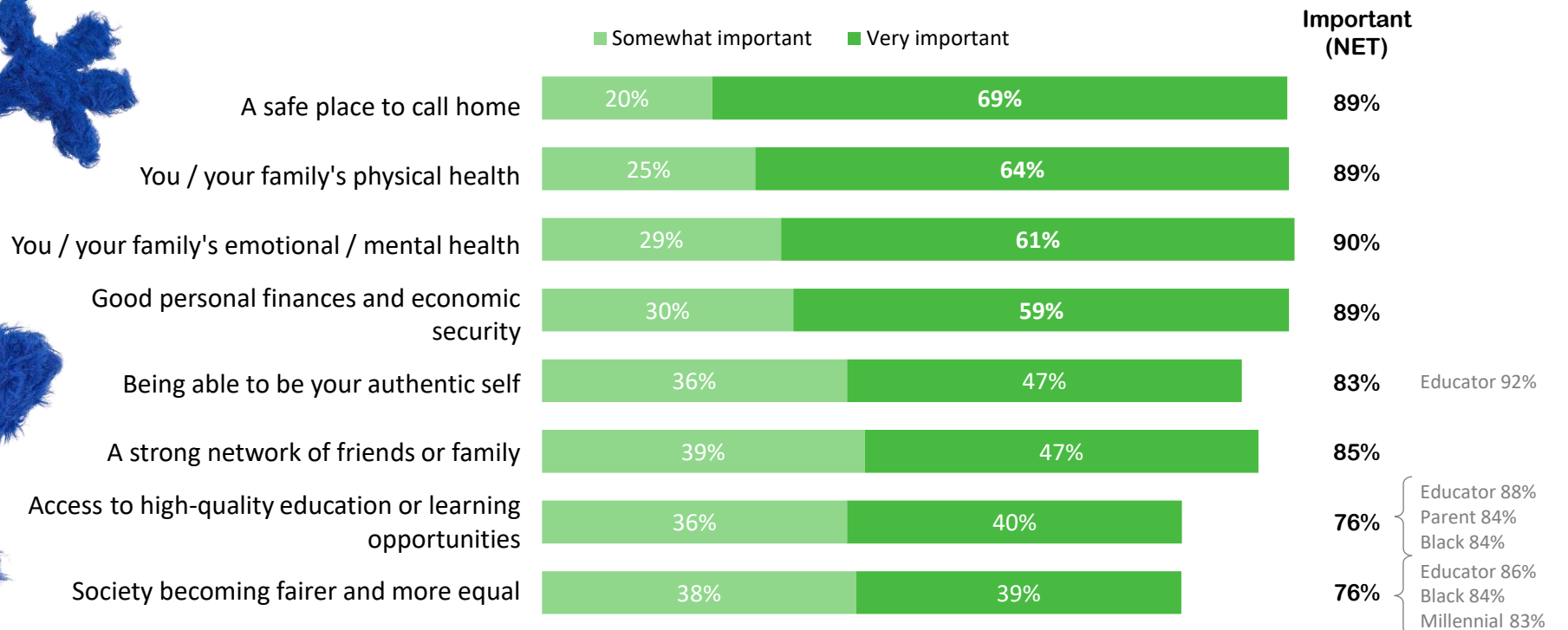
Having a safe home is Americans' top concern for their future well-being

For educators, parents, Black Americans, and Millennials equity and access to education are priorities to ensure future well-being



Importance for Americans future well-being

Total, % selected



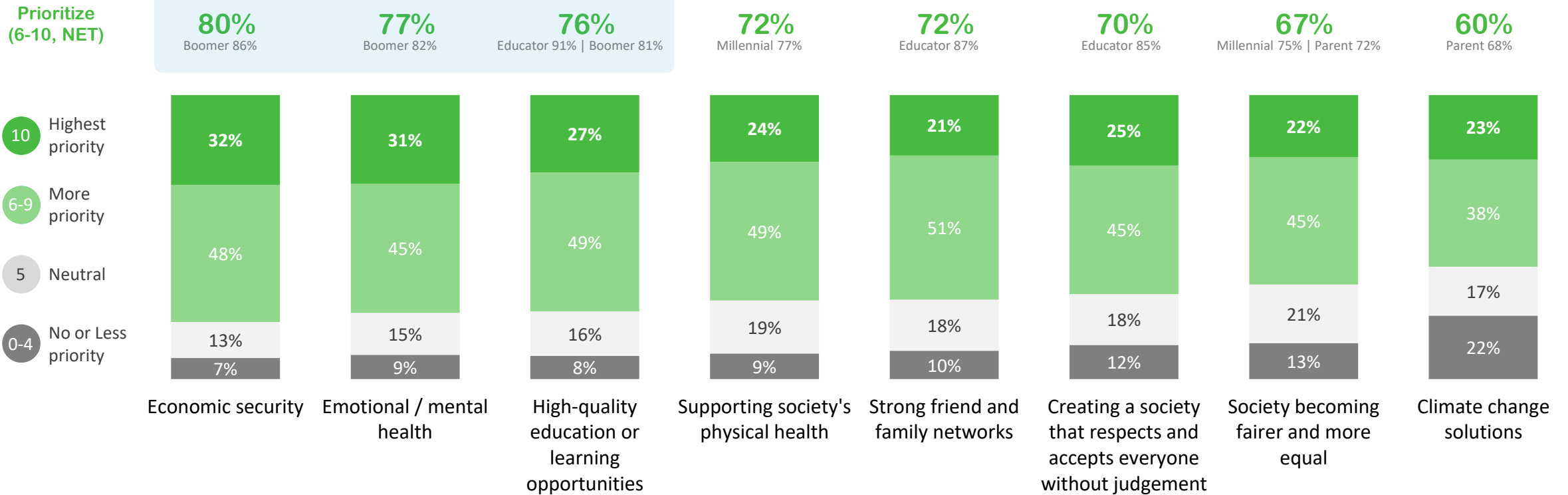
Economic security, mental health, and education are Americans' priorities

Educators would like to see an investment in strengthening personal support networking and creating a society without judgement

To best solve issues affecting the well-being of future generations in the US, what specific areas should we prioritize?

