Emma White Research LLC

MEA Educator Survey on Student Behavior

November 2026

Methodology

- N= 4,040 PreK-12 MEA members
- Conducted online August 12-21, 2026
- The data have been weighted to match the population of members



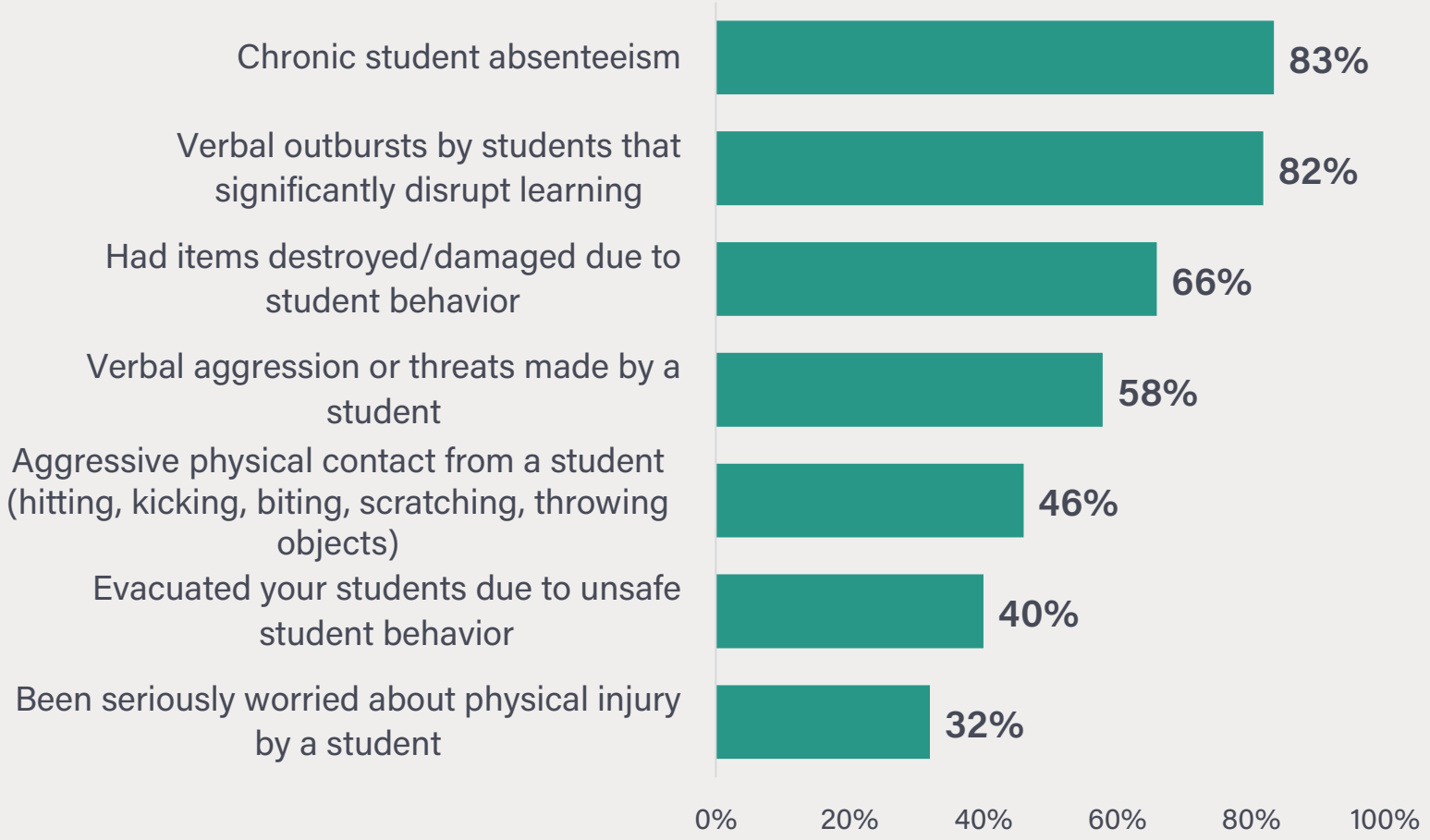
The problem



Behavior challenges

Many educators are experiencing serious challenges to safety and learning.

