



THE BAY AREA PARENT POLL

Report

Jan. 11, 2007

Additional information of findings from this 2006 survey of Bay Area Parents is available at

www.kidsdata.org/parentpoll



For more information, call (650) 724-5778, or e-mail info@lpfch.org

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INTRODUCTION

In August 2006, the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health commissioned a survey of 1,796 parents of children ages 0-17 in six counties in the San Francisco Bay Area -- Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara.

Now in its second year, this wide-ranging survey tracks what parents consider the most pressing issues affecting their children's health and well being. The foundation plans to conduct this survey at regular intervals to understand how these issues change over time. Results from both the 2006 and 2005 surveys are available at <http://www.kidsdata.org/parentpoll/>

The survey queried parents on issues ranging from the quality of their children's health care, dental care, and schools, to whether they spend too much or too little time together as a family, to the effects of media, to whether racial or language issues have caused problems for their children.

Results were tabulated by numerous demographic factors, including family income, race/ethnicity, age and gender of child and parent, marital status of parent, and county of residence.¹

Overall, parents report that their children are physically and emotionally healthy by many measures, but stress, children's weight, depression, worries about family conflict and other emotional and behavioral issues trouble substantial numbers of parents. Lower-income parents and those who have a child with a disability were less positive in their responses overall.

¹ Individuals interested in breakdowns that are not available either in this summary report or on kidsdata.org may contact the foundation's Information Program at (650) 724-5778 or at info@lpfch.org.

EMOTIONAL HEALTH

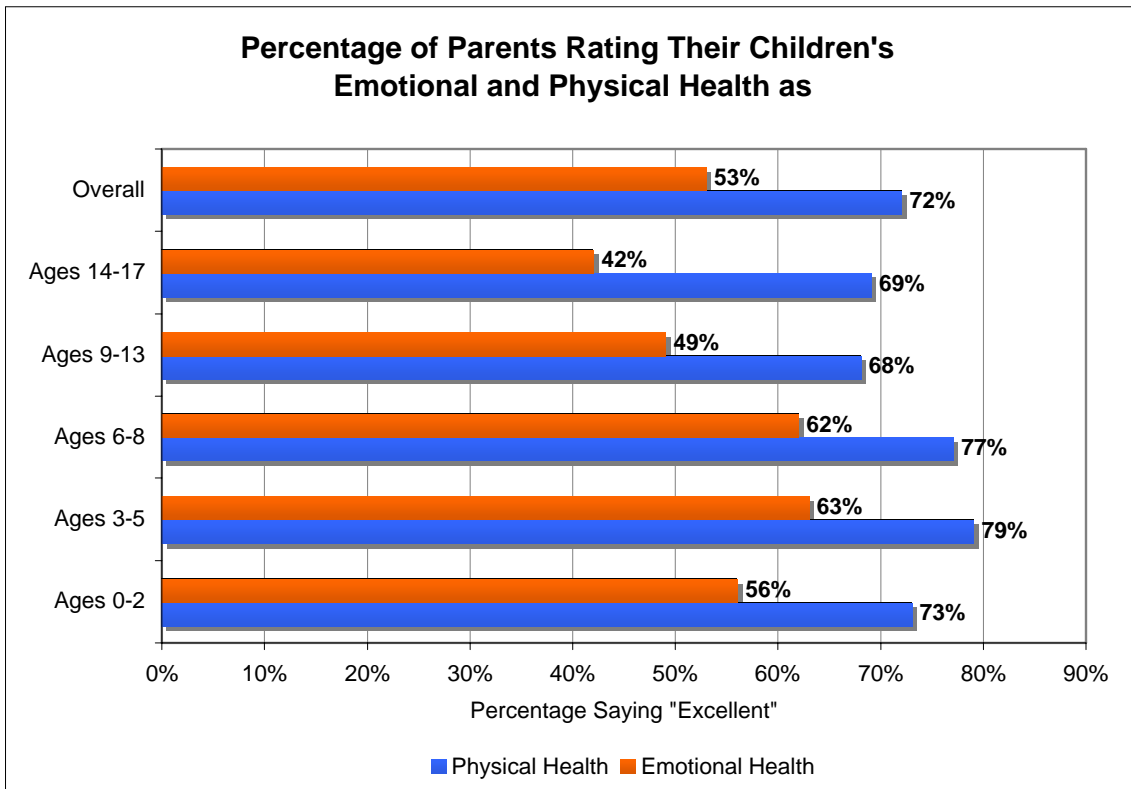
A substantial number of Bay Area parents express concern about issues related to their child's emotional health, with stress, depression, and the fallout from family conflict among the most prevalent concerns expressed in the survey. Concern about emotional health is especially clear when contrasted with attitudes about physical health. About three-quarters of parents (72%) gave their children the highest rating -- "excellent" -- for physical health, but only half of parents (53%) said the same for emotional health.

