Family Experiences During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Current Disruptions to Children's Activities: Jul. 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>California</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child Care Closed</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical or Dental Appointments Canceled</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports or After-School Activities Canceled</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Programs Canceled</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
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Definition: Estimated percentage of adults with caregiving responsibilities for children ages 0-17 whose children's activities were disrupted in the period after the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020 and were still disrupted at the time of questionnaire, by type of disruption (e.g., in Wave 3 (Jul. 8 – Jul. 27, 2021), the children of 4.5% of California caregivers were still experiencing closure of their child care).


Concern for Children’s Emotional or Mental Health in Past Month: Jul. 2021

California

What It Is

On kidsdata.org, measures of how children and families in California are faring during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic come from a national questionnaire, Family Experiences During the COVID-19 Pandemic. Caregivers with children ages 0-17 were asked a series of questions relating to the pandemic's impact on family economic security, public service use, emotional and behavioral experiences, child care, and education. Estimates based on their responses are available for California and seven sub-state regions. At the state level, data also are broken down by household income level, caregiver's race/ethnicity, and for families with and without children with special health care needs (CSHCN).

Why This Topic Is Important

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of U.S. families already were struggling with poverty, food insecurity, housing instability, mental illness, and difficulty accessing quality health care, education, and other resources. The onset of the pandemic dramatically worsened these issues, leaving many parents out of work or with reduced incomes and struggling to meet their families’ basic needs. At the same time, families grappled with child care and school closures, shifts to remote learning and working, and disconnection from extended family, friends, and other social supports. Many families also experienced illness and the loss of loved ones due to the disease. Not surprisingly, mental health problems increased for both children and parents during 2020.

Some families were particularly vulnerable to the COVID-19 crisis, including those already struggling to make ends meet, hourly workers and those with unstable employment, families of color (who faced inequities in health outcomes and access to care before the pandemic), and families with young children or children with special health care needs. The pandemic's effects on young people are of particular concern, as adverse childhood experiences (especially in early childhood) can have negative, long-term impacts on health and well being. The more traumatic events a child experiences, the more likely the impact will be substantial and long lasting. Every effort should be made to ensure that children and families recover from the pandemic and that their physical, emotional, educational, and material needs are met. Beyond meeting basic needs, children also need positive experiences and stable, nurturing relationships and environments in which to thrive.
Sixteen months after the COVID-19 outbreak, California adults with caregiving responsibilities for children ages 0-17 were still experiencing, among other disruptions, closure of their children's schools (24%) and child care facilities (5%), cancelation of children's health care appointments (6%), and postponement of young children's vaccinations (11%), according to estimates from the third wave of a questionnaire administered in July 2021. At the time of the Wave 3 questionnaire, almost half of caregivers statewide (46%) were more than slightly concerned that their youngest school-aged child was falling behind at school, and a similar share (42%) were more than slightly concerned for their oldest child's emotional or mental health in the previous month.

Use of social safety net resources remained high in Wave 3: Among caregivers who had used safety net resources at any time during the pandemic (56%), a large majority (more than 4 in 5) were using them at the time of questionnaire. Across waves, caregivers in lower-income households were more likely to have accessed safety net resources in the period after the COVID-19 outbreak, and also to have suffered negative impacts on their household financial situation during the pandemic. While fewer than one-third (32%) of all California caregivers had experienced a negative overall financial impact in Wave 3, nearly half (49%) of those with annual household incomes below $30,000 had been negatively impacted.

In Wave 3, 29% of California caregivers had in the previous month experienced feelings of nervousness or stress always or most of the time, and 20% felt difficulties piling up so high that they could not be overcome. Overall, fewer than 40% felt confident in their ability to control important things in their lives at least most of the time. In the previous week, an estimated 19% of caregivers had felt angry with their children every day and 20% had physically disciplined their children by spanking, slapping, or hitting. Among caregivers of CSHCN, estimates of daily feelings of anger towards children (24%) and physical discipline (35%) were higher than for caregivers in households without CSHCN (17% and 13%).

View references for this text and additional research on this topic: https://www.kidsdata.org/topic/105/family-experiences-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/