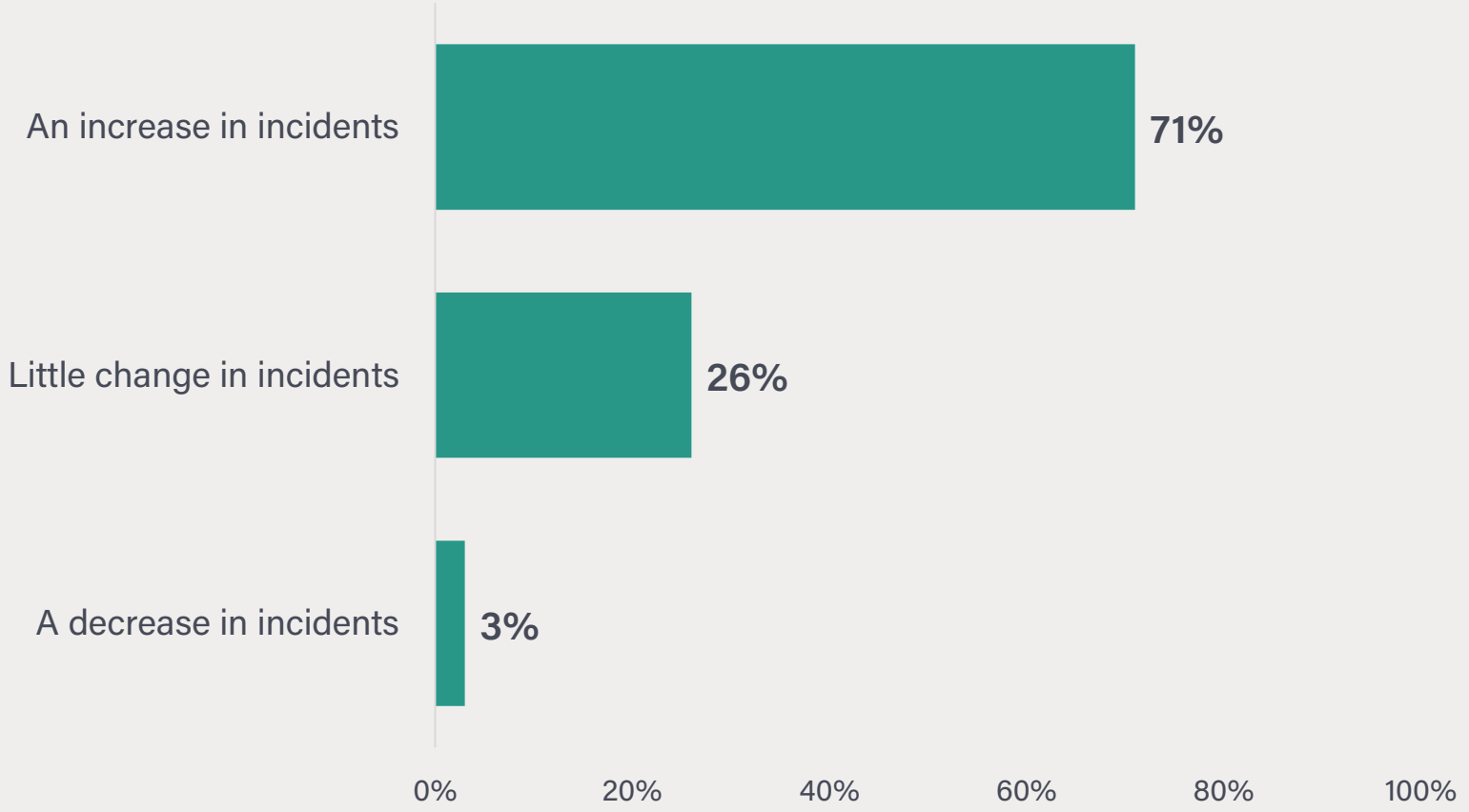
In the last school year, have you experienced any of the following at your job? Please select all that apply.