Parental ratings of emotional health also decline as children grow older, a trend that was not as pronounced for physical health. For example, while more than 62% of parents of 6- to 8-year-olds report that their children enjoy "excellent" emotional health, only 49% of parents of preteens (ages 9-13) say the same. That number drops even further -- to 42% -- for parents of teenagers.

DEFINITION

EMOTIONAL HEALTH encompasses a wide range of psychological functioning, such as self-esteem, coping, the ability to make healthful choices, and social competence. It affects all aspects of life including mental, physical and behavioral health, education and skill development, and social relationships.

(Child Trends, 2002)



A similar trend is evident in a more specific question about self esteem. Parents of children ages 3-5 were almost twice as likely (60%) to rate their child's self esteem as "excellent" than parents of teenagers (33%).

Household income also plays a role in parent perceptions of their child's emotional health, with children from higher income families saying their children fare better on many emotional health questions than lower income children, as shown in the table below.

Percentage of Parents Reporting "Excellent" on a Range of Emotional Health Questions	Annual Household Income		
	<\$50k	\$50k-\$100k	>\$100k
How would you describe your child's overall emotional health?	42%	51%	63%
How would you describe your child's level of self esteem?	38%	44%	50%
How would you rate your child's ability to be happy and see life in a positive way?	49%	49%	54%
How satisfied would you say your child is with the way he or she looks? ("very satisfied")	51%	55%	60%
How would you rate your child's ability to get along with other children?	51%	63%	60%

Parental perceptions of emotional health also vary by race/ethnicity of the parent. Latino parents were the least likely to give their children "excellent" ratings on the questions below.

Percentage of Parents Reporting "Excellent" on a Range of Emotional Health Questions	Race/Ethnicity of Parent		
	White non-Hispanic	Latino	Asian American
How would you describe your child's overall emotional health?	59%	44%	49%
How would you describe your child's level of self esteem?	45%	39%	42%
How would you rate your child's ability to handle difficult situations?	33%	18%	24%
How satisfied would you say your child is with the way he or she looks? ("very satisfied")	52%	45%	64%
How would you rate your child's ability to get along with other children?	59%	44%	60%

