

The Child and Family's Neighborhood

Urban and rural communities differ in their physical structure, and may also vary in their support for families and children. This section examines parents' reports about their children's safety and support in their school and neighborhood, as well as the amenities and physical conditions that make their communities safe and healthy places to live.



Supportive Neighborhoods

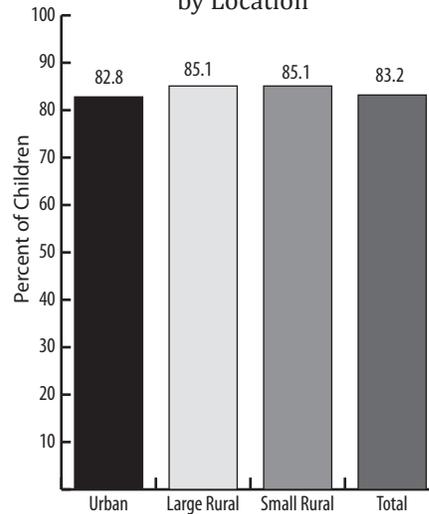
To assess whether or not families and children were supported in their neighborhoods, parents were asked whether they agreed with the following statements:

- People in the neighborhood help each other out.
- We watch out for each other's children.
- There are people I can count on in the neighborhood.
- If my child were outside playing and got hurt or scared, there are adults nearby whom I trust to help my child.

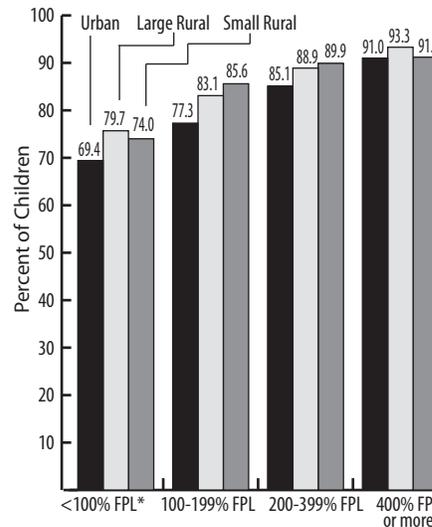
Families were considered to live in supportive neighborhoods if they answered "definitely agree" or "somewhat agree" to each of the four statements. Overall, parents of 83.2 percent of children reported that they live in supportive neighborhoods. This percentage was slightly higher (85.1 percent) in both small and large rural areas.

The discrepancy between urban and rural communities is greatest among children in lower-income households. Among rural children with household incomes below the Federal poverty level (FPL), approximately three-quarters lived in supportive neighborhoods, compared

Percent of Children Living in Supportive Neighborhoods, by Location



Percent of Children Living in Supportive Neighborhoods, by Location and Poverty Status



*Federal poverty level was \$20,650 for a family of four in 2007.

to 69.4 percent of urban children of the same income level. Among children with household incomes of 400

percent of the FPL or more, however, at least 91 percent lived in supportive neighborhoods regardless of location.

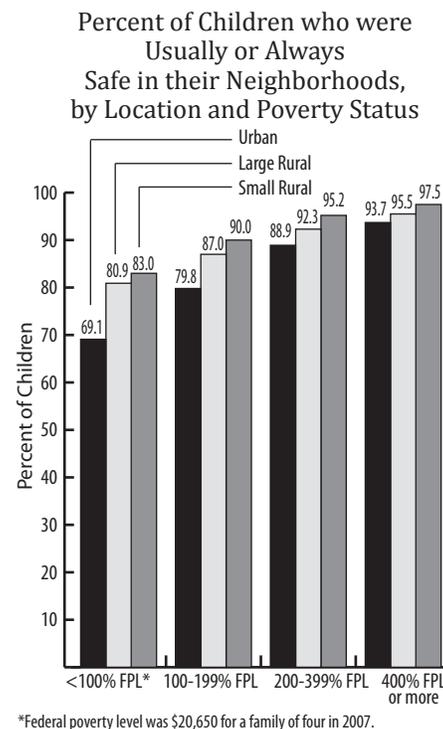
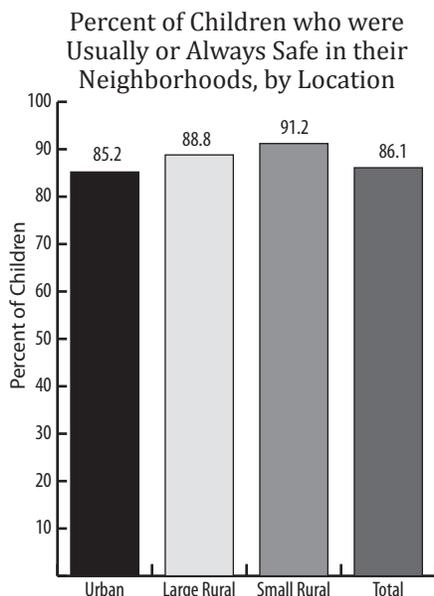