Increasing problems

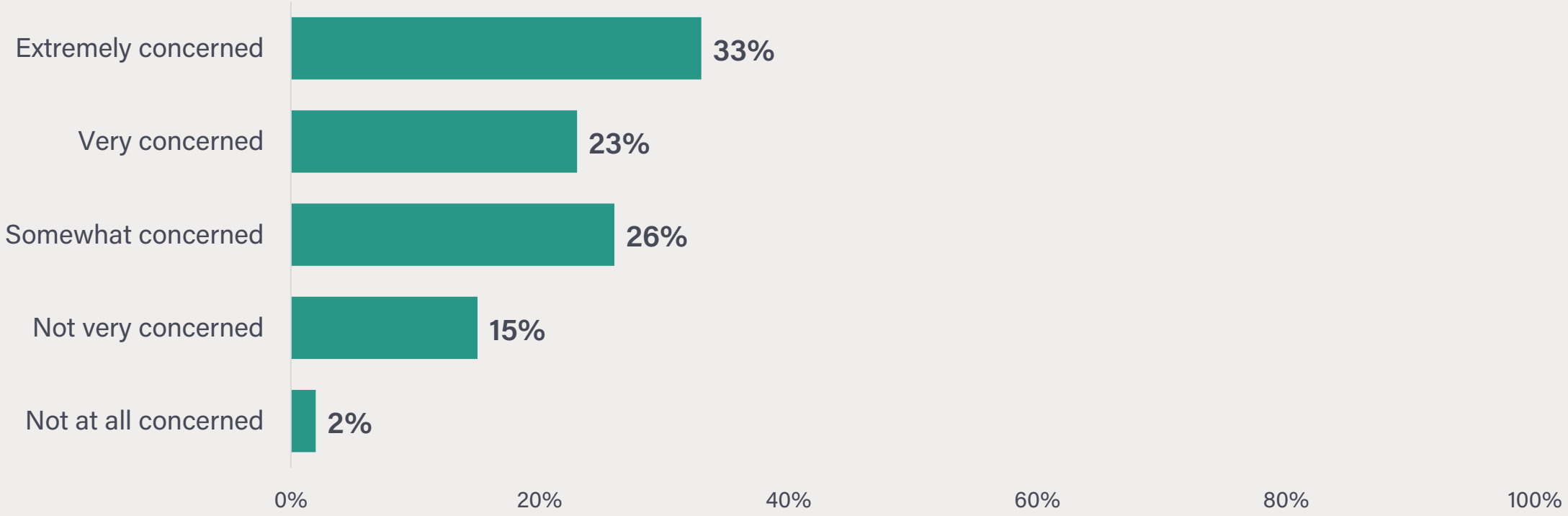
Most believe aggressive behavior has gotten worse.

Relative to inappropriate student behavior that is physically aggressive or violent in nature, within the last 5 years have you noticed:



Most are highly concerned about violence against employees.

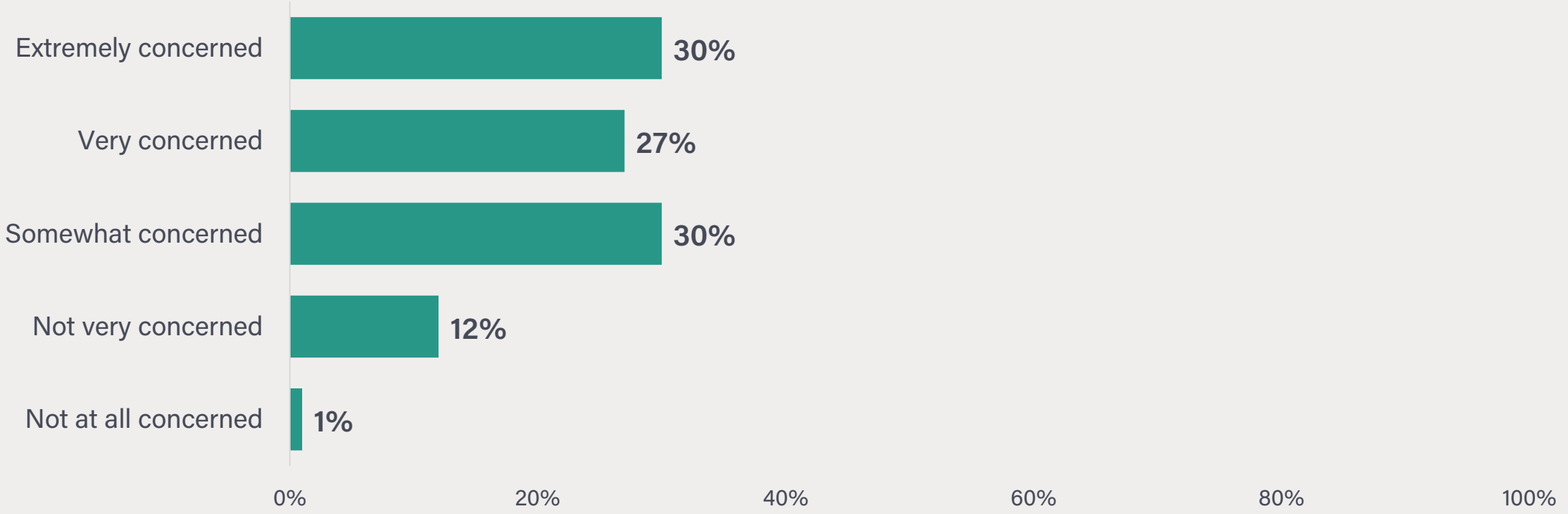
[PREK-12 MEMBERS] How concerned are you about student violence against school employees in your school district?



