



The impact of COVID-19 on high school counselors and the college search process:
A national survey.



Key Research Questions

- What do high school counselors need from colleges during this crisis? Do they prefer certain communication channels over others right now?
- What type of information do high school counselors need to have readily available to share with kids and families at this time when face-to-face events are not possible?
- According to high school counselors what are juniors, seniors, and their parents worried about during this crisis?
- Examples of excellent communication and handling of COVID-19 by institutions.
- Advice for colleges from high school counselors.

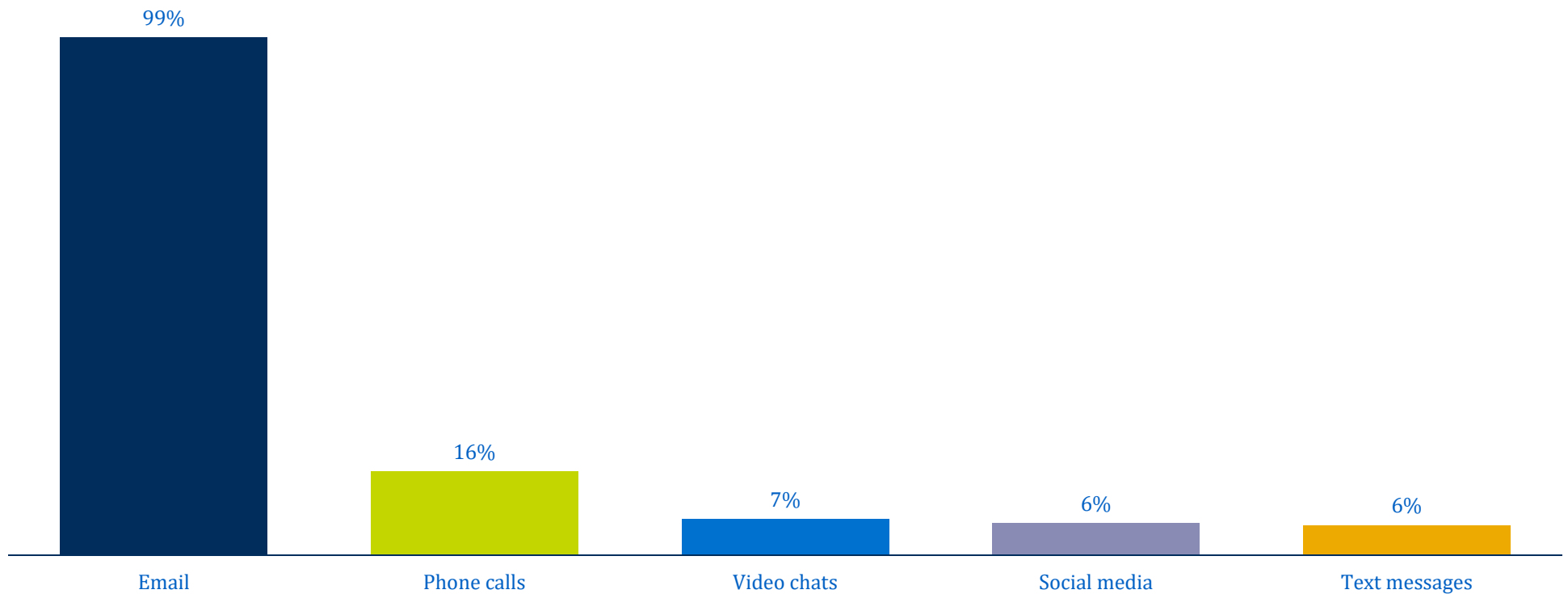
Survey Methodology

- Ruffalo Noel Levitz and High School Counselor Connect partnered to contact high school counselors electronically.
- Survey deployed beginning 04/10/20 and closed 04/14/20.
- Total completed responses 2,689.

