

(Lack of) School Reopening in the United States

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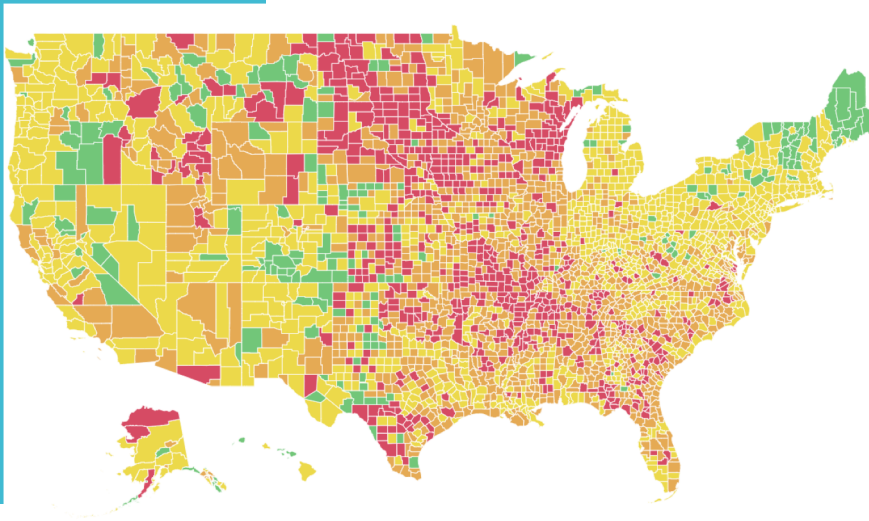
September 25, 2020

Overview

1. School reopening across the U.S.
 - Which schools are reopening?
 - How has it gone so far?
2. Risks and benefits of (virtual) school

School Reopening: Is it realistic?

- Consensus among public health experts is that in places with low community spread and with mitigation in place, schools can open safely
- Mitigation costs money, and so far we have not seen appropriate Federal funding



Map and color chart from [Harvard Global Health Institute](https://www.hs-niederrhein.de/fileadmin/user_upload/HS_Niederrhein/Institute/IGHS/IGHS%20-%20COVID-19%20-%20School%20Reopening%20-%20Risk%20Levels%20-%202020.pdf)