This represents the highest level of concern we have seen since we started tracking in 2024.

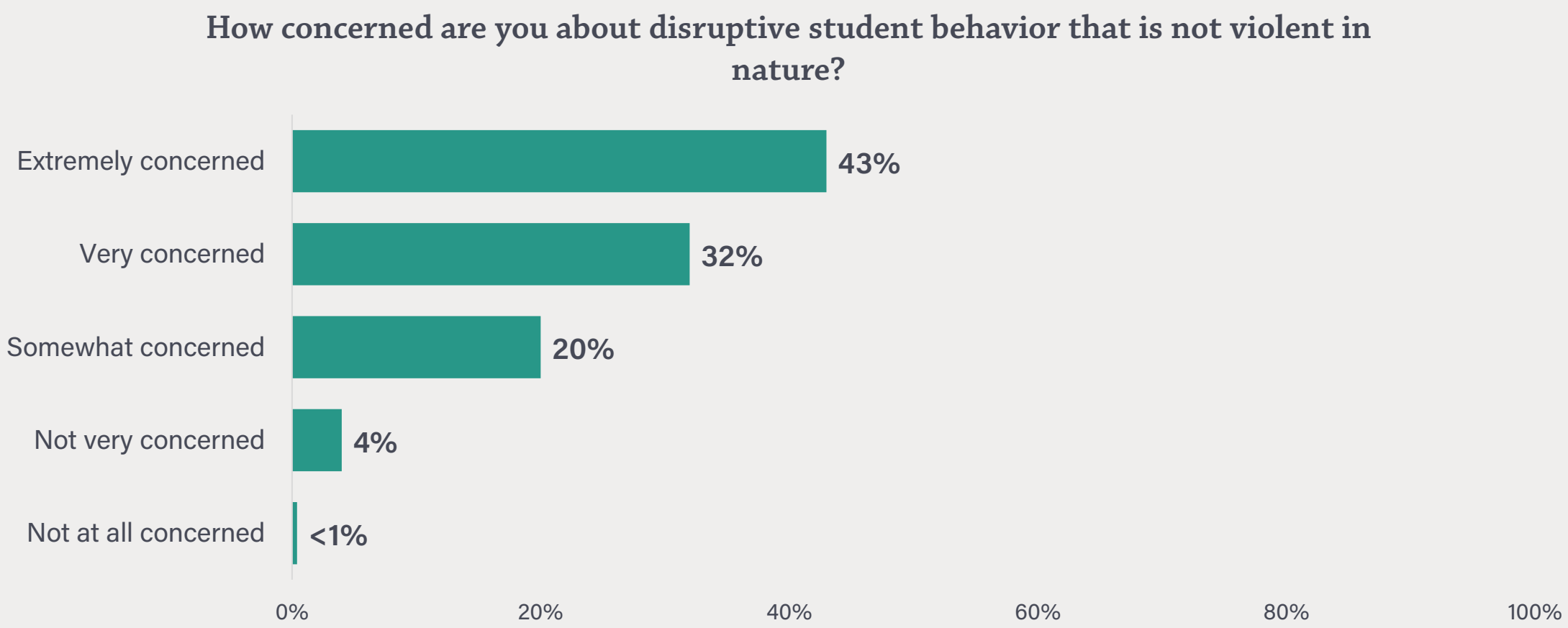
Concern about student violence against other students is similarly high.

[PREK-12 MEMBERS] How concerned are you about student violence against other students in your school district?