Type of high school respondents work at:

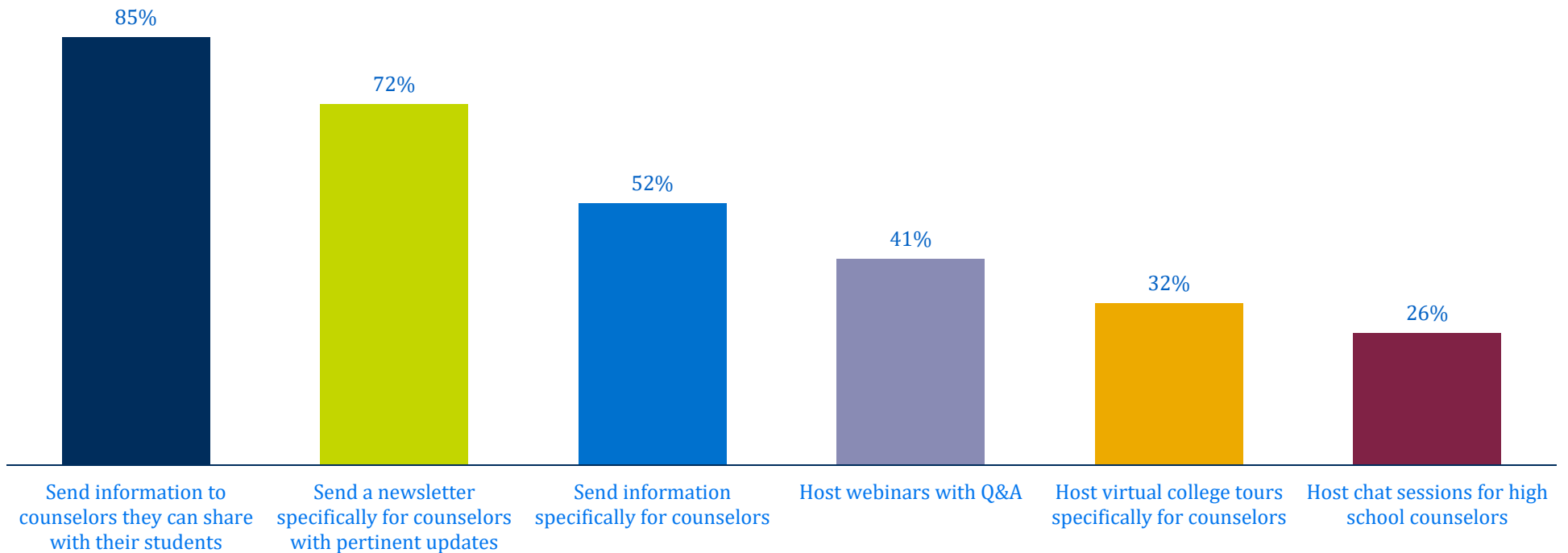
Private	18%
Public	76%
Boarding	1%
Other	4%

How do you prefer to be contacted by colleges and universities?



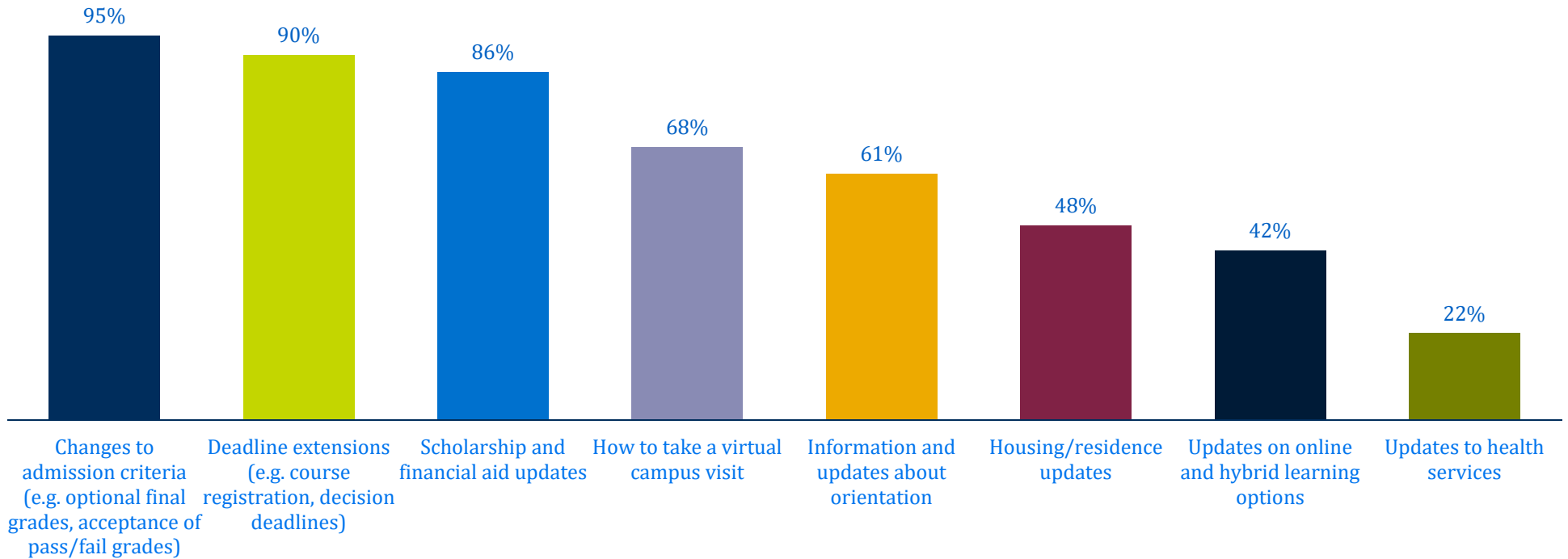
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How can institutions assist high school counselors during the COVID-19 pandemic?