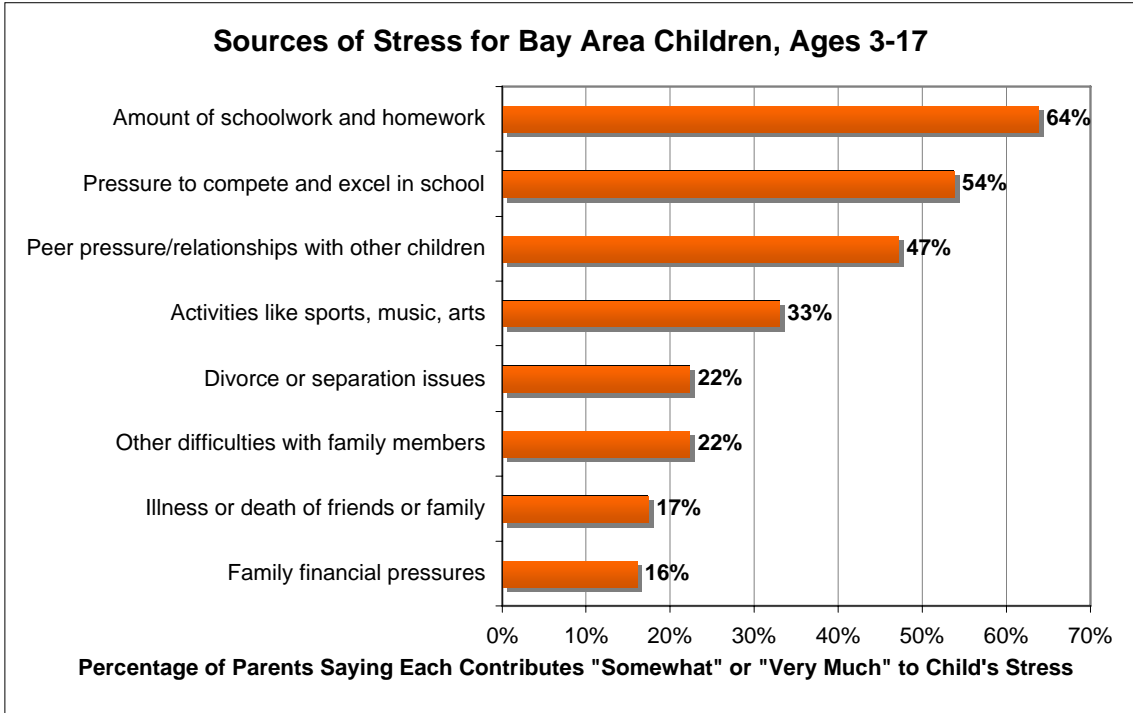
Stress

Parents report “high” or “very high” stress levels for children of all ages – from 10% of parents of children ages 3 to 5, up to 17% for 14- to 17-year-olds. When “moderate” stress is added, the totals rise to 27% of parents of 3- to-5-year-olds and 66% for teenagers. For all ages combined, 48% of Bay Area parents say that their children have moderate to very high levels of stress.

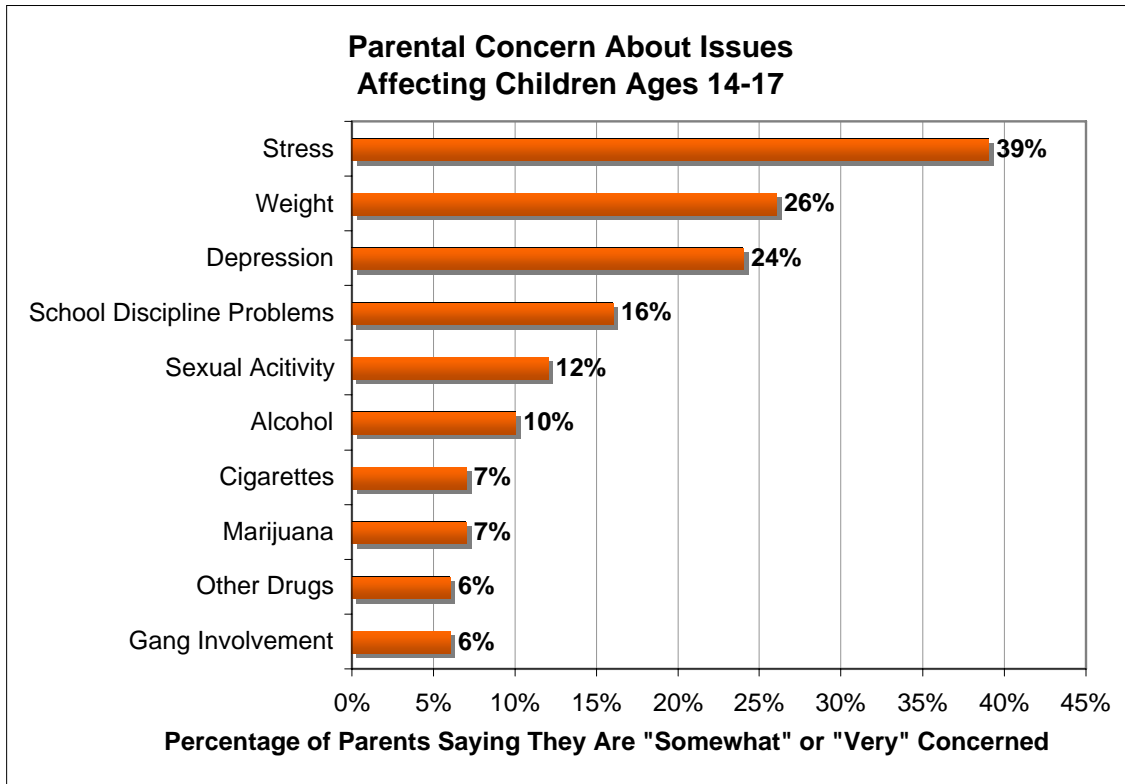
Level of Stress (Percentage of parents reporting)	Age of Child				
	3-5	6-8	9-13	14-17	Overall
Very high	3%	3%	4%	3%	3%
High	7%	6%	9%	14%	10%
Moderate	17%	27%	39%	49%	35%
Low	32%	35%	26%	21%	28%
Very Low	26%	25%	19%	12%	19%
Too young to say	13%	4%	0%	0%	4%

Latino parents report more overall stress (56% moderate, high, or very high) than other race/ethnicities, and Asian American parents report the lowest stress levels (41%). Single parents also say their children experience higher levels of stress (56% of parents reporting such stress) than married parents (47%).