Importance of investing in...

Total, Scale 0-10



Americans want more support for families experiencing difficult situations

Parents and Gen Z aren't done processing the pandemic: over 6 in 10 report they are still experiencing negative side effects

85% of Americans say, "We need more community and institutional support for children experiencing difficult family situations."

44% of Americans say, "My family and I are still experiencing negative effects from the COVID-19 pandemic."

Gen Z 63%	Hispanic 56%
Parents 61%	LGBTQIA+ 55%
Millennial 57%	Educators 55%
Black 57%	



Americans feel the status quo is insufficient

They are calling on leaders to reorient around well-being

81%

of Americans agree,

“Leaders of our institutions need to reorient their priorities around well-being.”

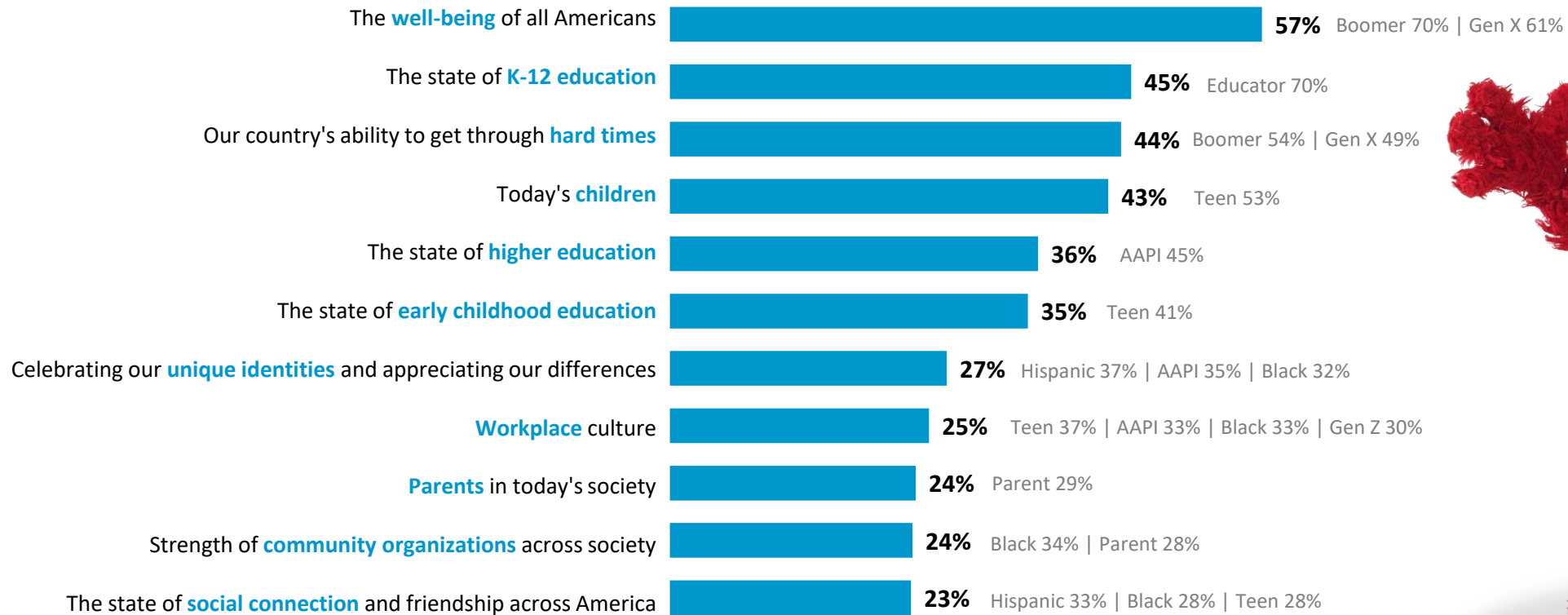


Americans want leaders to focus on well-being, education, and resilience

Educators particularly want leaders to focus on K-12 education (25 percentage points higher than average Americans)

Where Americans want leaders and institutions to focus resources and attention

Total, % selected



Societal Perceptions

Critical to well-being are passion, critical thinking, kindness, and resilience

Americans are moving away from others' expectations, perfection tendencies, and the need to be confident at all costs

What is most important for **adults' well-being**? Total, % selected

76%	Pursuing what you love	vs.	Pursuing what's expected	24%
74%	Being a creative thinker / problem solver	vs.	Knowing the right answer	26%
74%	Being kind to others	vs.	Focusing energy just on their own needs	26%
72%	Persevering in the face of challenges	vs.	Prioritizing easier tasks	28%
61%	Being compassionate	vs.	Being confident	39%
60%	Learning more about the world around them	vs.	Focusing on their own lives	40%

For some qualities, Americans show uncertainty

55%	Having empathy	vs.	Having manners	45%
53%	Following authority	vs.	Questioning authority	47%
52%	Fitting in	vs.	Standing out	48%

Q6. For each pair, please choose the one that is more important for the well-being of adults in the United States today.
(Total, n=2,012)



For children, kindness is the most important element of well-being

Teachers consider being compassionate more important than enforcing authority for children's well-being

What is most important for children's well-being? Total, % selected

75%	Being kind to others	vs.	Getting the things they want	25%
73%	Being a creative thinker / problem solver	vs.	Knowing the right answer	27%
70%	Pursuing what you love	vs.	Pursuing what's expected	30%
69%	Persevering in the face of challenges	vs.	Prioritizing easier tasks	31%
68%	Understanding the world around them	vs.	Being protected from the world around them	32%
60%	Following authority	vs.	Questioning authority	40%

For some qualities, Americans show uncertainty Educators strongly favor compassion and empathy

54%	<small>Educator 64%</small> Being compassionate	vs.	Being confident	46%
54%	Having manners	vs.	Having empathy <small>Educator 62%</small>	46%
53%	Fitting in	vs.	Standing out	47%



People perceive kids more positively than adults, calling children curious and smart

The average American adult is...