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What types of information should colleges and universities have readily available for high school counselors?



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What information should colleges have readily available?

Admissions

Checklists

Contact information

Information all in one place

Information for international students

Information for students with disabilities.

Testing updates

Updates to application schedule

Updates just for juniors

Financial aid

Checklists

Contact information

Information all in one place

Financial aid appeal process

Testing updates

Remote campus visits and events

For juniors-application sessions

For accepted seniors- admitted student events

For sophomores and juniors- information sessions

Student athletes

Updates on status of summer camps/programs (9th to 12th grades)

Virtual sessions on eligibility changes

On website- How will pass/fail affect athletic eligibility?

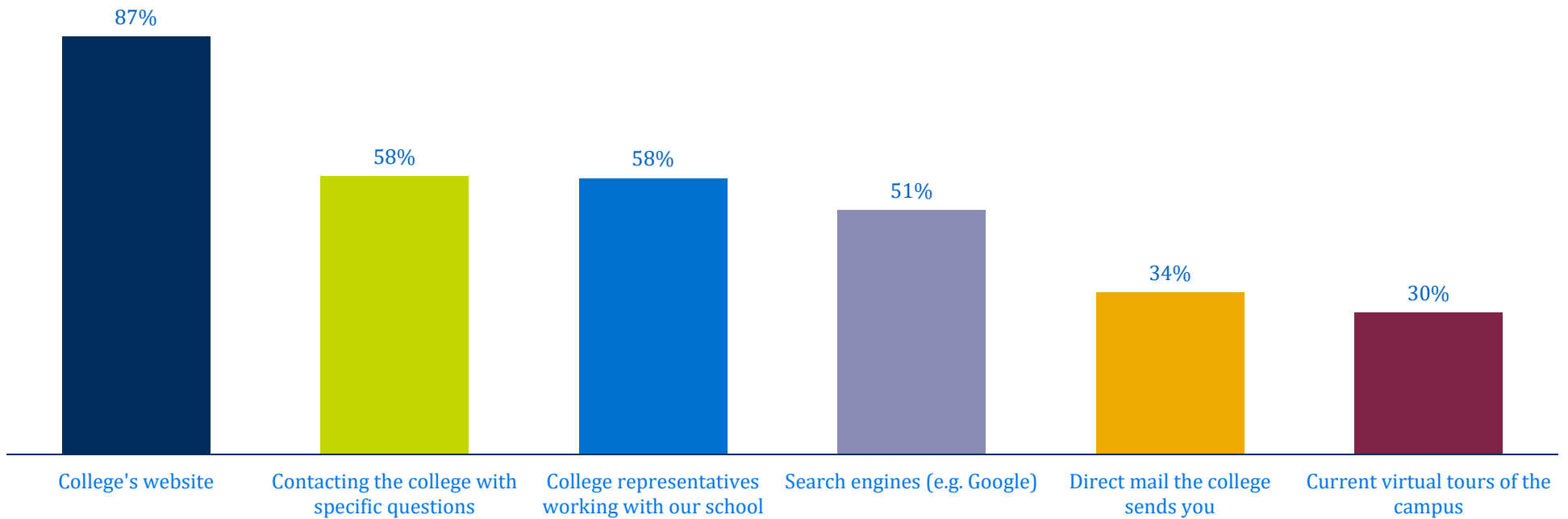
Remote campus visits and events just for athletes

Junior athletes- how will college seniors coming back for another year of play affect their place in a roster?