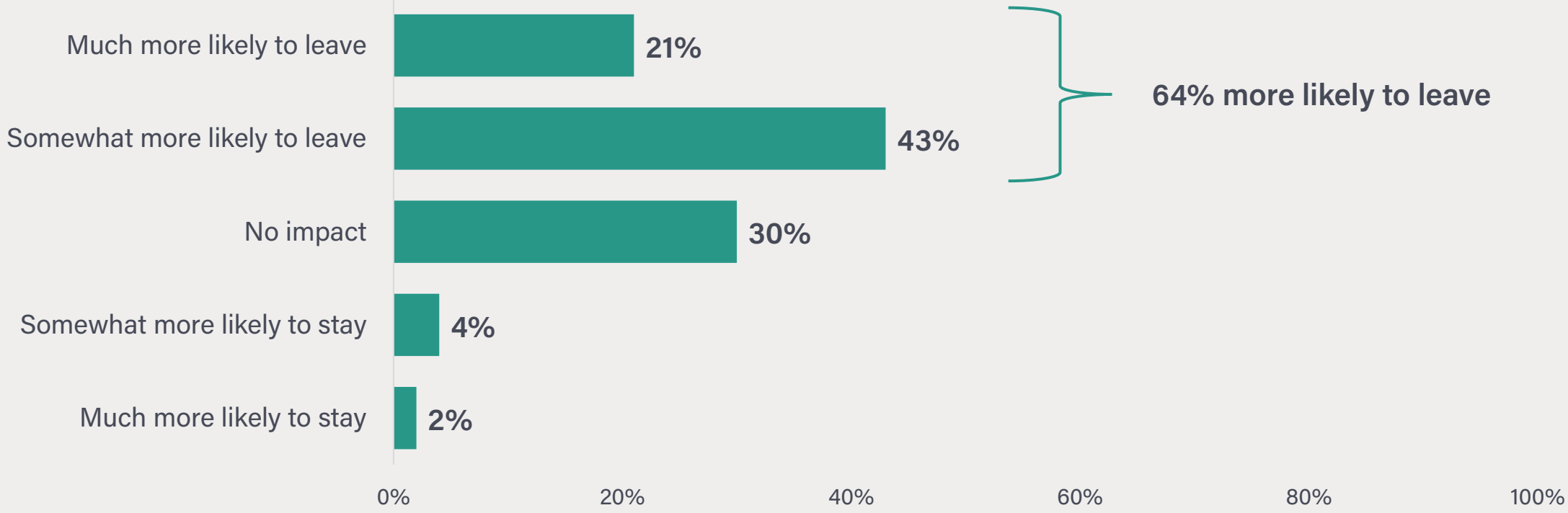
This represents the highest level of concern we have seen since we started tracking in 2024.

Even more are highly concerned about disruptive, but non-violent, student behavior.



Many say behavior challenges make them think about leaving.

How, if at all, do student behavioral challenges impact your likelihood to continue working in education?