School-related issues are the top two stressors, according to parents. The amount of schoolwork and homework topped the parental list of causes of child stress, with 64% of parents saying it contributes "somewhat" or "very much" to their child's stress, followed by pressure to compete and excel in school (54%). The full list of stressors that parents were queried about is listed in the graph on the next page.



Despite parents' reports that nearly half (48%) of children experience "moderate," "high," or "very high" levels of stress, less than one third (29%) say they are "somewhat" or "very" concerned about their child's stress. Still, parents expressed more concern about stress than any other issue in the survey -- and that was particularly true for parents of children ages 14-17, as shown on the next page.



Family Conflict

Parents of preteens are most likely to report that their child worries “somewhat” or “very much” about family conflict or divorce (31%), but even 13% of parents of young children (ages 3-5) report such worry. Overall, about one in four parents (24%) say their children worry "very much" or "somewhat" about family conflict. Single parents are far more likely to report that their children worry about family conflict (43%) than married parents (20%).

Depression

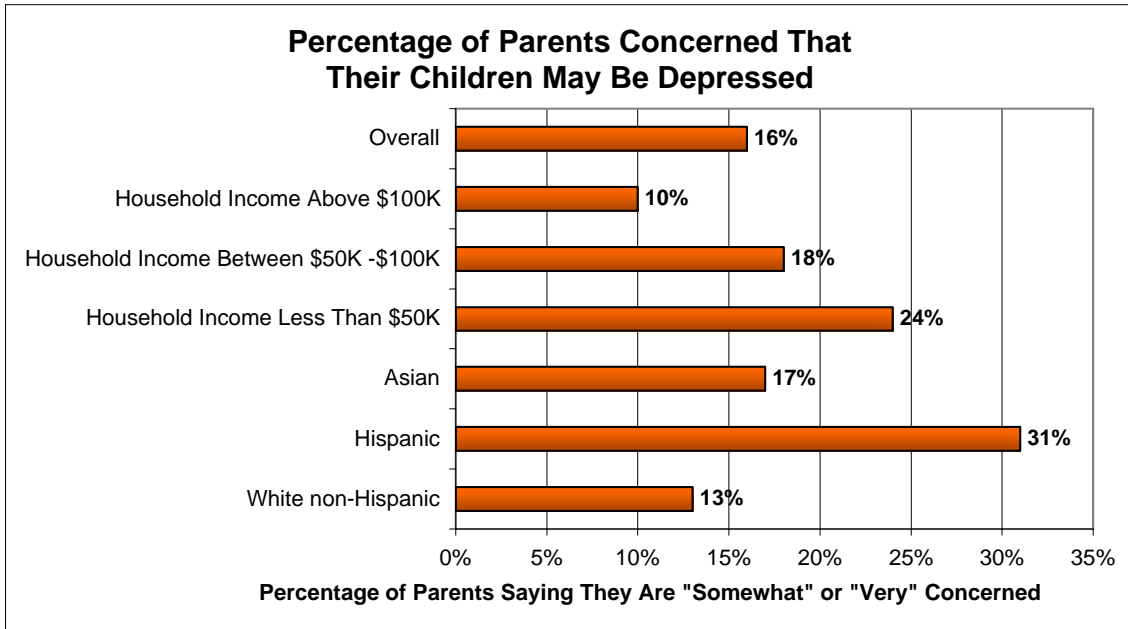
Overall, a large majority of parents (83%) say they are "not very" or "not at all" concerned that their child may be depressed. However, roughly 16% of parents are "somewhat" or "very" concerned, representing roughly 190,000 children ages 3-17 in the Bay Area.

Slightly more than one in 10 parents with children ages 3 and older (11%) say their children received emotional counseling or psychotherapy in the past year. Still, survey results suggest that many of those in need of such counseling may not be getting the support to address these issues. About three-fourths of parents (72%) who report concern that their children may be depressed said these kids did not receive counseling or psychotherapy.