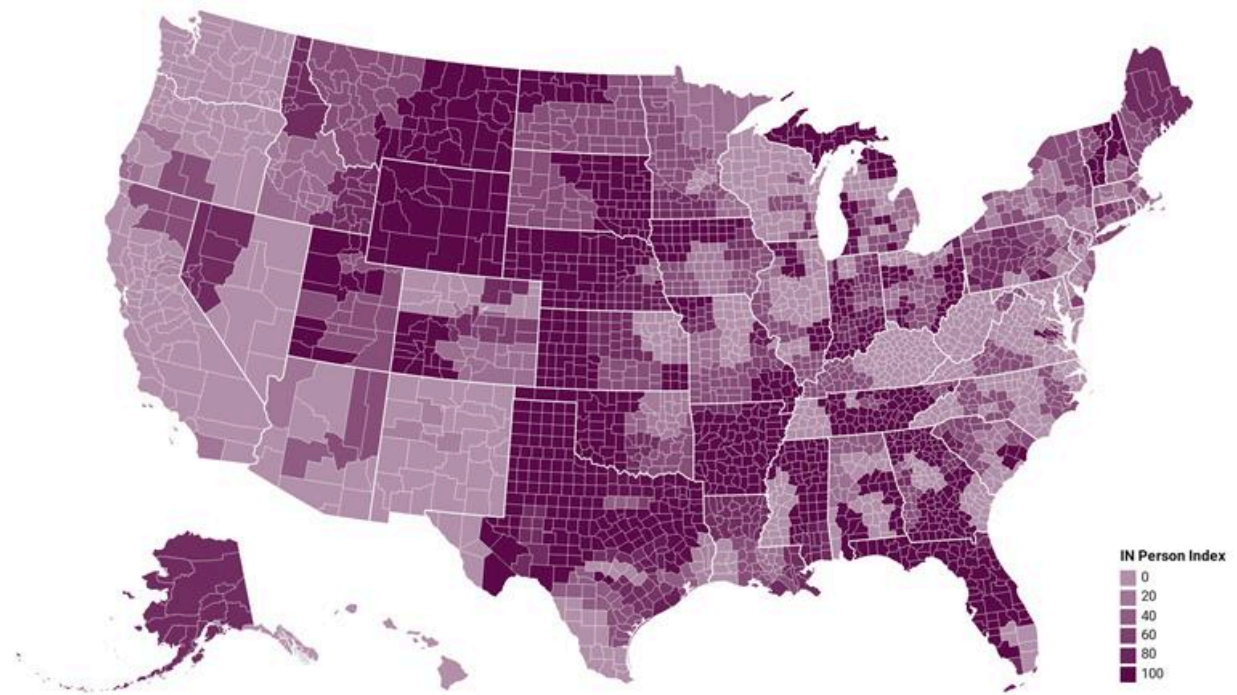
Risk Levels	Strategy for Pandemic Resilient Teaching and Learning
Red	Stay-at-home orders in place; all learning remote for all learners; districts, states, and federal government invests in remote learning.
Orange	<p>1st priority for re-opening: Grades preK-5 and in-person special education services at grade levels preK-8 open if conditions for pandemic resilient teaching and learning spaces can be achieved at scale; districts, states, and federal government invest in healthy buildings and healthy classrooms; in the absence of conditions for pandemic resilient teaching and learning spaces, schools continue with remote learning.</p> <p>2nd priority for re-opening: Grades 6-8 and in-person special education services at grade levels 9-12 open if conditions for pandemic resilient teaching and learning spaces can be achieved at scale; districts, states, and federal government invest in healthy buildings and healthy classrooms; in the absence of conditions for pandemic resilient teaching and learning spaces, schools continue with remote learning.</p> <p>Not a priority for re-opening: Grades 9-12 maintain remote learning for all learners; districts, states, and federal government invest in remote learning.</p>
Yellow	<p>1st priority for re-opening: Grades preK-5 and in-person special education services at grade levels preK-8 open if conditions for pandemic resilient teaching and learning spaces can be achieved at scale; districts, states, and federal government invest in healthy buildings and healthy classrooms; in the absence of conditions for pandemic resilient teaching and learning spaces, schools continue with remote learning.</p> <p>2nd priority for re-opening: Grades 6-8 and in-person special education services at grade levels 9-12 open if conditions for pandemic resilient teaching and learning spaces can be achieved at scale; districts, states, and federal government invest in healthy buildings and healthy classrooms; in the absence of conditions for pandemic resilient teaching and learning spaces, schools continue with remote learning. In-person opportunities for special needs students at grade-levels preK-8 are also included.</p> <p>3rd priority for re-opening: If sufficient pandemic resilient learning space is available AFTER allocation to K-8, grades 9-12 open on a hybrid schedule, with only a subset of students on campus at any particular point of time to facilitate de-densification; districts, states, and federal government invest in healthy buildings and healthy classrooms AND in remote learning.</p>
Green	All schools open if conditions for pandemic resilient teaching and learning spaces can be achieved at scale; districts, states, and federal government invest in healthy buildings and healthy classrooms

School Reopening:
Remote learning is
most common
format across the
U.S., especially for
urban areas

- Most urban districts opening remotely
 - Evidence from a nationally representative sample of school districts: 79% of urban school districts will open remotely ([CRPE](#))
 - 74% of largest school districts (most urban) opened remotely ([Education Week](#))
- Nationally representative sample of parents in late September reports ([CIVIS](#)):
 - 30% of students returning to full in-person classes
 - 19% hybrid/partial
 - 51% fully remote
- Despite evidence of lower COVID risk and transmission in younger children, few reopening plans differentiate by grade level
 - 8% of school districts are prioritizing in-person learning by grade ([CPRE](#))
 - 15% of schools with hybrid learning plans prioritize by grade ([COVID-19 School Response Dashboard](#))

