



Morningside Heights Community Survey January 2021

-Report of Findings-

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Survey Objective & Method

- While the Morningside Heights Community Coalition (MHCC) is not able to hold face-to-face meetings to hear what our neighbors are thinking, the organization is conducting brief surveys to gain insights into the views and priorities of Morningside Heights residents at specific points in time.
- On January 13, 2021, an invitation to participate in a new survey was e-mailed to MHCC's contact list. A reminder to complete the survey was sent to this same list on January 19, 2021. Survey collection ended at the close of day January 21, 2021.
- A total of 56 respondents, ages 18 years and older, completed the brief survey. **The questions pertained to the 2021 local elections and an increase in students on campuses at Columbia and Barnard.**
- Two different software programs were used for survey collection:
 - ✓ SurveyMonkey – an online tool used for survey design and data collection
 - ✓ Mailchimp – an online communications tool used to send emails to a designated contact list
- Note about the survey findings. The findings are limited to a moderate-sized, self-select sample (not a random sample) and therefore not statistically projectible.

Key Takeaways

Among NYC elected positions, the **District 7 Council Member is seen as most influential** for issues that affect **Morningside Heights**.

- Voters want to know **how 2021 candidates for NYC positions, will address issues that MHCC has been actively supporting: Rezoning, Covid, Affordable Housing and Support for Local Businesses.**
- Among other salient issues that voters will want to hear about from candidates are: **Public Transportation, Car Traffic/Street Parking, Crime Prevention, Schools and Police Reform.**

Morningside Heights residents remain concerned about Covid, including the impact that an increased student presence may have in spreading the virus to members of the community.

- By a **margin of two-to-one, it was *not* appropriate for Columbia and Barnard to increase the number of students** as of the Spring 2020 semester.
- Concern stems from **more people in the neighborhood = more chances to spread Covid**, especially since residents observe that not all students act responsibly outside of the school grounds, for example wearing face coverings and adhering to social distancing.

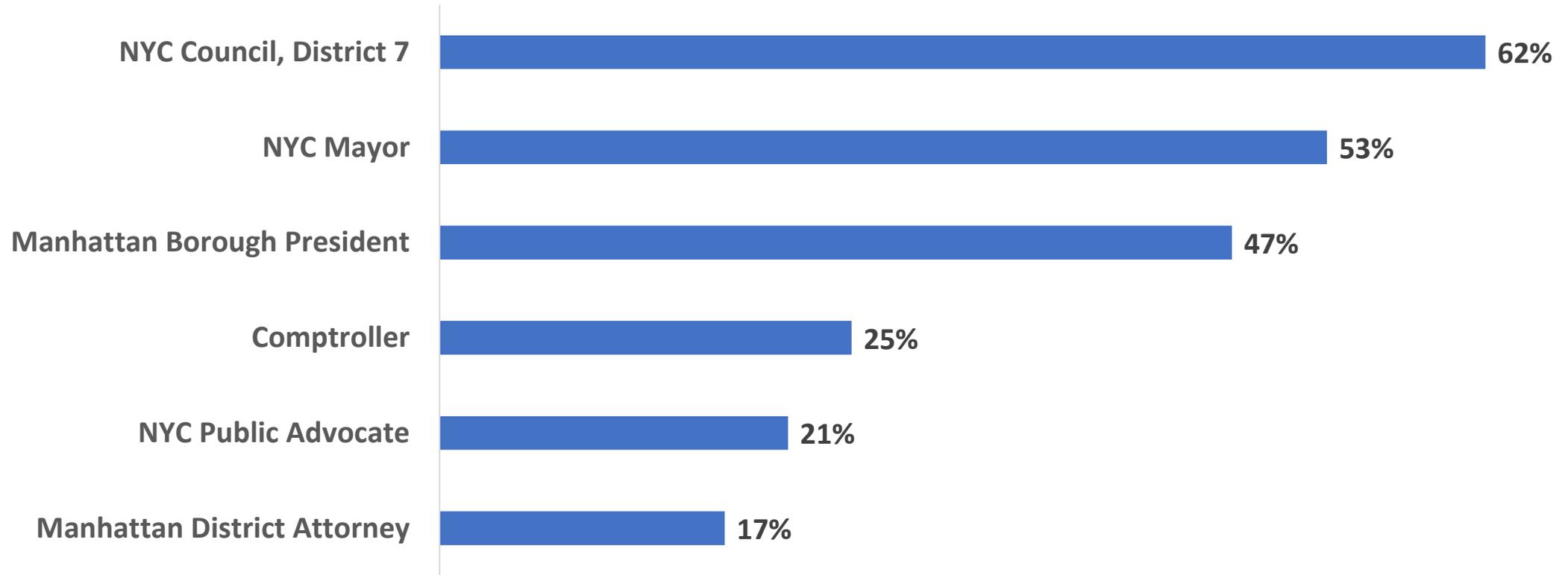
Even for those who support the presence of more students, it is acknowledged that **safety protocols delineated by the schools must be adhered to.**