Parental concern about depression consistently climbs as a child gets older. About one in four parents of teenagers say they are “very” or “somewhat” concerned about depression (24%), compared to 6% of parents of children ages 6-8.

Among single parents, the combined figure for parents who reported being “somewhat” or “very” concerned about depression is 22%, higher than the 15% for married parents, and nearly one in three Latino parents (31%) express similar concern about depression. Parents of children with a disabling condition are the most likely demographic group to report they are somewhat or very concerned that their child may be depressed (42%).

There also are income disparities regarding concern over depression, as noted in the graph below.

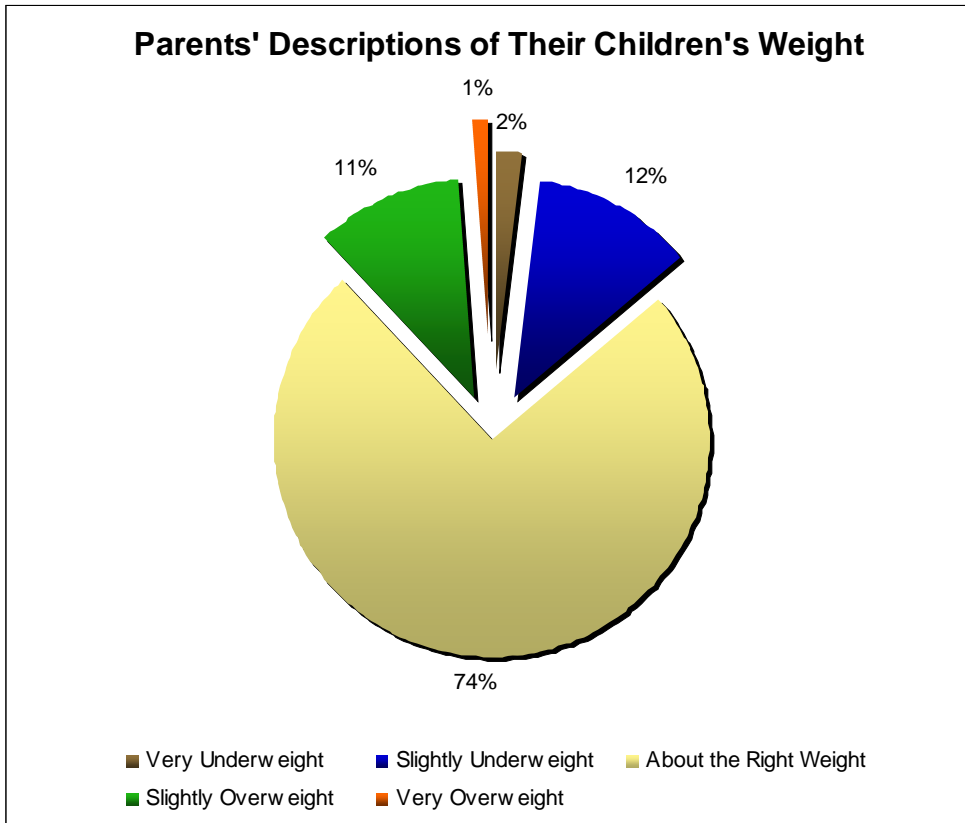


WEIGHT

Nearly one in four parents (24%) is “somewhat concerned” or “very concerned” about his or her child’s weight. Eleven percent of Asian American respondents and 10% of Latino respondents say they are “very concerned” about their child’s weight, roughly double the figure for White non-Hispanic parents. Concern levels regarding weight also are higher for lower-income parents (29% "somewhat" or "very" concerned) than higher-income parents (18%).

Percentage of Parents Concerned About Their Child’s Weight	Race/Ethnicity of Parent			
	White non-Hispanics	Latino	Asian-American	Overall
Very concerned	5%	10%	11%	8%
Somewhat concerned	13%	17%	22%	16%
Not very concerned	12%	14%	15%	14%
Not concerned at all	69%	59%	52%	63%

In addition to noting their concern about weight, parents also were asked to describe their child's weight. About three-quarters of Bay Area parents (74%) say their child is "about the right weight," with 14% saying their child is underweight and 12% saying their child is overweight.



Income was associated with parents' perceptions of their child's weight; only 9% of respondents with annual household incomes above \$100,000 said that their child is overweight, compared to 19% of respondents whose incomes were less than \$50,000.