What resources are you currently using to gather information on colleges and universities?

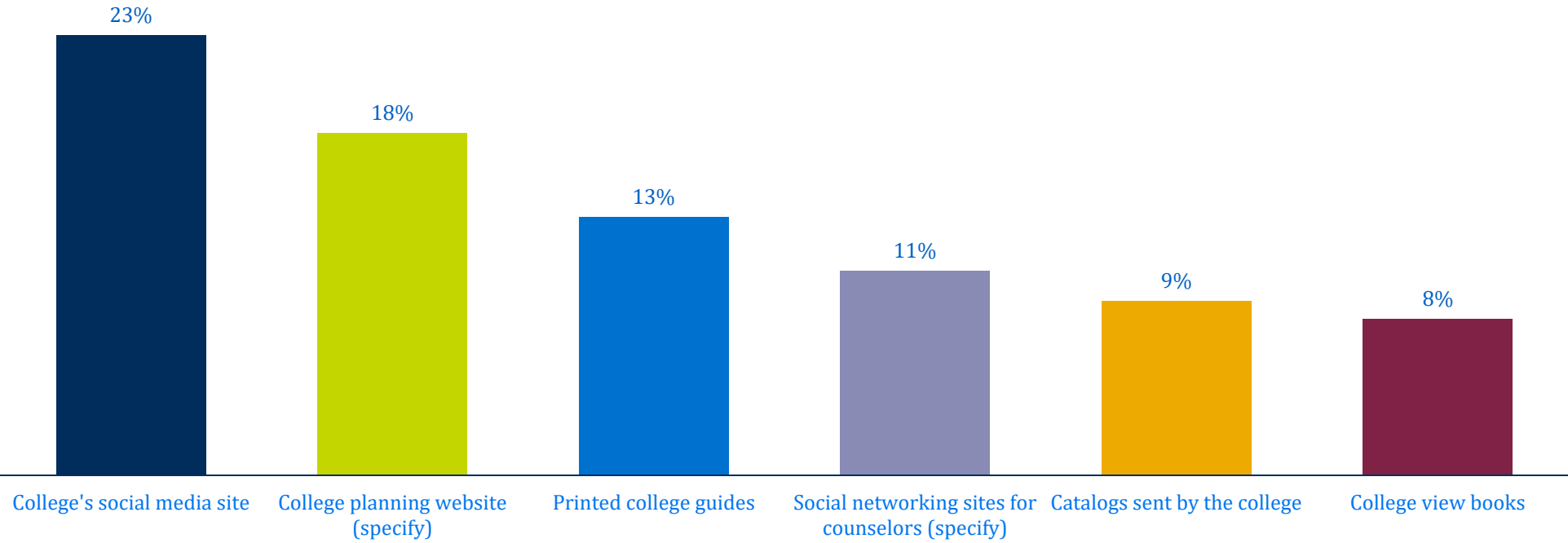
Top resources



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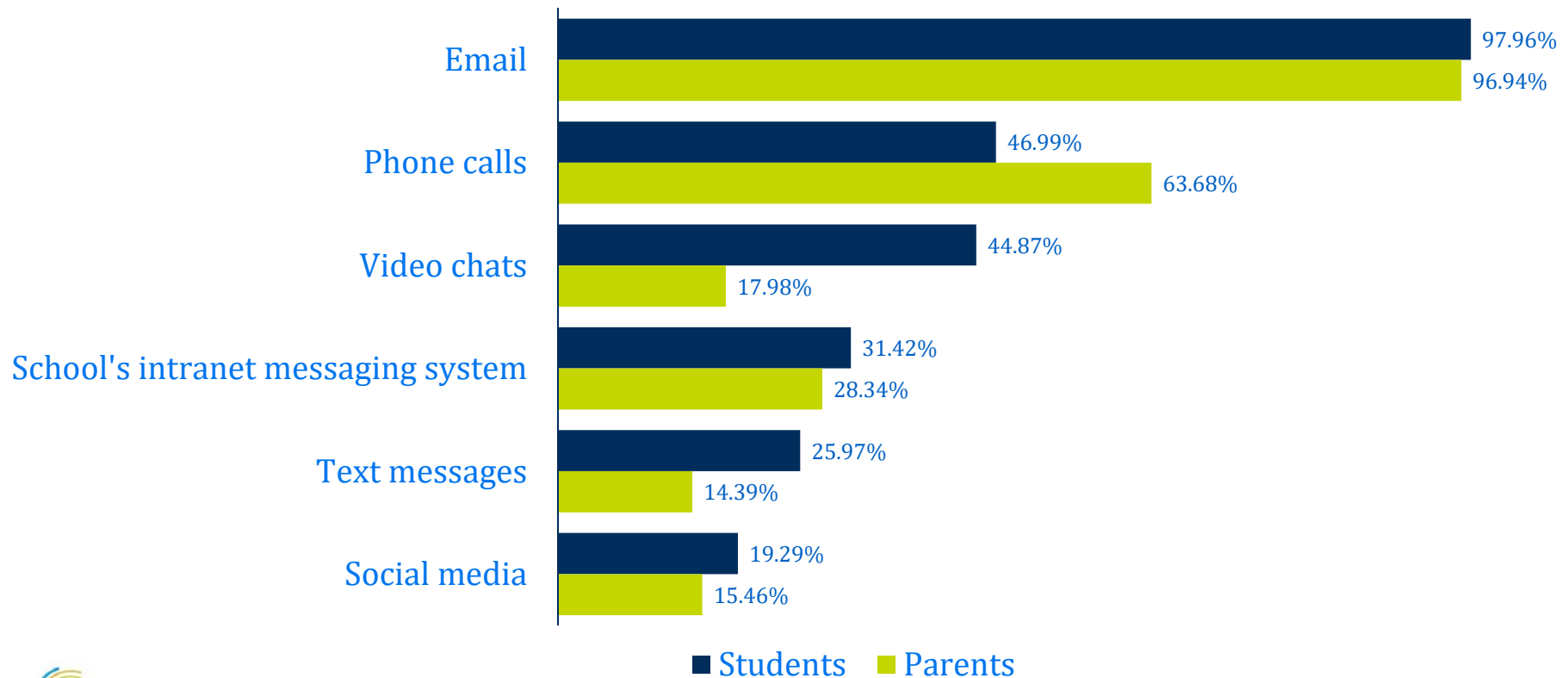
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Bottom resources