- Among those who find a larger student presence appropriate, local businesses and the schools themselves are seen as apt to benefit.

Detailed Findings

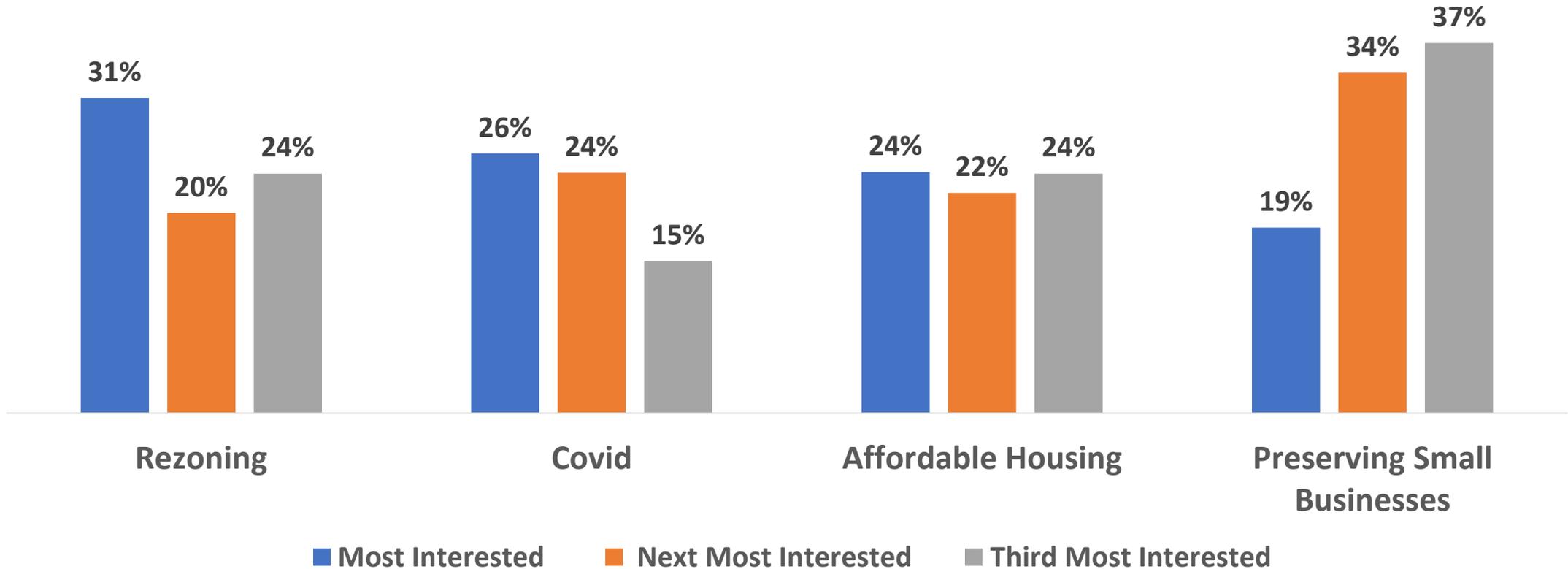
The person who will be elected to District 7 in the City Council, replacing incumbent Mark Levine, is seen as comparatively most influential for Morningside Heights issues.