Total, % selected

Anxious	56%	LGBTQIA+ 69% Educator 69%
Difficult	44%	Gen Z 56% LGBTQIA+ 54% Teen 53%
Resilient	43%	

Curious	41%	Teen 50% Educator 48%
Helpful	39%	Parent* 51%
Kind	37%	
Smart	37%	Hispanic* 53%
Compassionate	35%	Black* 52%
Thoughtful	34%	
Empathetic	33%	
Easygoing	32%	Millennial* 47%

*Parents, Millennials, and Black and Hispanic Americans over-indexed compared to the total on nearly every answer choice

The average American child is...

Total, % selected

Curious	64%	Teen 76%
Anxious	51%	Teen 67% Educator 61%
Smart	46%	

Resilient	44%	
Kind	42%	Black* 57%
Difficult	41%	Teen 55% Educator 50%
Thoughtful	40%	
Compassionate	39%	
Helpful	39%	Educator 48%
Easygoing	38%	Hispanic* 51% LGBTQIA+ 46%
Empathetic	37%	

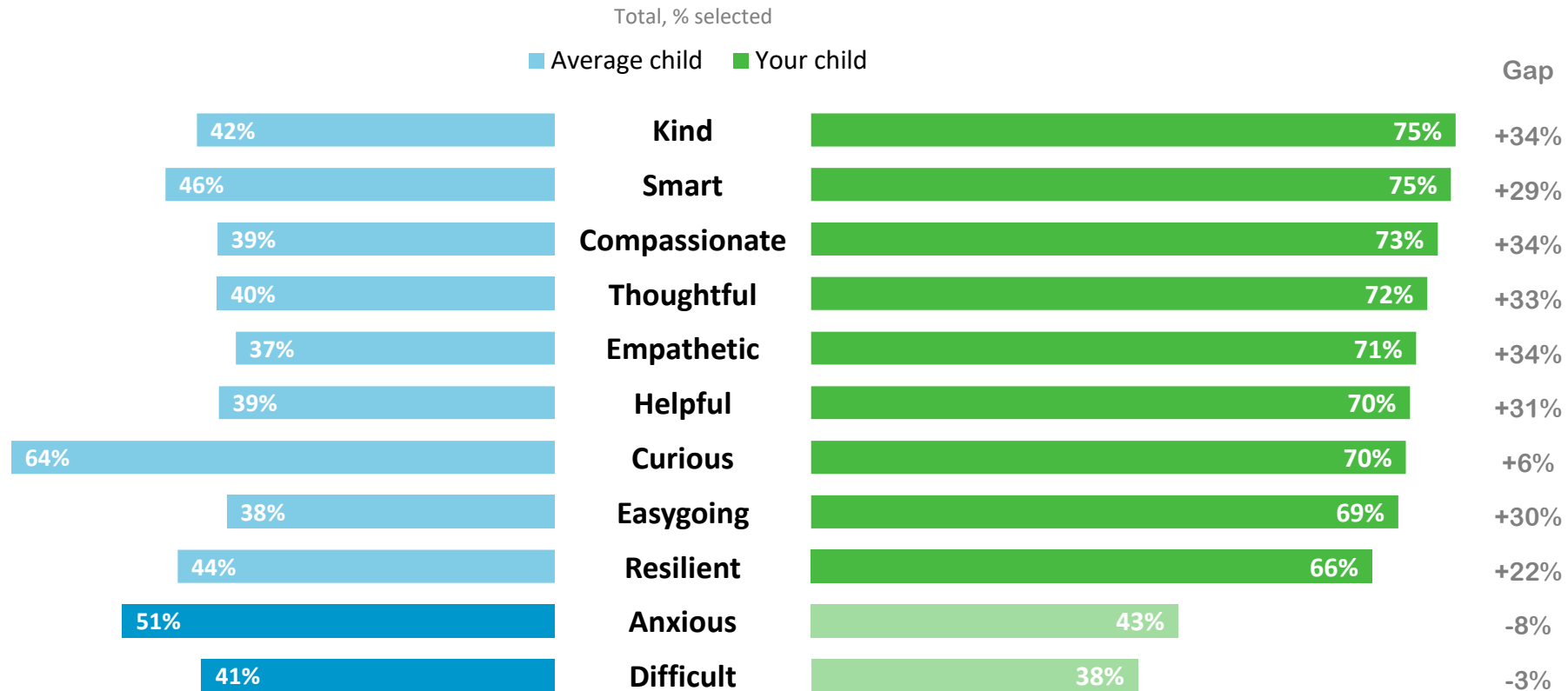
*Black and Hispanic Americans over-indexed compared to the total on nearly every answer choice



Q4. How much would you say _____ describes the average adult in the United States today? (Total, n=2,012)
Q5A. How much would you say _____ describes the average child in the United States today? (Total, n=2,012)

Parents describe their children significantly more positively than Americans view the average child, differing by over 30 percentage points

How much would you say _____ describes the **average child** / **your child**?



Parents also ranked the average child more positively, by 5 to 19 pts.

Q5A. How much would you say _____ describes the average child in the United States today? (Total, n=2,012)
 Q5B. How much would you say _____ describes your child? (Parents, n=509)

Barely half of Americans trust the leaders of their institutions

Interestingly, trust increases with Black Americans, Millennials, Parents, and Gen Z



48% of Americans agree, “I generally trust the leaders of our institutions.”

Black 63%	Gen Z 58%
Millennial 62%	Hispanic 57%
Parents 62%	Educator 56%

Americans feel a tension between an unkind world and the importance of helping children be aware

74% of Americans say, “It’s important to teach children about the bad things that happen in the world.”

vs. 26% who say, “It’s important to protect children from hearing about bad things that happen in the world.”

70% of Americans say, “I often worry that the world is an unkind place for children.”

vs. 30% who say, “I rarely worry that the world is an unkind place for children.”