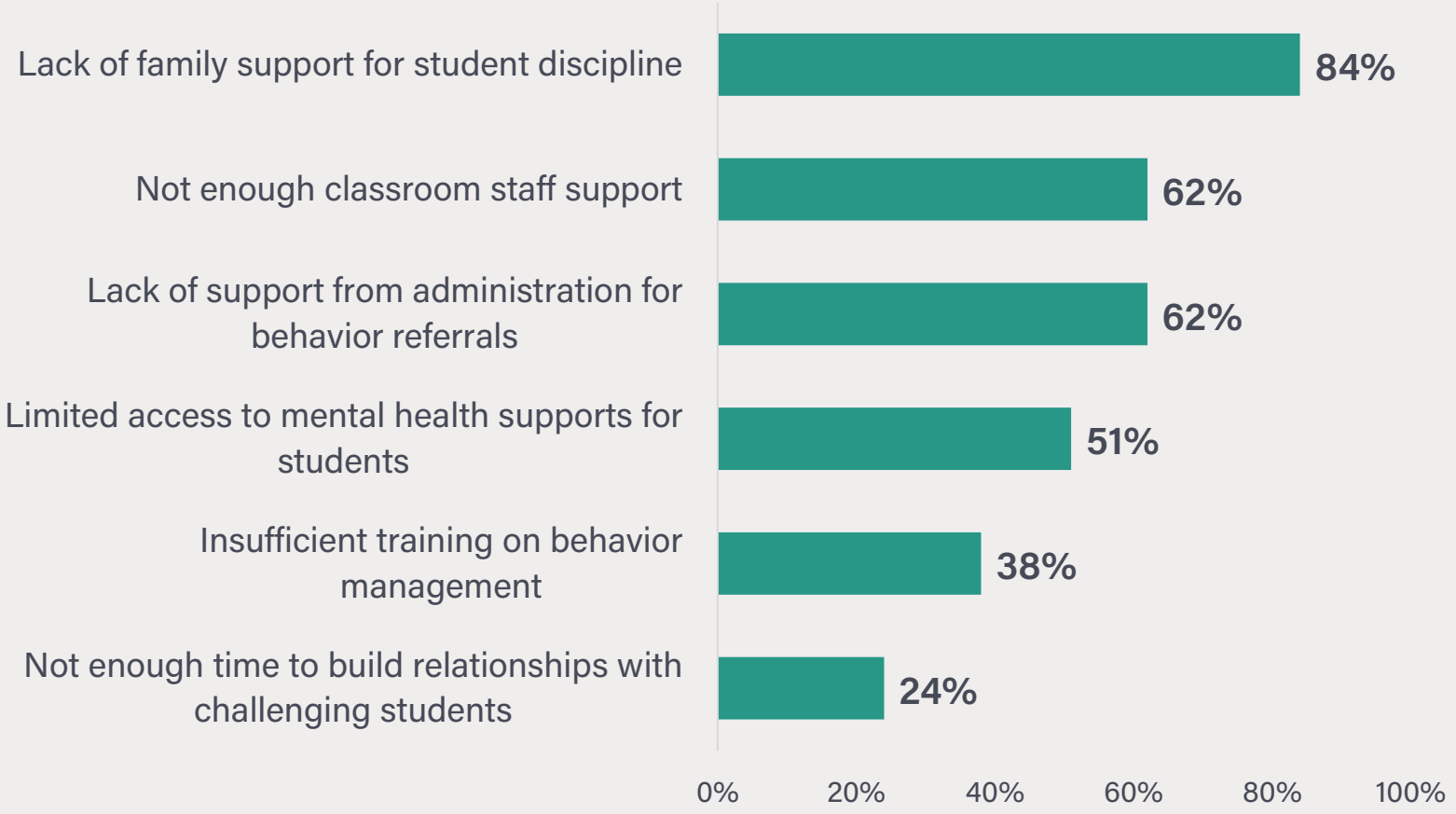
Barriers and potential solutions



Barriers

Educators highlight challenges with families, staffing levels, and administrators.

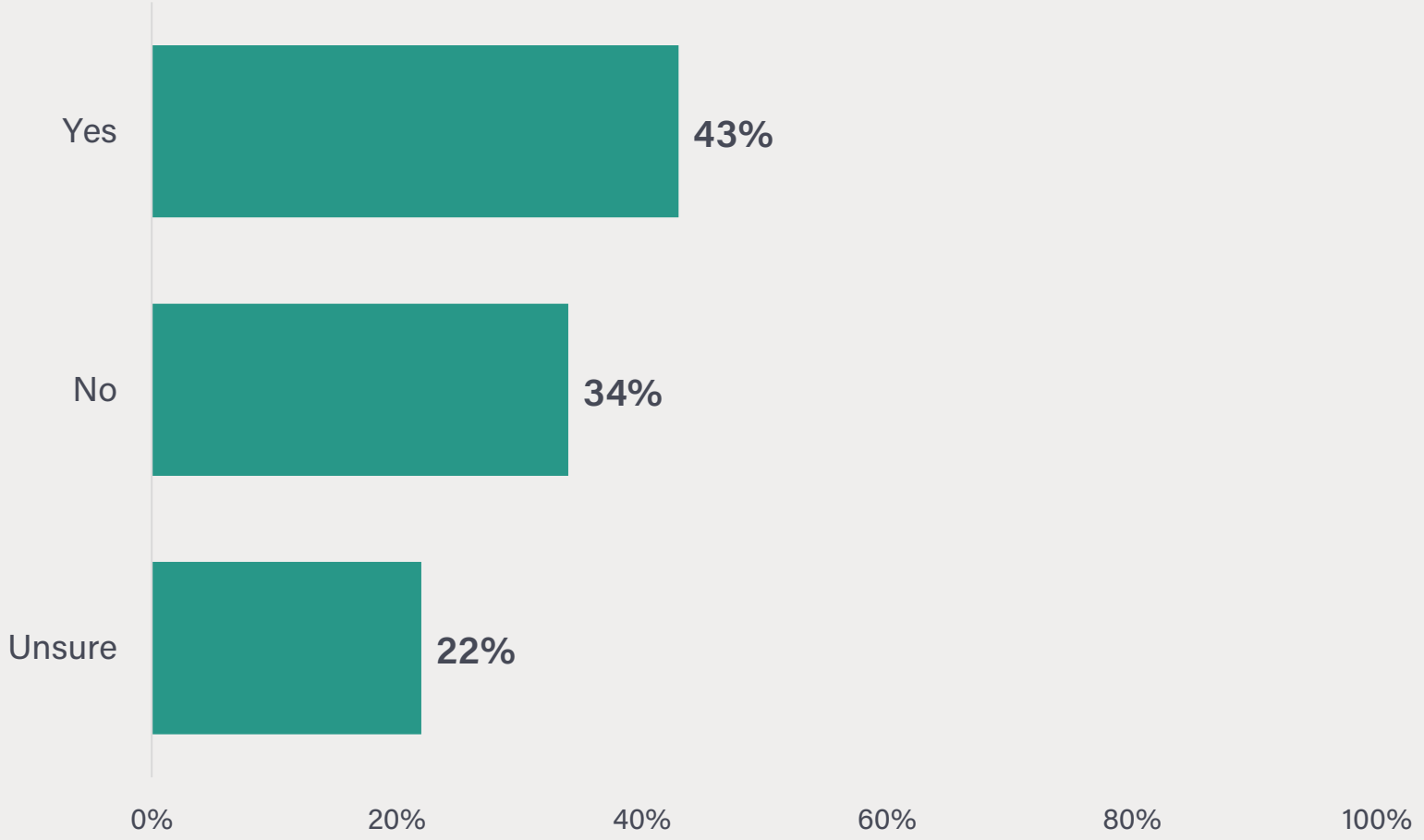
Over the last three years, what barriers have you faced when managing student behavior? Select all that apply.