Elected Positions That Will Have the Most Impact on Morningside Heights



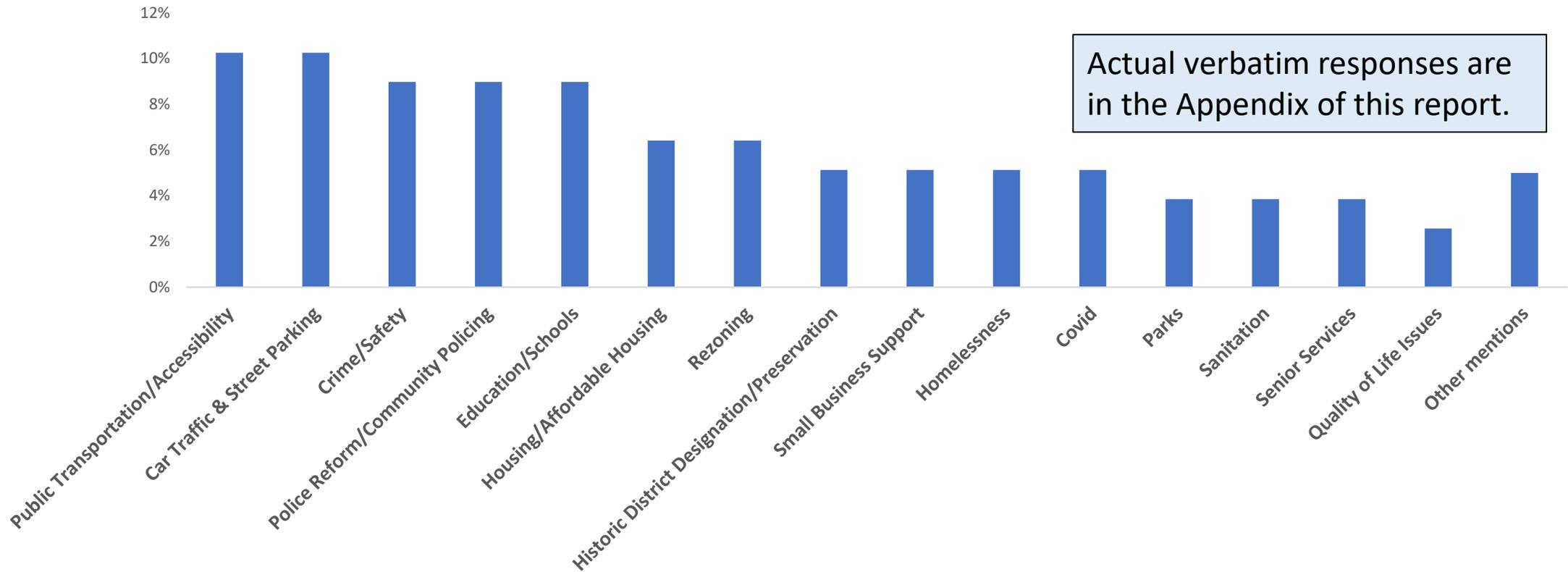
Voters are interested in hearing how NYC candidates will address four issues in Morningside Heights which MHCC has been actively addressing.

Interest In How Candidates Will Address Specific Issues



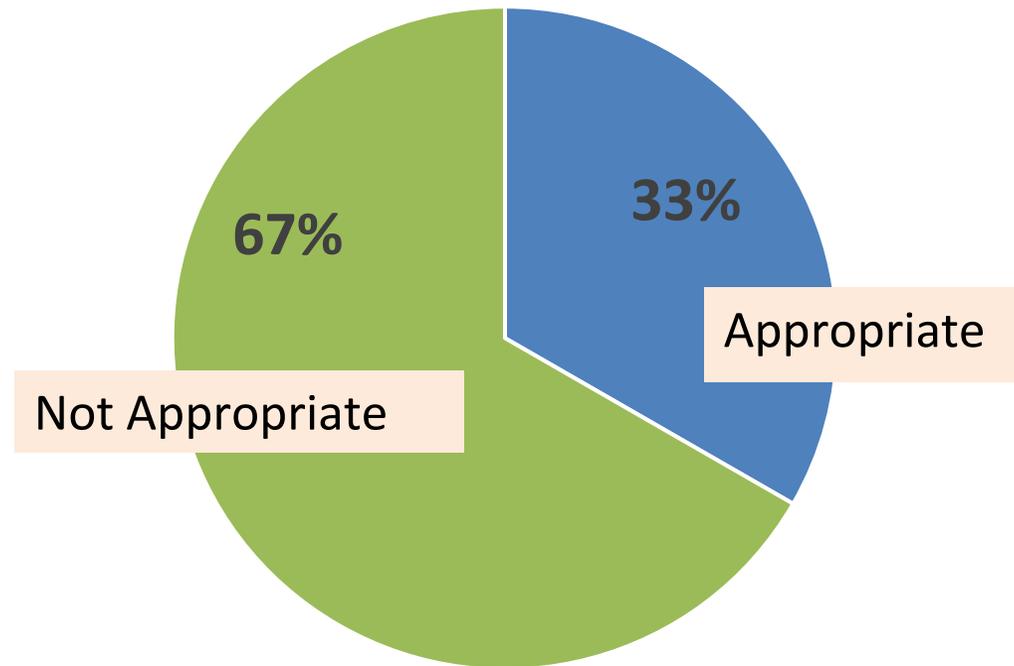
Candidates will be well-served by speaking about issues that impact day-to-day experiences: public transportation, traffic, safety, and schools. Less personal, but still relevant, are matters that shape our community, such as housing, rezoning, historic preservation, and sustaining small businesses.