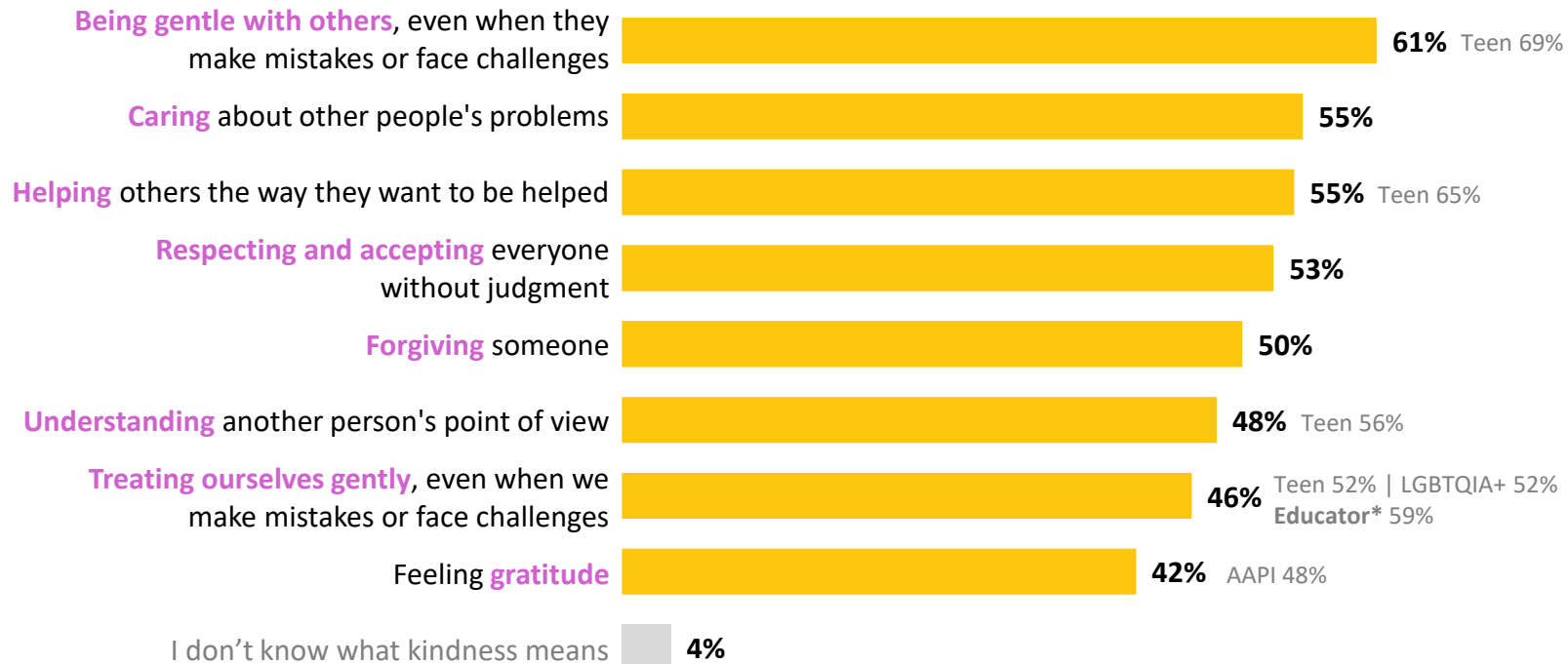
2. The State of Kindness

Kindness fuels happiness and starts with empathy, caring, and selflessness

Teens are especially tuned into being gentle with others and helping people the way they want to be helped

What does kindness mean to you?

Total, % selected



91% of Americans agree, "Doing kind things for others makes me feel happier."
Educator 96%



*Educators over-indexed compared to the total on nearly every answer selection by +7-12 percentage points

Q13. What does kindness mean to you? (Total, n=2,012)
Q19. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Total, n=2,012)

Americans overwhelmingly report practicing kindness in their own lives

Most Americans are lending a listening ear or a helping hand, while educators practicing giving people grace