Lack of school response

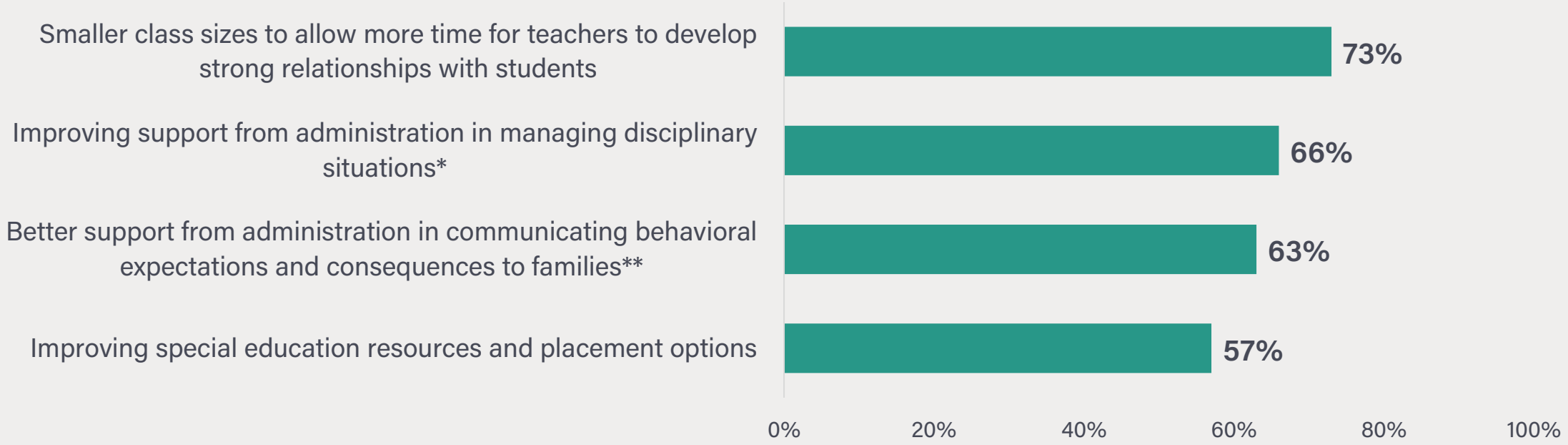
Fewer than half are aware of a clear plan for at the school level for dealing with violent situations.

Does your school have a clear plan in place for addressing physically aggressive/violent situations in the classroom?



Top solutions include smaller class sizes, administrative support, and better special ed resources.