Percentage of Parents Saying Their Child Is...	Annual Household Income			
	<\$50k	\$50k-\$100k	>\$100k	TOTAL
Very underweight	5%	1%	1%	2%
Slightly underweight	13%	8%	12%	12%
About the right weight	63%	80%	77%	74%
Slightly overweight	17%	10%	8%	11%
Very overweight	2%	1%	1%	1%

Parents also were asked to describe how much time per day their child spends on a variety of activities. Roughly one-quarter of parents say their child spends more than four hours each day being physically active -- and just 4% of parents say their child spends that much time watching television. According to parents, Bay Area children spend, on average, more than two hours a day being physically active; just under two hours a day watching television; between one and two hours on the computer or reading for pleasure; and less than an hour playing video games or talking on the phone. Whether or not this is an accurate reflection of the time children actually spend in these ways, it is an accurate reflection of parents' perceptions of how their children spend their time.

Percentage of Parents Reporting How Much Time Their Child Spends Each Day...	Percent of parents reporting				
	None	<1 hour	1-2 hours	3-4 hours	>4 hours
Watching television	8%	21%	50%	16%	4%
Playing video games	51%	21%	20%	4%	2%
On the computer	29%	32%	30%	5%	3%
On the telephone or cell phone	57%	27%	8%	2%	2%
Reading for pleasure	18%	41%	30%	5%	2%
Being physically active	4%	12%	33%	21%	28%

INCOME DIFFERENCES

In wide-ranging questions across the survey, disparities were evident among children from families whose annual household income is less than \$50,000 per year – which is roughly equivalent to the self-sufficiency level for a family of four in the high-cost Bay Area – and those from families with incomes above \$100,000, as shown in the table below.

Percentage of Parents Saying...	Annual Household Income Less than \$50,000	Annual Household Income Between \$50,000 and \$100,000	Annual Household Income Greater than \$100,000
Their child's overall physical health is "excellent"	60%	71%	85%
Their child's overall emotional health is "excellent"	42%	51%	63%
They are "very concerned" that their child may be depressed	10%	4%	1%
They are "very concerned" about their child's weight	11%	7%	5%
Their child is <i>not</i> regularly involved in music, sports, art classes or other non-school programs or classes	26%	19%	9%
The quality of their child's school is "excellent"	29%	34%	57%

Parents also were asked whether they have the means to provide for their children's basic needs. Fourteen percent of Bay Area parents, including 40% of single mothers, say their family income is “not quite enough” or “not nearly enough” to provide for basic necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter for their children. Eleven percent of Latino parents say that their family income is “not nearly enough” to provide for the basic needs of their children, and 11% of single parents say the same.

In this survey, 51% of Latino respondents and 40% of single parents reported annual household incomes below \$50,000.

Percentage of parents reporting whether they have enough income to meet their child's basic needs.	Parent Characteristics						
	White non-Hispanic	Latino	Asian American	Married	Single	Single mom	Overall
More than enough	53%	15%	41%	47%	22%	19%	42%
Adequate	37%	59%	52%	44%	41%	39%	44%
Not quite enough	7%	13%	6%	6%	24%	28%	10%
Not nearly enough	3%	11%	0%	2%	11%	12%	4%

OTHER FINDINGS

Concerns About Media

Parents were asked to rate the effect of media, such as television and music, on their child. Forty-five percent of parents of children ages 14 to 17 say that media have a “somewhat negative” or “very negative” effect on their child, more than any other age group. For all ages, three in 10 parents say media have a somewhat or very negative effect on their child, and 51% say the effect is positive (About 20% said their child was “too young to say” or “don’t know”).

Physical Health & Medical Care

Bay Area parents overwhelmingly say their children are physically healthy, with nearly 96% rating their child's physical health either as “good” or “excellent,” and more than nine in 10 parents (94%) say the quality of their child's medical care is “excellent” or “good.”

However, there are notable differences among certain demographic groups. For example, White non-Hispanic parents are more likely to rate their child's physical health as excellent (80%) than Latino parents (57%). These differences also hold true when parents were asked to rate the quality of health care their child receives. More than two-thirds of White non-Hispanic parents (69%) give their child's health care the highest marks, compared to less than half of Latino parents (47%).