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How are high school counselors communicating with students and parents during this crisis?



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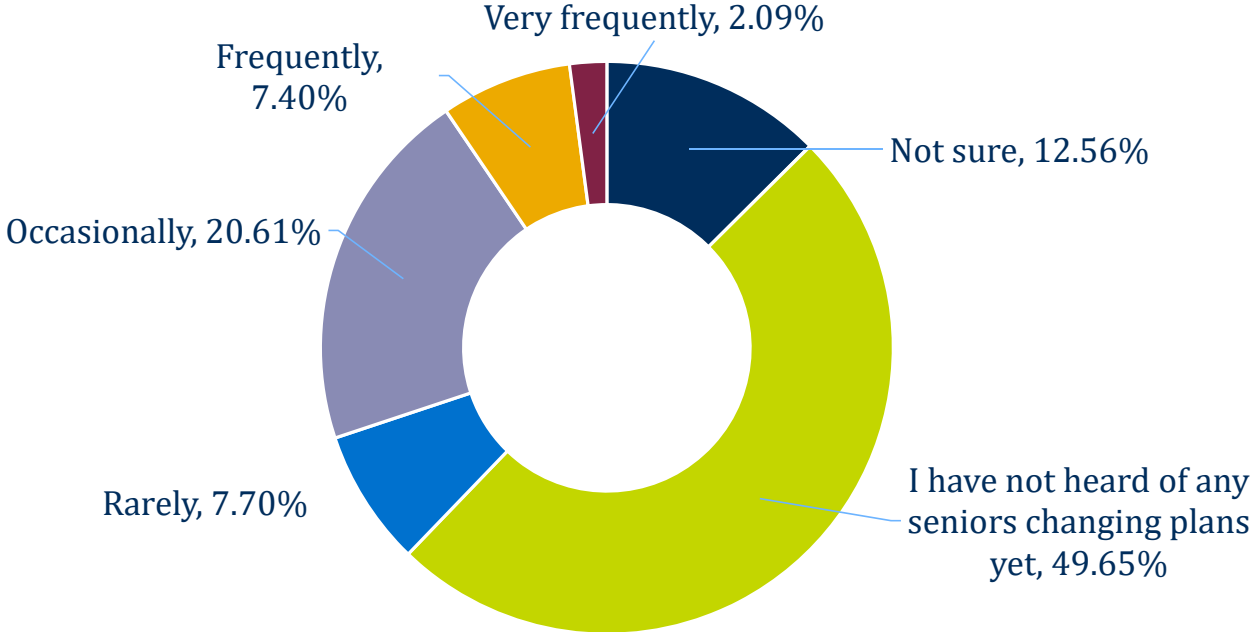
Students' and parents' concerns according to counselors