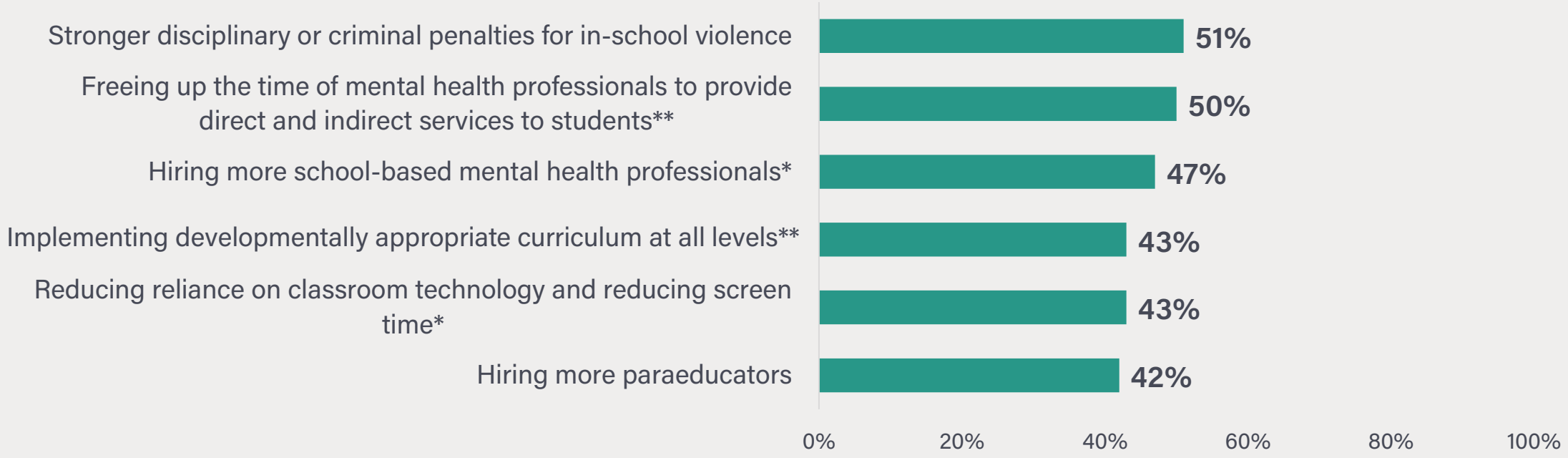
Next are some potential ideas to address challenges regarding student behavior. For each, please indicate how effective you think each would be: very effective, somewhat effective, somewhat ineffective, or very ineffective. (% very effective)



* Split A only, N=2,001
**Split B only, N=2,039

Educators also believe stronger penalties and mental health supports would make a difference.

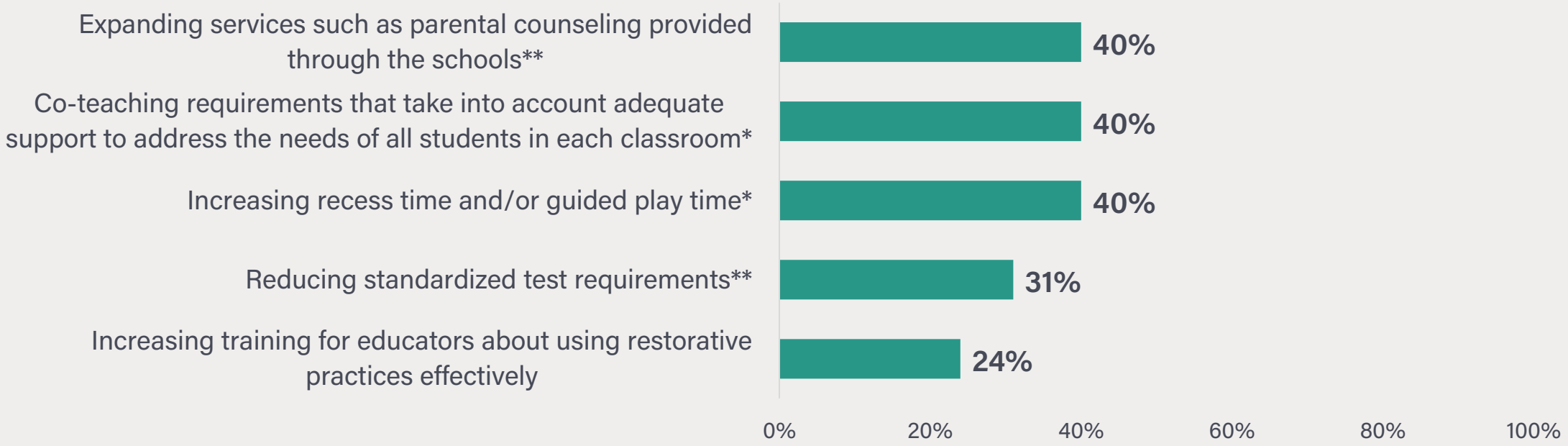
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Educators see increased training and reducing standardized testing as least effective potential solutions.

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Effectiveness of the two solutions related to administrative support varies by grade level.

(% very effective)	Total	PreK	Kindergarten / Elementary	Middle school/ Junior high	High school
Improving support from administration in managing disciplinary situations*	66%	53%	63%	71%	68%
Better support from administration in communicating behavioral expectations and consequences to families**	63%	73%	67%	61%	60%

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**Split B only, N=2,039

PreK/elementary members are more likely to rate the solutions on developmentally appropriate curriculum and increasing recess as very effective.

(% very effective)	Total	PreK	Kindergarten / Elementary	Middle school/ Junior high	High school
Implementing developmentally appropriate curriculum at all levels**	43%	62%	50%	42%	34%
Increasing recess time and/or guided play time*	40%	46%	46%	38%	34%

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