Neighborhood Safety

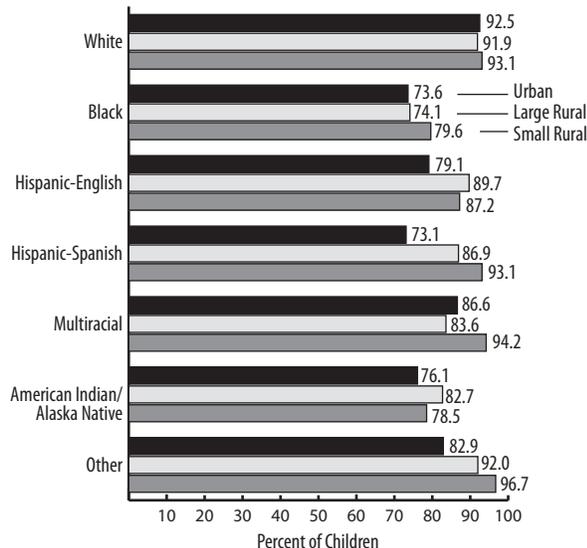
Families are more likely to feel comfortable in a neighborhood if they feel that their children are safe. Parents were asked how often they felt that their child was safe in their community or neighborhood—never, sometimes, usually, or always. Overall, parents of 86.1 percent of children report that they feel that their child is usually or always safe in their neighborhood. This percentage was higher in small rural areas (91.2 percent) and large rural areas (88.8 percent) than in urban areas (85.2 percent).

In all locations, children with higher household incomes were more likely than lower-income children to live in safe neighborhoods. This discrepancy is greatest among urban children, of whom 69.1 percent of those with household incomes below the Federal poverty level (FPL) were reported to usually or always be safe in their neighborhoods, compared to 93.7 percent of children with household incomes of 400 percent of FPL or more.

Within most racial and ethnic groups, the percentage of children who were usually or always safe in their neighborhoods is greatest in small rural areas. This discrepancy is greatest among Hispanic children who primarily speak Spanish; within this group, 73.1 percent of children



Percent of Children who were Usually or Always Safe in their Neighborhoods, by Location and Race/Ethnicity



in urban areas live in safe neighborhoods, compared to 93.1 percent of those in small rural areas. Among English-speaking Hispanic and Ameri-

can Indian/Alaska Native children, the highest percentage living in safe neighborhoods was found in large rural areas.

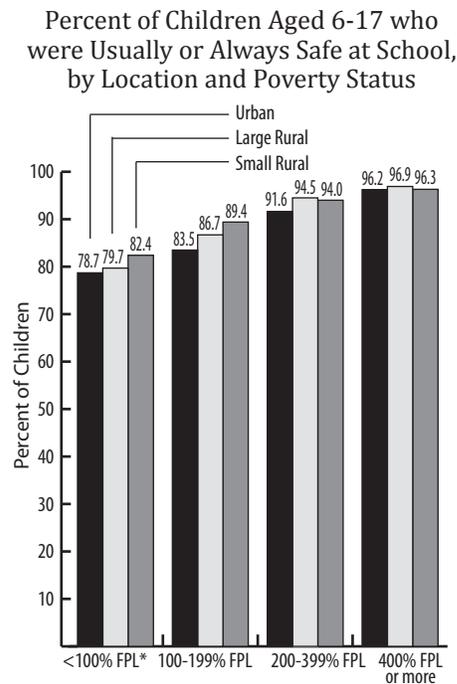
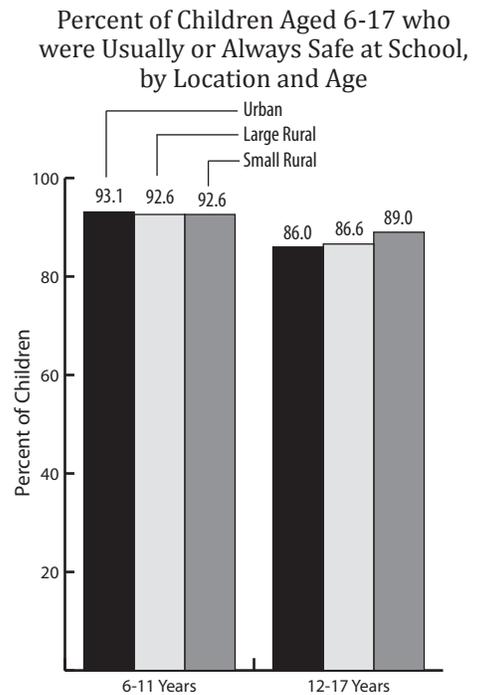
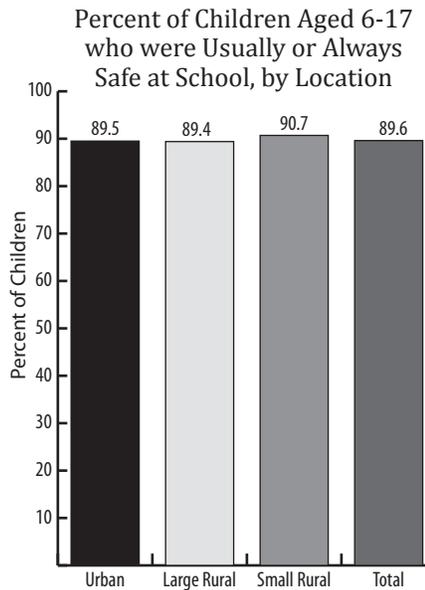