What Other Issues Are You Interested In Hearing About From Local Candidates



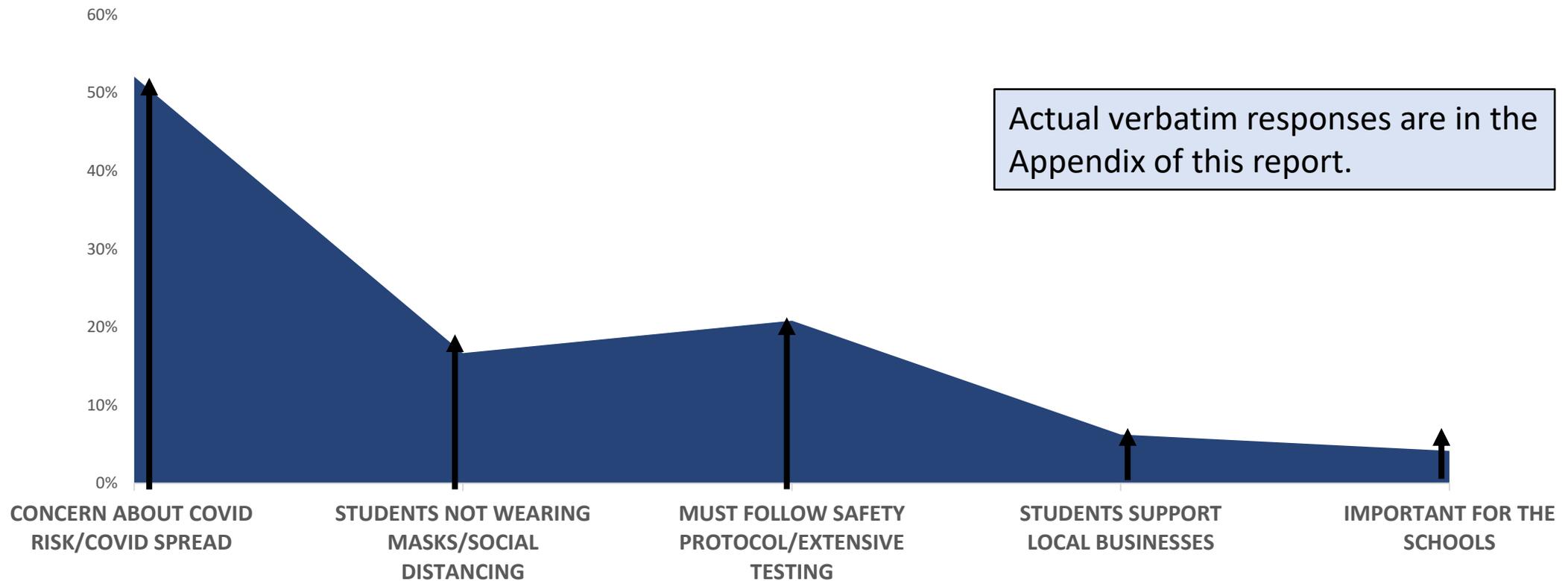
By a two-to-one margin, it is *not* considered appropriate for Columbia and Barnard to have increased the number of students on campus as of this month.