	Unable to make scheduled visits/interviews	Unable to tour campuses	Cost	Standardized testing effect on college admission	Pass/Fail high school grade's effect on college admission
Juniors	88%	100%	53%	27%	100%
Seniors	100%	83%	98%	58%	53%
Parents	81%	78%	100%	100%	73%

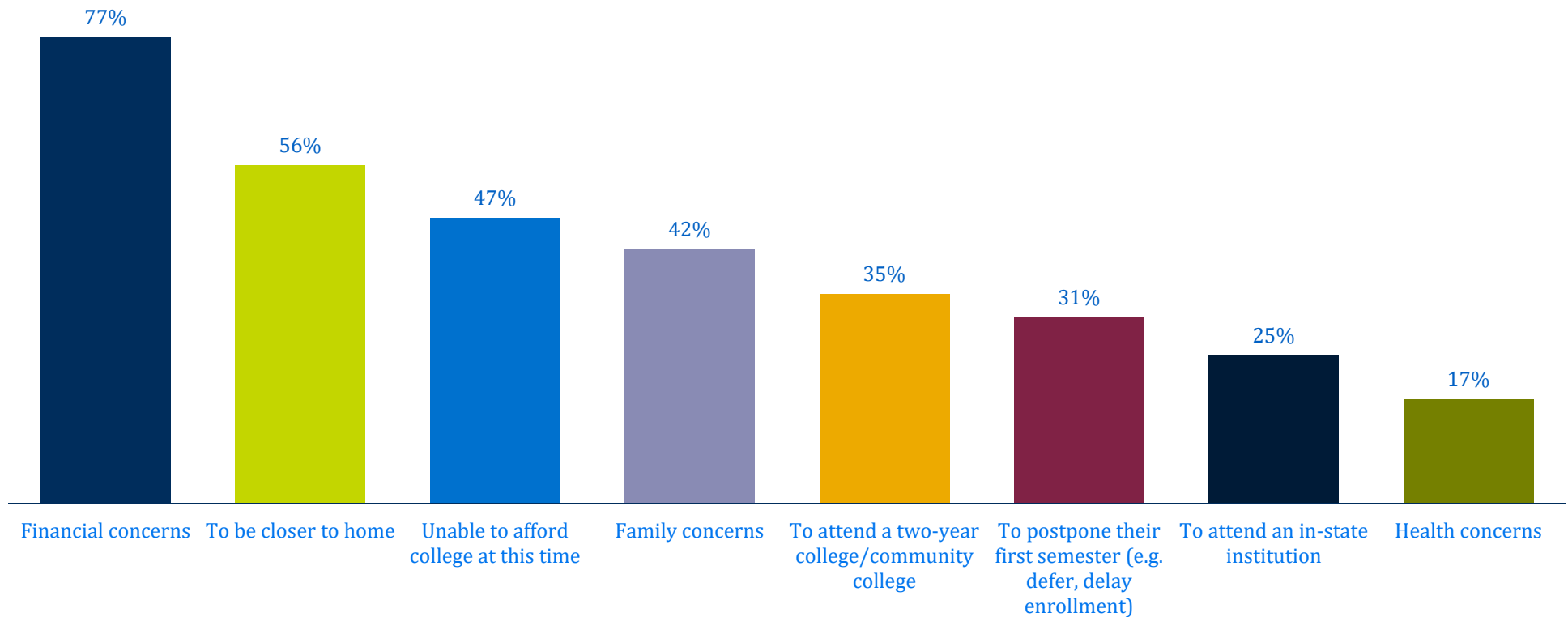
	Safety	College's distance to home	Health services	College's handling of COVID-19	Taking college courses online
Juniors	32%	52%	21%	44%	88%
Seniors	66%	93%	100%	89%	100%
Parents	100%	100%	69%	100%	92%