Income also is a significant factor in parents' ratings of the quality of their child's health care. About half (47%) of parents whose household incomes are below \$50,000 rate their child's health care as “excellent” -- much less than the 69% of parents whose incomes are above \$100,000.

Overall, 94% of parents report that their children have insurance coverage that pays for part or all of their medical care. Latino parents are the least likely to report that they had medical coverage; according to their parents, fully 13% of their children remain uninsured. About 14% of low-income parents (those with annual household incomes less than \$50,000) say their children do not have health insurance, significantly higher than the 2% of parents whose incomes are above \$100,000.

Dental Health

Three-quarters of parents (74%) with children over age 3 say their child had visited a dental clinic in the last six months. However, 81% of parents with children under age 3 reported that their child had never seen a dentist; the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends that children should see a dentist for the first time by age 1.

More than half of parents (57%) rate the dental care their child receives as “excellent.” White non-Hispanic parents are the most likely to give an “excellent” rating (68%); only 42% of Latino parents gave the same rating.

Overall, 17% of parents indicate that they do not have any insurance coverage that pays for dental care, which is significantly higher than those who say they lack medical insurance (5%). Latino parents are the most likely to report that they lack dental coverage for their children (25%).

Attitudes Toward School

Bay Area parents generally have positive views of their children's schools and teachers, with 80% of parents rating the quality of their child's school as "excellent" or "good," and 82% rating teachers in the same way.

A slightly larger percentage of parents -- 86% -- also say that, normal complaints aside, their child's feelings about going to school either are "very" or "somewhat" positive. However, the percentage of parents reporting that their child has a "very positive" attitude toward school declines from 73% for parents of 6-to-8-year-olds to 50% for parents of children ages 14-17.

The majority of parents (54%) say there is "about the right amount" of focus on testing in the schools, 20% say there's "too much" focus on testing, and 9% say there's "not enough" testing (17% also responded either "don't know" or "does not apply").

Safety

The majority of Bay Area parents (74%) say their child is "very" safe while attending school, and a similar percentage (69%) say their child is "very" safe outside of school. For both questions, about 20% of respondents answered "somewhat safe" and roughly 5% answered either "somewhat unsafe" or "very unsafe." There were no substantial demographic differences in responses to these questions

Race/Ethnicity & Language Issues

Less than one out of ten parents report that race/ethnicity or language issues have caused problems for their children in the last year. However, children are more likely to encounter such problems as they get older, according to parent assessments. While only 5% of parents of children ages 6-8 report such difficulty, 12% of parents of teenagers say their child experienced language or racial/ethnic problems in the last year. Language problems also were reported by more than twice as many Latino parents (11%) as Asian parents (4%).

Time Together as a Family

More than a quarter of all parents (27%) say their families do not spend enough time together as a family, compared to 67% who say they spend about the right amount of time together and 6% who say they spend too much time together as a family.

Although differences among demographics are not large, single parents and parents of teenagers are more likely to say they don't spend enough time as a family than other groups.

Sleep

Overall, three quarters of parents (76%) report that their children sleep “about the right amount.” Latino parents are most likely to report their children sleep “about the right amount” (85%), and Asian American parents are the least likely (68%) to say this.

Differences also are evident by the age of the child. Parents of young children (ages 3-5) are the most likely to report their children sleep about the right amount (86%). In contrast, 25% of parents of teenagers report that their children do not get “quite enough” or “nearly enough” sleep, followed very closely by parents of children ages 6-8 (24%).

Also of note: Higher income parents are almost twice as likely to report that their children do not get “nearly enough” sleep (21%) as lower income parents (11%).

Almost half of parents (45%) with children under age 3 say their children slept with them in the parent’s bed, at least occasionally. This was most common in Latino families (64%) and least common in White non-Hispanic families (36%).

Morals

When parents of children over the age of 6 were queried about how they would rate their child’s sense of morals -- that is, how they behave in terms of his or her sense of right and wrong and fairness -- only half of respondents (50%) gave their child a rating of “excellent.” Parents of girls gave their child an “excellent” rating more often (55%) than parents of boys (45%). And teenagers were the age group most likely to receive an “excellent” rating from their parents (57%).

Higher-income parents are more likely to give their child an “excellent” rating (56%) than lower-income parents (47%). However, single mothers are significantly more likely to report that their children had “excellent” morals (57%) than married parents (49%).