Is it Appropriate? Columbia and Barnard Increasing Number of Students on Campus



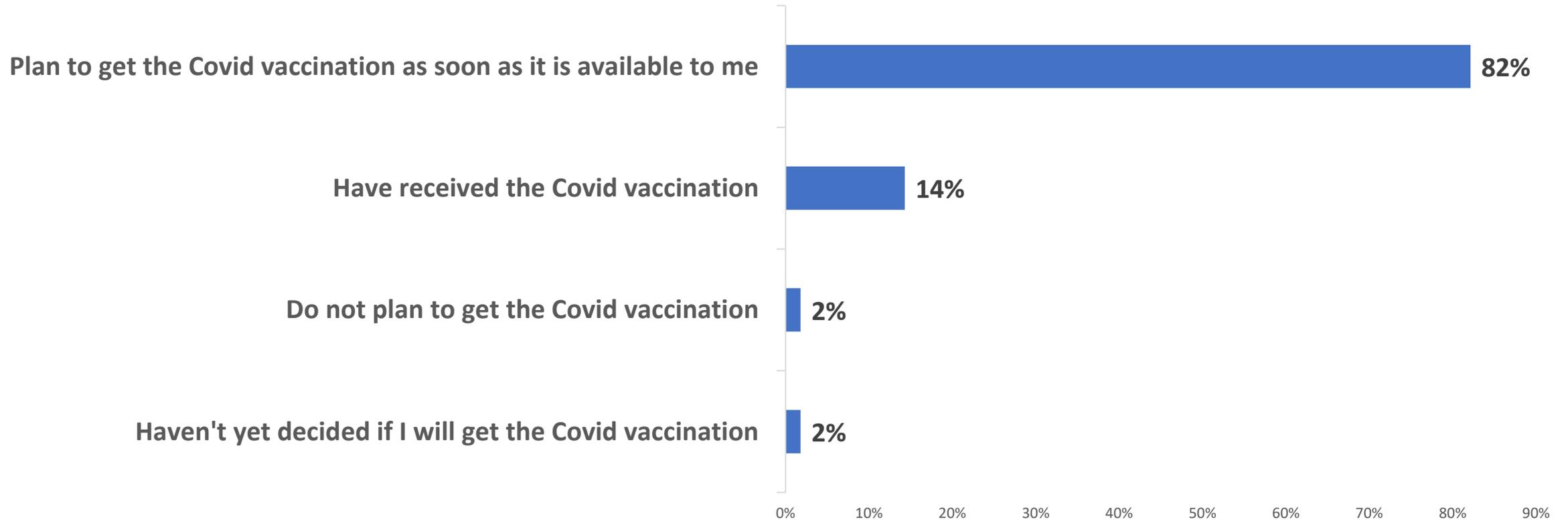
As expressed in verbatim responses, *concern about the spread of Covid* underlie feelings about having more students in the neighborhood. *Safety protocol* is top of mind – that it is not followed by all students, and that it must be adhered to by students. Reasons for supporting an increased student presence include the views that it helps to support local businesses, and that the schools are facing financial challenges.

Reasons Increased Number of Students Is Not Appropriate - or - Appropriate



There is keen interest in receiving the Covid vaccination. The modest number of Morningside Heights residents who have already been vaccinated is a function of limited availability.

Covid Vaccination Status



Appendix

Verbatim Responses: Feelings about schools increasing number students for Spring semester

CONCERN ABOUT COVID RISK/COVID SPREAD (page 1 of 2)

- 1 I am concerned for my family health. The students are not taking the pandemic serious.
- 2 They fill up the stores we shop in, so more potential for infection.
- 3 It has been shown that college students in schools that did not limit attendance lead to the fall surge and will probably lead to the winter surge in COVID-19 cases.
- 4 The super spreader concept
- 5 The community is not ready for return of students.
- 6 The numbers are still way too high
- 7 The higher incidence of people in limited areas (i.e., dorms, college campuses, classrooms, neighborhood food and other stores) the higher the risk to spreading the virus in our community. The student population in this area from the combined Columbia University, Columbia College, Barnard College and Teachers College put it at very great risk to our community. Our community does not understand why the powers that be would subject us to this medically unsound decision, that is, to allow this extraordinarily high influx of students to deluge our community at a time when there is a drastic increase in the incidence of Covid-19 cases.
- 8 More people increases the spread of the virus
- 9 It will help spread the virus
- 10 Community spread and the presence of the more infectious strain of COVID-19 now identified in NY.
- 11 Due to the increased spread of COVID in other places where campuses have students in attendance.
- 12 Covid19 risk
- 13 There is a linkage between the number the number of students and the number of COVID-19 vaccinations administered: the more of one, the more if the other.