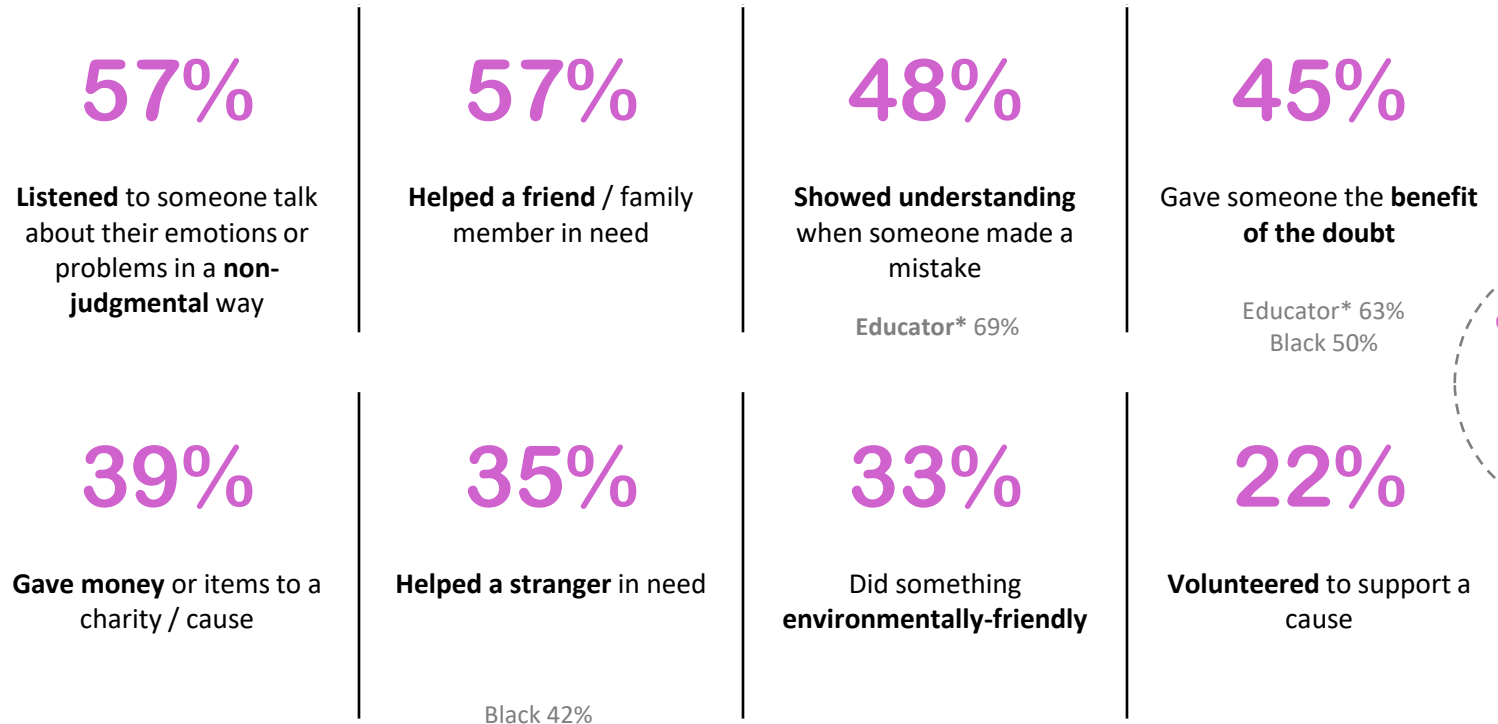
93%

of Americans say they've practiced kindness in the past 3 months



Ways people have shown kindness in the past 3 months

Total, % selected



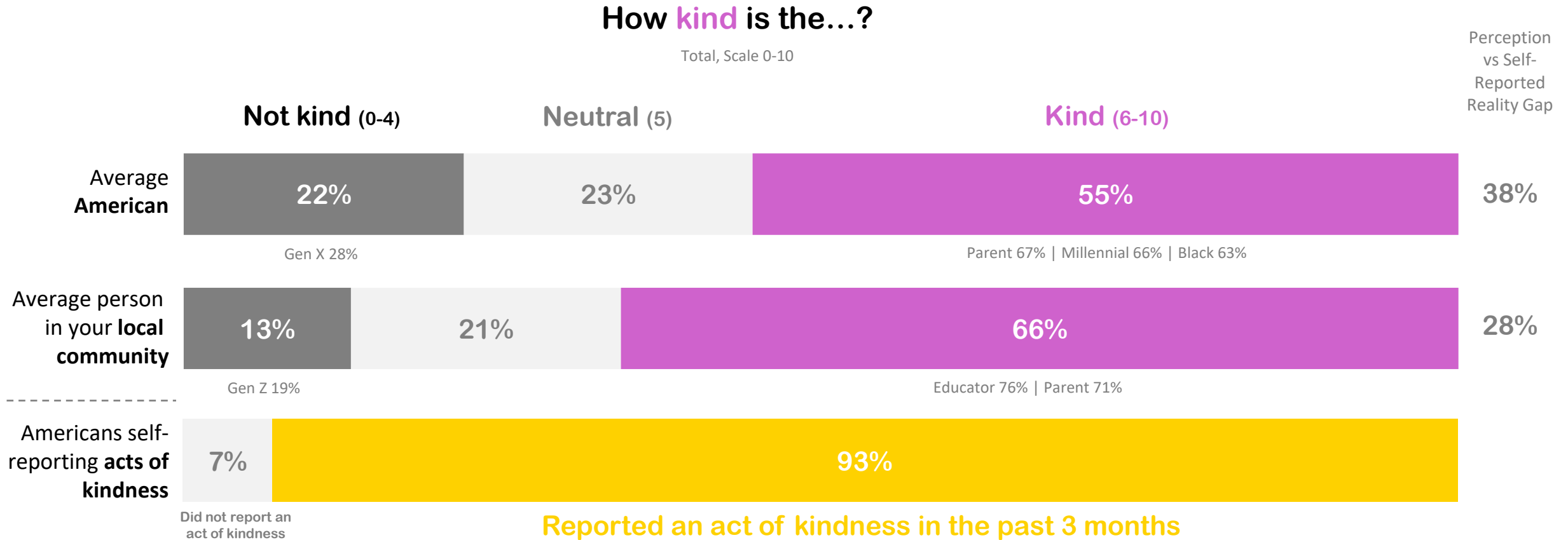
Over 3-in-4 gave emotional support to someone (78%)

**Educators over-indexed compared to the total on nearly every answer selection by +5-21 percentage points*

Q17. Which of these kindness-related behaviors have you done in the last three months? (Total, n=2,012)

While Americans report being kind, they don't see it in others

There is a perception vs self-reported reality gap regarding kindness, which is especially evident on a national level



Q15. On a scale from 0 to 10, how kind do you think the average American is today? 0=Not kind at all, 5=Neutral, 10=Extremely kind (Total, n=2,012) | Q16. On a scale from 0 to 10, how kind do you think the average person in your local community is today? (Total, n=2,012) | Q17. Which of these kindness-related behaviors have you done in the last three months? (Total, n=2,012)

Americans tend to hold negative views of other people's behaviors

64% of Americans say, "Most people don't go out of their way to help others."

vs. 36% who say, "Most people go out of their way to help others."

60% of Americans say, "Most children today are disrespectful."

vs. 40% who say, "Most children today show respect to others."

55% of Americans say, "Being kind is not a priority to most people."

vs. 45% who say, "Being kind is a priority to most people."

Americans see promoting kindness as vital for our society

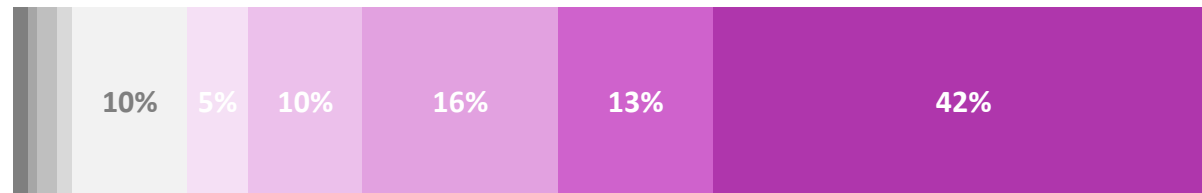
This is especially true for educators who nearly unanimously support it

How important is it for society to promote kindness?