Daily Activities

As referenced above in the weight section, the majority of parents report that, per day, their child spends less than two hours watching television (79%); less than one hour playing video games (72%); less than one hour on the computer (60%); no time on the telephone (57%); less than one hour reading for pleasure (59%); and between one and four hours being physically active (54%).

However, the amount of time parents reported for each activity varied greatly by the age of their child. For instance, parents of preteens are most likely to report that their child spends more than one hour playing video games (39%), compared to 31% of teenagers and only 21% of children ages 6-8.

The percentage of parents reporting that their child watched more than three hours of television was also highest for preteens (26%), but parents of teenagers were the most likely to report more than three hours of both computer use (15%) and telephone use (8%).

Eighteen percent of parents report that their child did not ever read for pleasure. Parents with household incomes below \$50,000 were twice as likely to report this (29%) as parents with higher household incomes (14%). Older children also are less likely to read for pleasure, according to parental perceptions; parents report that 22% of their teenage children do not read for pleasure, compared to only 13% of parents with children ages 6-8 who said the same.

A greater percentage of higher-income children (86%) are regularly involved in music, sports, art classes, or other non-school programs than low-income parents (71%). Latino parents are among those least likely to say their children are involved in such activities. And despite concerns among some experts that kids today are too overscheduled, the majority of Bay Area parents (54%) say their children have the "right amount" of unscheduled time, and 27% believe that kids have "more than enough" unscheduled time. A little less than one-fifth of parents said their children have either "not quite enough" or "not nearly enough" free time.

Child Care

Fourteen percent of parents report that there are no affordable child care options for their children after school. Latino parents are more than three times as likely to report this (32%) than White non-Hispanic parents (9%).

The problem is most pressing for parents of preschool-age children (ages 3-5), who are almost twice as likely to say that there are no child care options (20%) as parents of children ages 6-8 (11%).

Of the parents who had child care for their children, 71% say that they are "very satisfied" with the quality of those arrangements. Parents of children who had disabling conditions were the least likely of any demographic group to report such satisfaction (58%).

Children with Disabilities

About 5% of parents report having a child with a physical, behavioral, or mental condition that limits his or her participation in normal childhood activities, and those parents say their children fare worse on a range of issues. Forty-nine percent of these parents are "very" or "somewhat" concerned about their child's weight, compared to 22% for those whose child did not have a disability. Twenty-seven percent say their family income is "not quite enough" or "not nearly enough" to meet basic needs, compared to 13% for those without a disabled child. And 14% are "very concerned" that their child may be depressed, compared to 4% of parents without a disabled child.

Overall, about one in 10 respondents say that their child (9%) had an episode of asthma or an asthma attack over the past year, and 13% of parents say their child has been diagnosed by a doctor or psychologist with a learning disability.

METHODOLOGY

The Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health commissioned the Survey and Policy Research Institute (SPRI) at San Jose State University to conduct 1,796 interviews in Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties with parents of children under the age of 18. Interviewing in Spanish and English was conducted July 10, 2006 to Aug. 2, 2006.

SPRI's interviews included 947 parents in Santa Clara County and 433 in San Mateo County. Included in these totals for the two counties was an over-sampling of Latinos and Asian Americans.

The complete sample was weighted by race and county to obtain a distribution that matches the 2000 U.S. Census for persons 18 years of age or older. In addition, separate weights for racial/ethnic distribution were calculated for Santa Clara and San Mateo counties and for the two-county region.

The margin of error, at the 95% confidence level, for the overall sample is $\pm 2.3\%$. For White non-Hispanics in the Bay Area the margin of error is $\pm 3.5\%$; for Latinos it is $\pm 4.4\%$; and for Asian Americans it is $\pm 4.6\%$. In San Mateo County, the margin of error is $\pm 4.7\%$; for Santa Clara County, it is $\pm 3.2\%$; and for the Alameda-Contra Costa counties region it is about $\pm 5.4\%$. In the two-county San Mateo and Santa Clara counties region, the margin of error for is $\pm 2.6\%$. African Americans parents, who constitute only about 7% of the region's total population, were not over-sampled and their responses are subject to a considerably larger margin of error. Populations of other ethnic groups were too small to provide reliable responses.

About the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health

The Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health is a public charity whose mission is to “promote, protect and sustain the physical, mental, emotional and behavioral health of children.” For more information about the foundation, call (650) 724-5778 or visit www.lpfch.org.