Verbatim Responses: Feelings about schools increasing number students for Spring semester

CONCERN ABOUT COVID RISK/COVID SPREAD (page 2 of 2)

- 14 The college student age group is responsible for much of the Covid spread and in our neighborhood, we also have large elderly and vulnerable (Black and Hispanic) populations. The two don't mix well.
- 15 There is a new viral infection on the back of COVID
- 16 We are inviting unknown populations into our community who may perpetuate the spread of the virus.
- 17 "Super Spreading's a deal. We'll never get passed this if we don't hunker down now. The incorrectly named Spanish Flu killed 675,000 Americans, most in its second wave.
- 18 It quicken so spread on the virus putting vulnerable neighbors at risk
- 19 Can spread Covid to Heights community
- 20 Increased Covid-19 exposure.
- 21 Columbia could not prevent their MBA students from vacationing in the Caribbean. They will not be able to enforce their rules on students returning to campus.
- 22 It makes it easier to spread the virus with more students on campus.
- 23 Because we are experiencing a national spike in infection rates and these institutions host personnel from across the country and world.
- 24 Students are arriving from COVID hot spots, and often do not comply with protocols that are not strictly enforced by our local institutions causing infection rates to rise among our vulnerable community seniors and people of color.
- 25 Students from all over spread the virus. They could learn remotely.

Verbatim Responses: Feelings about schools increasing number students for Spring semester

STUDENTS NOT WEARING MASKS/SOCIAL DISTANCING/NOT ACTING RESPONSIBLY

- 1 Some returning students are not wearing masks. The parties have begun. This behavior can introduce Covid virus.
- 2 Dangerous, students are not social distancing
- 3 I already notice more foot traffic and the parties being held in my building.
- 4 Hard to control crowds, social distancing violations and hard to monitor quarantines after travel.
- 5 Students do not social distance and do not wear masks. With a statistic that states 60% of Covid transmission is from people who are asymptomatic, the likelihood that these students will spread Covid to vulnerable residents is high. This is especially true with the new variants of Covid.
- 6 The institutions have zero control over student behavior beyond their campuses. Students have little investment in being community members and are generally entitled and oblivious to the effects of their behavior in the public realm. Our streets are packed and our stores too small to safely accommodate an increased population while Covid remains alive and well "out in the wild."
- 7 More people who may be irresponsible could increase spread.
- 8 Some college students are careful, but many are not! They gather and then go into community stores and restaurants. Online classes would help some if they stay in dorm room with only roommate.

Verbatim Responses: Feelings about schools increasing number students for Spring semester

MUST FOLLOW SAFETY PROTOCOL/EXTENSIVE TESTING

- 1 Closely following policies and procedures for mandated test, trace, restrict and otherwise follow good public health recommendations. COVID-19 rate of infection among students, faculty and staff is under 1%
- 2 Expect they will be socially distant and act safe.
- 3 Campuses have a better handle on testing and quarantine than most. Students keep local businesses alive
- 4 The plan for protecting students and the community seems carefully crafted. Only the senior class is back. It is tragic to confine them to remote learning and the vaccine will soon have been administered to most people.
- 5 I feel protecting our community and the students with better PPE rule worth than fail the generation. Because the pandemic might stay longer
- 6 Ok as long as they respect Covid limitations
- 7 They should be pretty smart about keeping distance, with easy reporting to authorities if they're careless, and strict discipline and expulsion an easily achievable threat
- 8 Well developed plans and extensive testing
- 9 Columbia's COVID numbers have been incredibly low due to their mandatory student quarantine upon arrival and extensive mandatory testing program for all students and faculty. Furthermore, it is my impression that students adhere better to the mask mandates than many local residents.
- 10 It all depends upon how the university handles the situation.

Verbatim Responses: Feelings about schools increasing number students for Spring semester

STUDENTS SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESSES

- 1 Local businesses need the income that student customers generate. The alternative is to watch our neighborhood become impoverished and deteriorate.
- 2 I feel responsible students will positively affect small business in area
- 3 Many of our small businesses including restaurants/shops are struggling to survive with limited access. Adding more individuals to frequent these places will undoubtedly jeopardize their safety [to] survive.