School Reopening: Big Picture

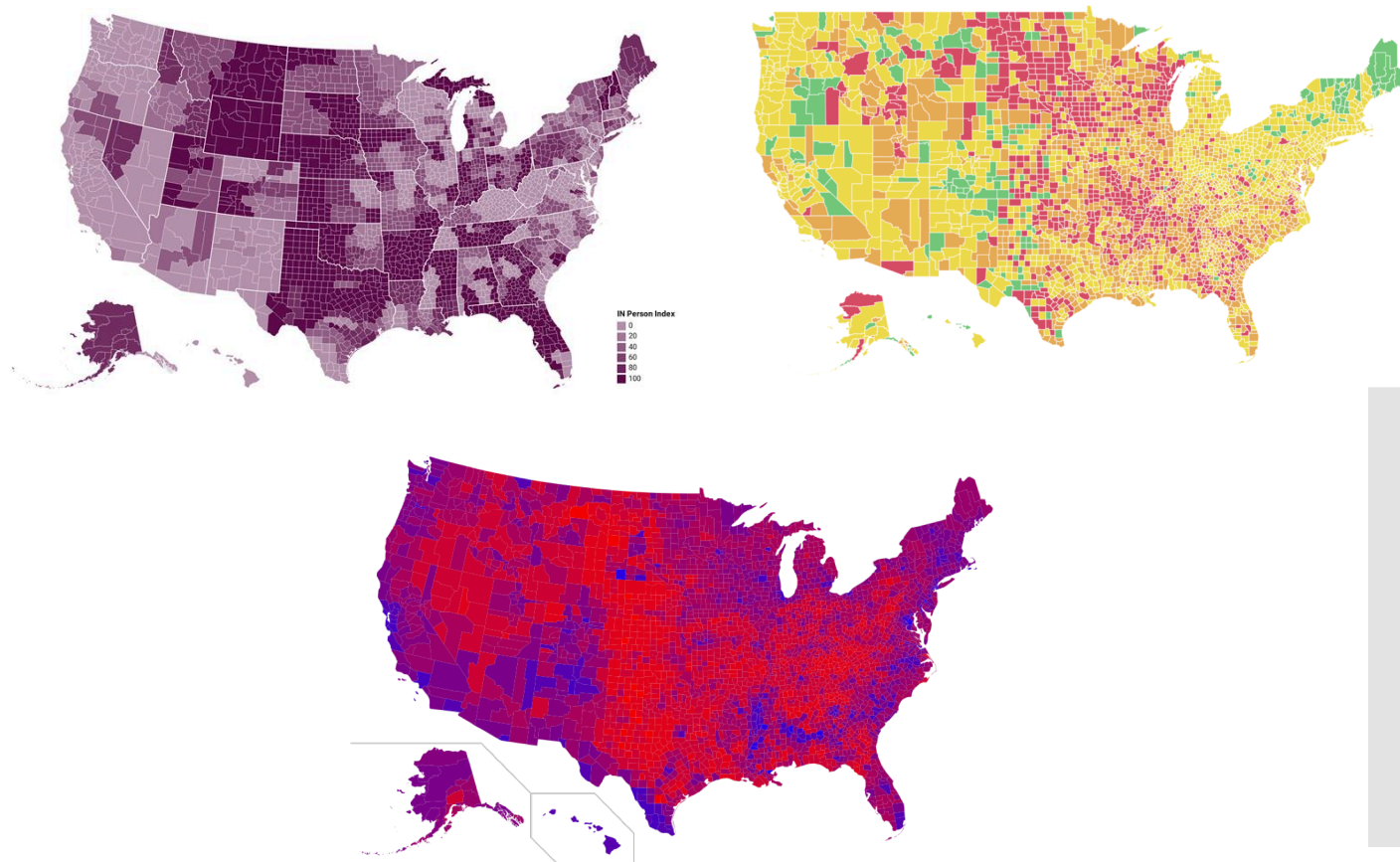
Most schools are opening fully or partially remote,
But large number of schools still in person
(Darker purple more in-person)