Total, Scale 0-10

85%

Educator 96%
Boomer 91%



Not important at all (0)

Neutral (5)

Extremely important (10)

Kindness definition:
“Thinking about how others feel and engaging in helpful and caring behaviors”



Q14. On a scale from 0 to 10, how important is it for society to promote kindness? (Total, n= 2,012)

Teaching kindness begins with modeling it and understanding emotions

Educators and Black Americans see featuring more kindness-focused characters in children's shows as a solution

How important are the following for helping children be kinder?

Total, % selected *somewhat or very important*

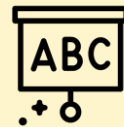
87% of Americans agree, "Children will only grow up to be kind if the adults around them model kindness toward others."



Support from adults

Adults around them **91%**
modeling kindness

More support from adults **90%**
to **help children work**
through conflicts



Teaching kindness

Teaching kindness in **90%**
school
AAPI 96%

Teaching children how to **90%**
understand their own
emotions and the
emotions of others
Educator 95%

Teaching children **87%**
positively about peoples'
differences
Educator 94%



Resources & opportunities

More **resources for** **85%**
parents to help them
teach kindness to their
children

Having more **kindness-**
focused characters in
children's shows **84%**
Educator 93%
Black 90%

More **volunteer** **81%**
opportunities for children
AAPI 90%
Educator 90%

61% of Americans say, "Schools should focus on social and emotional skills just as much as academics."



Q9. For each pair, select which statement do you agree with more. (Total, n=2,012) | Q18. How important is it that society does the following to help children be kinder? (Total, n=2,012) | Q19. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Total, n=2,012)

Teachers say they witness kindness in action, yet there is room for improvement



72%

of educators agree,

“Today's educational environment makes it easy for me to **teach kindness** to students.”



70%

of educators agree,

“The average student today regularly **shows kindness** in the classroom setting.”



Nearly all Americans see kindness as an amplifier for societal well-being

Kindness emerges as a great unlock to the well-being of children, adults, and future generations

Educator 94%
Boomer 94%

89%
of Americans agree,

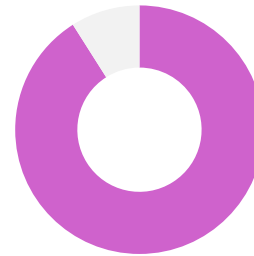
“The well-being of children would improve if society was kinder.”

Educator 91%

82%
of Americans agree,

“My well-being would improve if society was kinder.”

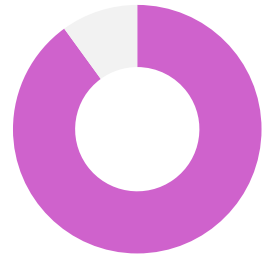
91%
of Americans agree,



“Kindness fosters stronger bonds between people, leading to a more empathetic and supportive community.”

Boomer 96%

90%
of Americans agree,



“Nurturing kindness in children has a positive ripple effect, building a brave and caring society for generations to come.”

Boomer 98%



Q19. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Total, n=2,012)

3. The State of Resilience



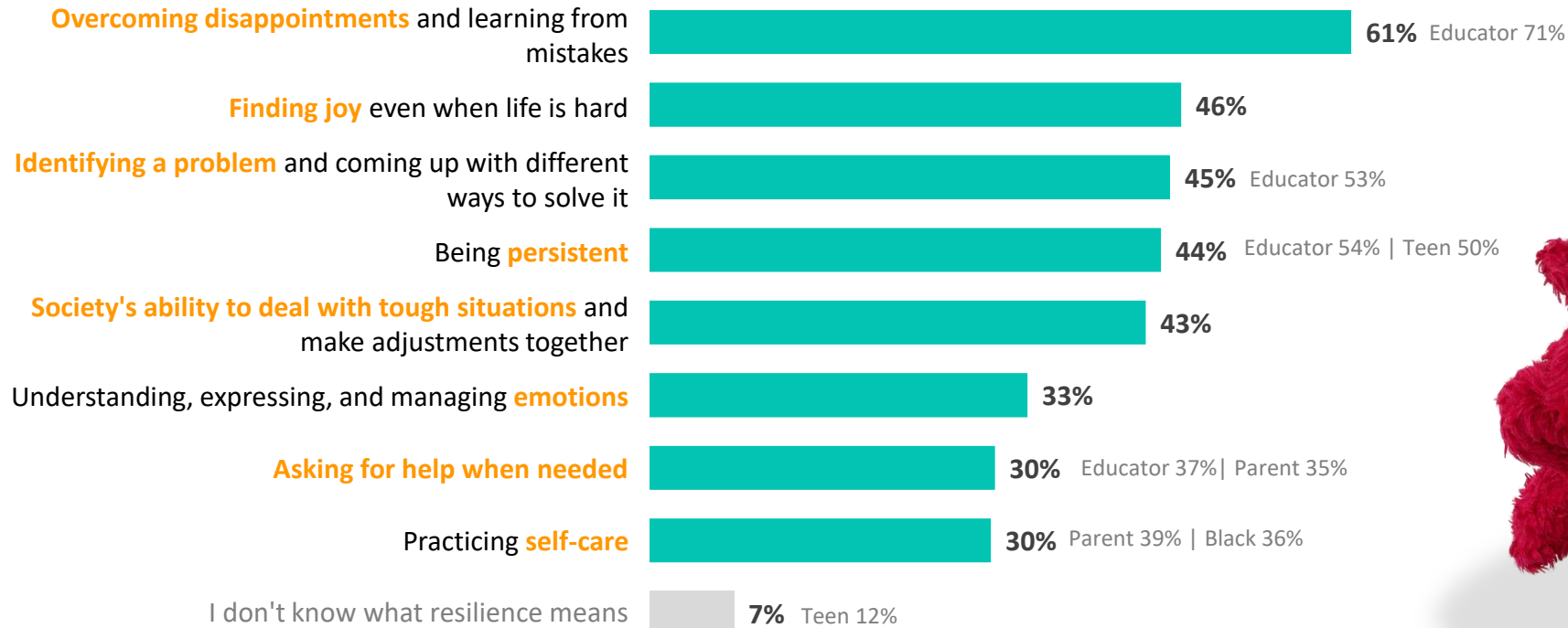
SESAME WORKSHOP

Most Americans define resilience as the ability to grow from challenges

Educators are more likely to define resilience in the context of persistent and creative problem solving

What does **resilience** mean to you?