IMPORTANT FOR THE SCHOOLS

- 1 These institutions need to fully re-open if they are to survive and prosper. There is no proof that letting students return is in any way dangerous to the community.
- 2 Universities are in a crisis as much as anyone else, and as a employee at the university, I understand their needs. I wish they didn't have to have students on campus for financial and student visa reasons, but they do, and arguments that they shouldn't because COVID are as simplistic as arguments that restaurants and bars should just close. If there were support for these organizations generally, then I would agree that they should just hibernate, but when there's not (and there isn't), then we have to do some complex calculus between health safe and not letting important institutions die.

Verbatim Responses: Other Issues Interested in Hearing About From Candidates

Public Transportation/Accessibility

- 1 Accessibility to train #1
- 2 Maintaining MTA
- 3 Public transit
- 4 Public Transportation
- 5 Improving public transportation service
- 6 Can subway, 122nd -133rd on Broadway be quieted?
- 7 Irregular maintenance of escalators to 125th St IRT
- 8 Providing transit access for those with disabilities

Car Traffic & Street Parking

- 1 Neighborhood parking permits
- 2 Reducing car traffic
- 3 Making bicycles more adherent to traffic laws
- 4 Raising meter rates around Columbia University to limit auto commuters to neighborhood
- 5 Alt Side Parking Rules
- 6 traffic enforcement
- 7 125th street traffic to/from highway
- 8 Street parking zoned for residents

Verbatim Responses: Other Issues Interested in Hearing About From Candidates

Crime/Safety

- 1 Crime in our neighborhoods
- 2 Safety/crime
- 3 Crime reduction
- 4 Ensuring safety in Morningside Park
- 5 Gangs in Amsterdam houses
- 6 Crime
- 7 Increasing crime

Police Reform/Community Policing

- 1 Police Justice
- 2 More beat cops on the street
- 3 police reform
- 4 More police walking around our neighborhood, getting to know it
- 5 Adequate and just policing
- 6 Policing and Criminal Justice
- 7 neighborhoods knowing the police that patrol it

Verbatim Responses: Other Issues Interested in Hearing About From Candidates

Education/Schools

- 1 education reform/alternatives
- 2 A diverse and well funded NYC School System
- 3 Schools
- 4 Public Schools
- 5 improving public education K-12, community college, CUNY

- 6 How they would advocate for students/parents of public schools

- 7 Schools—equity and support for excellence

Housing/Affordable Housing

- 1 proper financing of public housing
- 2 Housing a
- 3 Affordable Housing
- 4 anti-eviction procedures
- 5 Making institution owned apartments permanently rent-stabilized

Verbatim Responses: Other Issues Interested in Hearing About From Candidates

Rezoning

- 1 Rezoning
- 2 Zoning
- 3 Rezoning
- 4 Rezoning
- 5 Rezoning

Historic District Designation/Preservation

- 1 Neighborhood Landmark Preservation
- 2 Historic District designation
- 3 Preserving our historic buildings
- 4 Changes to streetscapes

Small Business Support

- 1 Small business
- 2 Empty store fronts at pier
- 3 Promoting non-corporate owned businesses
- 4 Small Independent Business and Restaurants

Verbatim Responses: Other Issues Interested in Hearing About From Candidates

Homelessness

- 1 minimum income for homeless
- 2 Homeless Services
- 3 Helping homeless find supportive housing
- 4 homeless

Covid

- 1 Covid
- 2 Covid
- 3 University COVID issues for students/faculty
- 4 Universities and Covid

Parks

- 1 Parks improvement
- 2 Parks
- 3 Cuts to parks department staff

Sanitation

- 1 Sanitation
- 2 Cleaner Streets and sidewalks and merchant accountability
- 3 sanitation

Verbatim Responses: Other Issues Interested in Hearing About From Candidates

Senior Services

- 1 Senior services
- 2 Programs for elderly

Quality of Life Issues

- 1 Unnecessary loud sirens
- 2 More panhandlers

Other Issues

- 1 protecting immigrant population
 - 2 if they will do participatory budgeting / what percent
 - 3 Green energy
 - 4 Racial Equality
- what constituent issues they feel they can address most effectively