Source: <https://cai.burbio.com/school-opening-tracker/>

School Reopening:
Politics is a driver
of learning
modality

Eyeball it yourself: Reopening in purple, COVID risk in stoplight colors, Trump vote share in red-blue

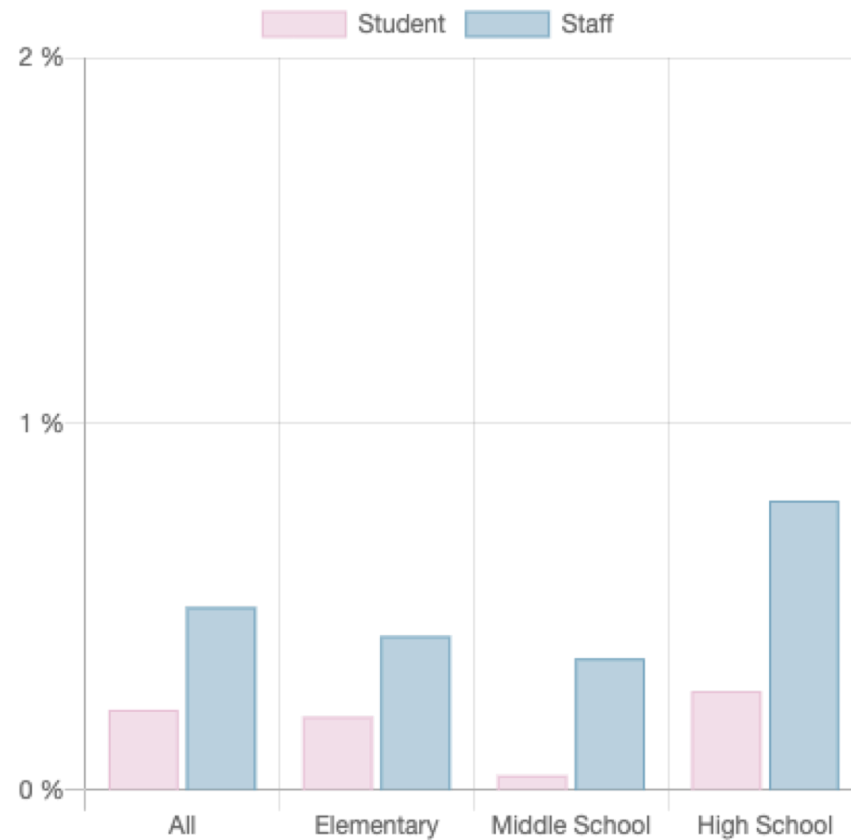


Additional evidence from [CPRE](#) and [Brookings Institution](#)

School Reopening:
Where schools
have reopened in
the U.S., they do
not appear to be
driving viral spread

Low infection rates among students and staff

[COVID-19 School Response Dashboard](#)



School Reopening: What is hindering broader reopening?

- No Federal funding
 - Need funds for mitigation strategies
 - Need funds to fill gaps left from reduced state and local tax revenue
 - Need additional teachers to staff hybrid models, socially-distanced classrooms
- Politics
 - Reopening more likely in states with Republican governors and less likely in those with Democratic
- Lack of systemic response that prioritizes schools
- Lack of trust and communication
 - Lack of clear metrics for return to school
 - Need preparation to understand detection of occasional cases at schools are a good thing