Total, % selected



Americans believe resilience is fostered in the goodwill of others



85%

of Americans agree,

“We aren't meant to solve all of our problems on our own—we should ask for help.”

Educator 92%



54%

of Americans say,

“People need to be responsible for their own children and families **and other people in society.**”

*vs. 46% say, “People need to be responsible **only** for their own children and families.”*



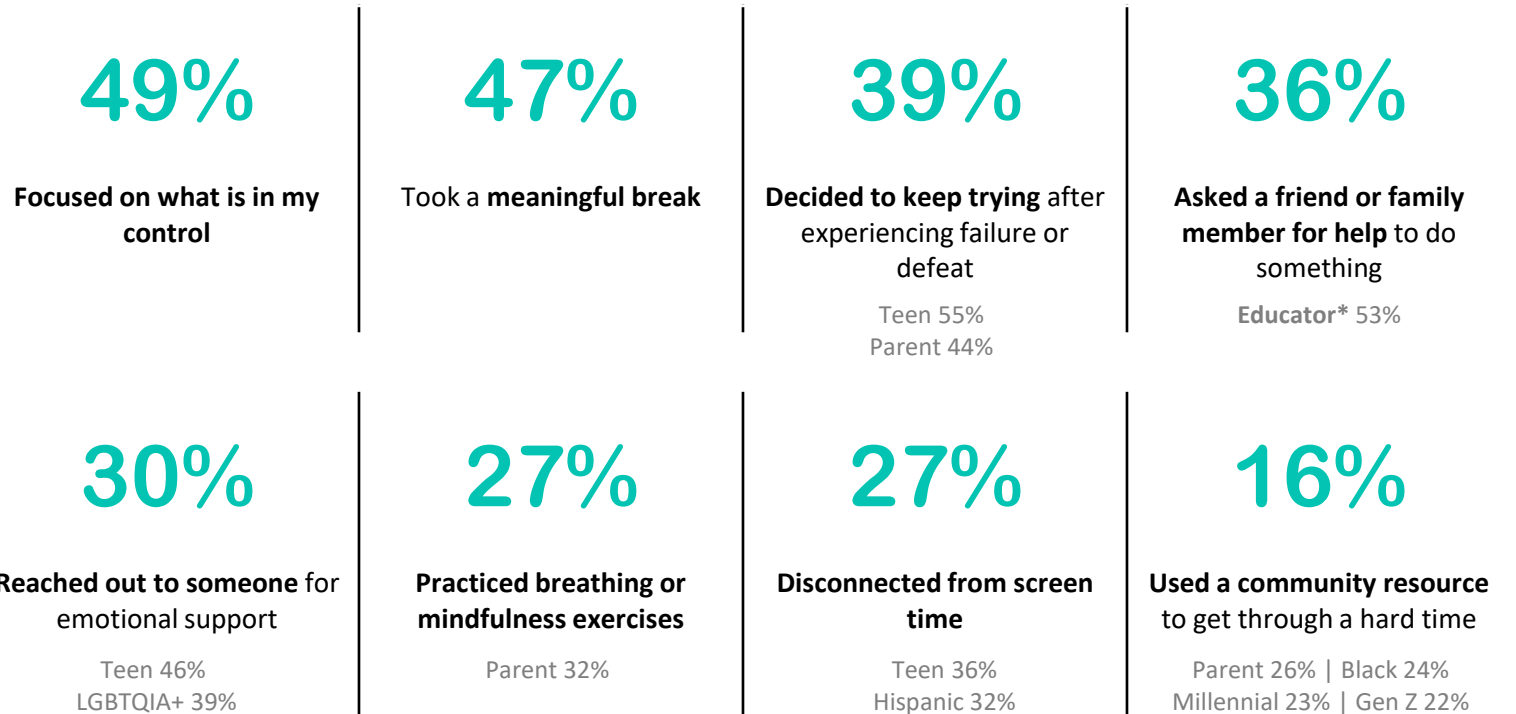
Americans report actively practicing resilient behaviors in their lives

Teens are more likely to practice persistence, ask for emotional support, and disconnect from tech than adults



Ways people have shown resilience in the past 3 months

Total, % selected



**Educators over-indexed compared to the total on nearly every answer selection by +4-16 percentage points*

While Americans report being resilient, they don't see it in others

There is a perception vs self-reported reality gap regarding resilience, which is especially evident on a national level

How resilient is the...?

