



## June 2020 MHCC Survey:

### MORNINGSIDE COMMUNITY WARY OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS RETURNING IN THE FALL

**Key Findings:** After more than three months of measures taken to “flatten the curve” in New York, members of the Morningside Heights community are concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on their well-being and that of their family members. Top-of mind is that the coronavirus is an unchecked health risk and that as some areas in the US have re-opened, the number of coronavirus infections has spiked. Survey respondents’ fears are high for a return to spiking rates in the Morningside Community if students are allowed to return too soon. The results of this survey are particularly important with the July 7 announcement by Columbia University President Lee Bollinger that a substantial number of students will be returning to campus in September and that university residence halls will be filled to 60 percent of capacity.

**About the Survey:** During this challenging period of uncertainty, MHCC created a survey in to gain insights into what Morningside Heights residents are feeling at a specific point in time during the COVID-19 pandemic. Fall 2020 plans for the many institutions of higher learning in Morningside Heights were not yet known at the time survey responses were submitted.

An email was sent to MHCC’s contact list with a link to *SurveyMonkey*. This link allowed participation in MHCC’s survey from June 18 through June 30, 2020. Surveys were completed among 315 participants ages 18 years and older.\* Aware of the integral role that these institutions have in our community, we asked for verbatim responses to the idea of students returning to live on campus and attending in-person classes in the Fall.

#### Extracts:

1. Of note, the proportion of survey participants not wanting schools to offer in-person classes is significantly greater than those who do. In their own words, survey respondents want to avoid neighborhood residents’ exposure to the coronavirus that could result from students taking in-person classes.
  - *Institutions must conference with the community and have Independent approval of safety plans by epidemiologists and other independent qualified experts. Otherwise stay away*
  - *Dangerous for students and local residents*
  - *Early opening could pose a threat to residents of the Heights*
  - *Past history of these institutions not factoring in concerns of neighborhood does not bode well*

\* The survey findings are limited to a self-select sample (not a random sample) pertaining to a specific point in time. The findings are not statistically projectible to any group or groups outside of this survey.

2. There is keen recognition of social distancing and face coverings as requisites for preventing the spread of COVID, and awareness that the college-aged cohort is less apt to follow these practices.
  - *I don't believe that social distancing and safety guideline will be followed*
  - *Young people haven't been social distancing*
  - *I think it is risky and unrealistic that students will follow social distancing*
  - *No way to ensure social distancing*
  
3. Even for those more amenable to schools allowing students on campus, concern about COVID-19 is evident in the way they describe colleges/universities need to having safety protocols in place.
  - *I am assuming these institutions will have established protocols to prevent exposure and spreading of the virus*
  - *If they do resume on site classes they need to test and quarantine all incoming students and maintain strict policies about gatherings, masks, etc.*
  - *I think the schools need to make sure adequate rules and awareness trainings are in place so that students take precautions when going to bars, restaurants, shops, grocery stores, and otherwise interacting with the surrounding neighborhood to limit the risk of infection to local residents*

The complete Survey Findings can be found [here](#).

Please send questions and comments specific to the survey to [mhccnyc@gmail.com](mailto:mhccnyc@gmail.com).