How often, if at all, are high school seniors changing, or will likely change, their college plans because of COVID-19?



What reasons are students giving for changing their college plans?



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Other reasons why students are changing their minds about their college plans:

- Inability to tour/visit campuses.
- Chose not their #1 choice but one they had already visited.
- Spring sports cancelled.
- To take a gap year.
- To join the work force out of necessity.

Among the many challenges counselors are currently facing, what would you say is the most pressing concern over the next month?

- Emotional support of students
- Grades and end of the year preparations (including graduation, award ceremonies, and other events)
- Counseling sophomores and juniors remotely
- Seniors completing college, fin. aid, & scholarship applications, and final decisions
- Not being able to reach seniors
- Testing requirements (state testing for this and next year, other standardize testing, AP, ACT/SAT)
- Worried about families' changes in finances and what that will do to college plans
- Fall schedule (course scheduling, testing, college planning)
- Summer melt – how to help graduating seniors without these last few months of constant contact
- Helping seniors with deadlines
- Helping students with no access to technology
- Communicating with and encouraging students who are not motivated and could be at risk of dropping
- Communicating with students
- Helping seniors make up for campus visits and orientations
- Communicating with families
- Helping seniors find additional financial aid



Examples of good communications from higher education institutions during this time:

- Concise/timely communication—particularly from the actual admissions counselors (not blanket statements from campus presidents).
- Specific to the students (apps, admits, deposits) from XXXX high school (not blanket emails from colleges to every school in their data base).
- Clear information on Testing Policies/Pass Fail Grades for FA20 and FA21 incoming.
- Updates on deadlines/campus visit information.
- Easy direction to campuses website for more information.

What advice would you give colleges and universities?

Do webinars! They are extremely helpful, especially if they can get a group of schools together to answer questions. The real-time connection allows for a lot of questions to be answered quickly. While getting an email update is certainly helpful, it does not always answer questions that are lingering. Having something in real-time is much more helpful in giving us information to pass on to our students.

Do not email long letters; bullet points under section headings are much easier.

I would like to see them host events for current juniors.

Continue to offer online virtual college tours.

Contribute to sites that are aggregating colleges' responses (e.g., NACAC, ACCEPT deposit extensions, etc.). Emails from individual colleges are great, but there are so many. We need a central place to look up the changes that college are making.

Create an FAQ document/web page/email blast for counselors that is regularly updated. We are reading through so many emails from schools. We need communication to be concise so we can sort through it all.

Hold zoom meetings, webinars and training virtually on specific topics

Webinars for prospective parents by class, they have different questions and worries.

I know this is a trying time, but can we please stop sending mixed messages??



Recommendations

- Specific web page dedicated to counselors (or section on COVID site) for counselors with specific and brief bullet points.
- Webinars that address the key themes (deadlines, financial aid, events) and by audience (juniors, seniors, parents).
- Update your remote campus visit to reflect the current times and needs/wants of prospective students.
- Offer more online events/webinars but target specific audiences/grades and topics vs. just a large general online event.

Recommendations

- Be proactive in addressing the financial concerns of students and parents.
- Use Email as the primary channel of communication with college counselors.
- Make information easy to share with students and parents.
- Communicate changes to admission, deadlines, scholarships, financial aid, visit (virtual visit options), orientation, etc.
- Make it easy for different types of students, and parents, to find applicable information on your website (seniors, juniors, transfers, athletes, international, etc.)