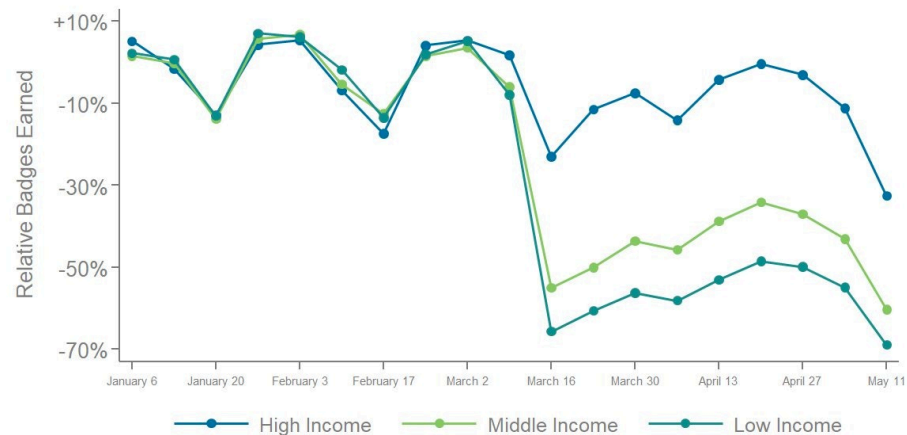
School Reopening: Immediate Consequences

- Many (most?) students will be learning in part or fully online
 - Digital divide
 - Low participation rates in online classrooms
- Exit from public school system
 - Some districts experiencing decline of ~15% in kindergarten enrollment
 - 8% of parents at all grade levels report homeschooling

Impacts of school closures and remote learning: Evidence on virtual learning and the digital divide

- Evidence from virtual charter schools shows negative impacts on student learning (Bueno, 2020)
 - Lower test scores (0.1 – 0.4 standard deviations)
 - 10 percentage point decline in high school graduation
 - Though some evidence that students recover with a return to in-person schooling
- School closures this spring exacerbated inequality ([Economic Tracker](#))

Student Progress in Zearn, by School-Area Income Level
For Classrooms Using Zearn *BEFORE* the Shutdown



Impacts of school closures and remote learning: Evidence on virtual learning and the digital divide

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 - 10 percentage point decline in high school graduation
 - Though some evidence that students recover with a return to in-person schooling
- School closures this spring exacerbated inequality ([Economic Tracker](#))
- Digital divide falls heaviest on low-income students and students of color, Native American, Black, and Latinx families much more likely to have no computer or internet at home ([Urban Institute](#)), low-income students less likely to receive live instruction this Spring ([Hechinger Report](#))

Impacts of school
closures and
remote learning:
**Potential long
term impacts from
disrupted
schooling**

- School disruptions and decreased funding both likely to have long-term negative impacts on students
 - Decreased funding due to state fiscal crisis
 - Students out of school for long periods in Argentina due to teacher strikes have lower employment and earnings (Jaume and Willen, 2019)
 - Declines in school funding during Great Recession led to lower test scores and less college enrollment (Jackson, Wigger, and Xiong 2020)
 - Earlier research shows students exposed to more school funding due to court-ordered school funding policies are more likely to stay in school and have higher earnings (Jackson, Johnson, and Persico, 2016)

Impacts of school
closures and
remote learning:
**Other risks from
disrupted school**

- Increased domestic violence
 - Increased DV calls by 7.5% during shutdowns in Spring 2020 (Leslie & Wilson, 2020)
- Decrease in reports of child maltreatment (neglect), due to lack of reporting from schools
 - Child maltreatment reports 27% due to school closures (Barron, Goldstein, and Wallace, 2020)
- Food insecurity increased, partial policy responses to address this (Pandemic-EBT) ([Hamilton Project](#))
- Mental health risks (parents and children) (Gassman-Pines, Ananat, and Fitz-Henley 2020)
- Parents (mother's) careers

Thank you!

- **Questions and comments:**

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- Twitter: @SarahCohodes
- Google doc with U.S. school reopening information and citations linked to here: <https://sarahcohodes.com/links/>