Total, Scale 0-10

Perception
vs Self-
Reported
Reality Gap

Not resilient (0-4)

Neutral (5)

Resilient (6-10)

Average
American

19%

22%

59%

31%

Black 72% | Parent 69% | Millennial 68% | Hispanic 67%

Average person
in your local
community

12%

23%

65%

24%

Teen 17% | LGBTQIA+ 17%

Black 75% | Millennial 72% | Parent 72%

Americans
self-reporting
practicing
resilience

10%

90%

Did not report
practicing
resilience

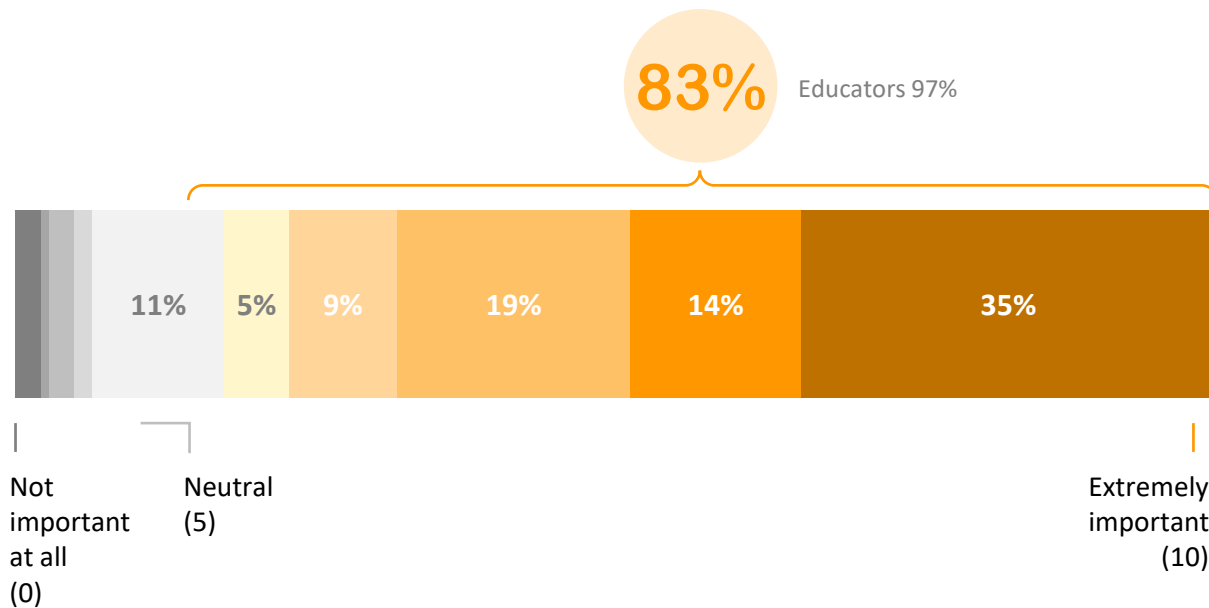
Reported a practice of resilience in the past 3 months

Q22: On a scale from 0 to 10, how resilient do you think the average American is today? 0=Not resilient at all, 5=Neutral, 10=Extremely resilient (Total, n= 2,012) | Q23: On a scale from 0 to 10, how resilient do you think the average person in your local community is today? (Total, n= 2,012) | Q24: Which of these resilience-related behaviors have you done in the last three months? (Total, n= 2,012)

Over 8 in 10 consider it important for society to promote resilience—with a third saying it’s extremely important

How important is it for society to promote resilience?

Total, Scale 0-10



Resilience definition:
“The ability to cope with and overcome challenges”

89% agree, “Teaching resilience can create a society that sticks with solving long-term problems.”



Q21: On a scale from 0 to 10, how important is it for society to promote resilience? (Total, n= 2,012)
Q26: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Total, n= 2,012)

Adults wished they had learned about emotions and their parents' mental health struggles

Parents, Black Americans, and teens feel particularly strong about these sentiments as they navigate today's challenges

73%

84%
Parents

of Americans agree,

“I wish I had been taught more about how to understand and manage my emotions as a child.”

Black 85% Teen 84% Educator 84%
Gen Z 83% Millennial 82% LGBTQIA+ 82%

67%

79%
Parents

of Americans agree,

“I wish my parents had been more honest with me about their mental health struggles.”

Millennial 78% LGBTQIA+ 78% Gen Z 77%
Teen 77% AAPI 77% Educators 77%
Black 76% Hispanic 73%



Teaching resilience begins with encouragement and honesty

Educators especially believe working through emotions and the mind-body connection can help build resilient children

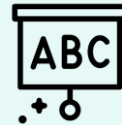
How important are the following for helping children be **resilient**?

Total, % selected *somewhat or very important*



Support from adults

- Adults around them encouraging them and **believing in their abilities** **91%**
- Adults around them helping them **find solutions to challenges** **90%**
- Adults around them **being honest** about their own feelings **89%**
Educator 95%



Teaching resilience

- Teaching children **to work through, rather than avoid, negative feelings** **90%**
Educator 96%
- Teaching children **mind-body connection** practices **79%**
Educator 90%
Parent 87%
AAPI 86%



Resources & opportunities

- Ensuring all children have **equal learning opportunities** **89%**
- Support networks** for parents **88%**

74% of Americans agree, "Media can help teach children about how to understand and manage their emotions."
Parent 82%

Q25. How important is it that society does the following to help children be more resilient? (Total, n=2,012)
Q26: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Total, n=2,012)

Educators say the school setting supports resilience, yet skill development can grow



68%

of educators agree,

“Today’s educational environment makes it easy for me to **teach resilience** to students.”



64%

of educators agree,

“The average child today **has the skills they need** to practice resilience in the classroom.”



Building resilience in children spreads strength through communities

Americans are looking for resilience tools to improve the well-being of children and themselves

90%
of Americans agree,



“Fostering resilience in children has a positive ripple effect, spreading strength and courage through communities.”



88%
of Americans agree,

Educator 94%

“The well-being of children would improve if they had the tools to be more resilient.”

72%
of Americans agree,

Educator 86%
Millennial 84%
Black 82%
Parent 82%
AAPI 80%

“My well-being would improve if I had the tools to be more resilient.”

Americans are prioritizing the mind-body connection

Americans see physical health and time outdoors as integral to maintaining their mental well-being



89% of Americans say, “Taking care of my body is central to taking care of my mental health.”

Educator 95%

84% of Americans say, “When I get a chance to move or exercise, I do better emotionally.”

Educator 92%

84% of Americans say, “Getting outside and exploring the outdoors is important for my well-being.”

Educator 93%



Q28. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Total, n=2,012)



*Learn more about our Emotional Well-Being Resources at
[sesame.org/mentalhealth](https://www.sesame.org/mentalhealth)*