Safety at School

Parents of school-aged children (aged 6-17 years) were also asked how often they felt that their children were safe in school. Overall, parents of 89.6 percent of children reported that their children were usually or always safe in school. This percentage does not vary substantially by location.

In all locations, younger children (aged 6-11) were more likely to be considered safe at school than older adolescents (aged 12-17). Approximately 93 percent of children aged 6-11 were reported to be safe at school, compared to 86.0 percent (in urban areas) to 89.0 percent (in small rural areas) of adolescents.

Children with higher household incomes were also more likely to be reported to be safe at school. Approximately 96 percent of children with household incomes of 400 percent of the Federal poverty level (FPL) or more were usually or always safe at school; among children with family incomes below the FPL, this percentage ranged from 78.7 percent of urban children to 82.4 percent of those in small rural areas.



*Federal poverty level was \$20,650 for a family of four in 2007.



Neighborhood Amenities

The availability of neighborhood amenities, such as playgrounds, community centers, and libraries, provides children with opportunities for recreation, education, and socializing without going far from home. Overall, 73.3 percent of children were reported to live in neighborhoods with sidewalks or walking paths; 80.8 percent had a park or playground in their neighborhood; 86.0 percent had a library or bookmobile in the community; and 65.0 percent had a recreation center, community center, or Boys' and Girls' club. Only 4.6 percent of children were reported to live in neighborhoods with none of these amenities, while 48.2 percent of children lived in neighborhoods with all of these amenities.

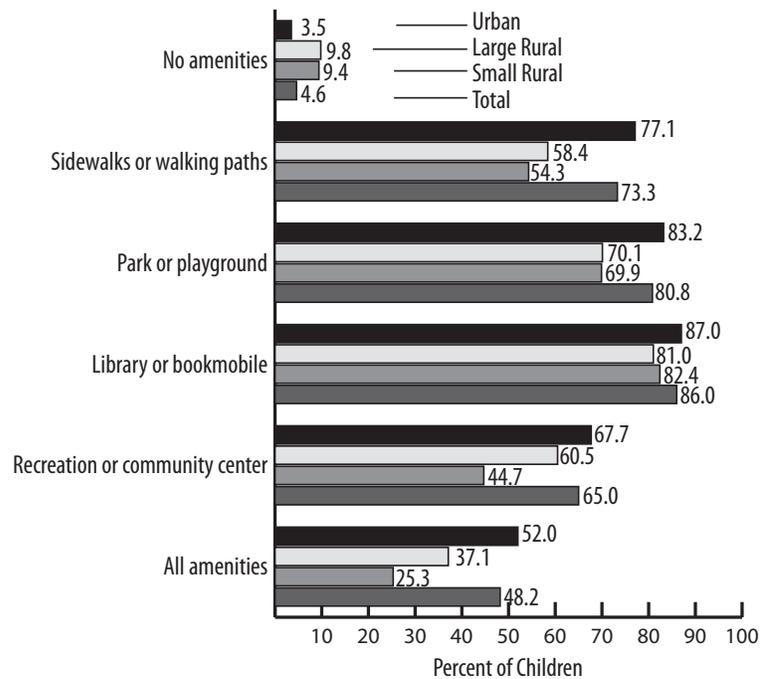
Children in urban areas were more likely to have access to neighborhood amenities than rural children. More than half of urban children (52.0 percent) had access to all four amenities, compared to one-quarter (25.3 percent) of children in small rural areas and 37.1 percent of those in large rural areas. Very few children (3.5 percent) in urban areas had access to no amenities, compared to 9.4 percent of children in small rural

areas and 9.8 percent of those in large rural areas. However, rural communities may have other features, such as swimming holes or hiking trails, that were not included in the survey question.

Libraries and bookmobiles were most likely to be available in all locations; more than 80 percent of children in both urban and rural areas

have access to a library. Children in small rural areas were least likely to have access to a recreation center or community center; this was reported to be available to only 44.7 percent of children in these areas. Among children in large rural areas, the amenity least often reported was sidewalks or walking paths, available to 58.4 percent of children.

Percent of Children with Access to Neighborhood Amenities, by Location





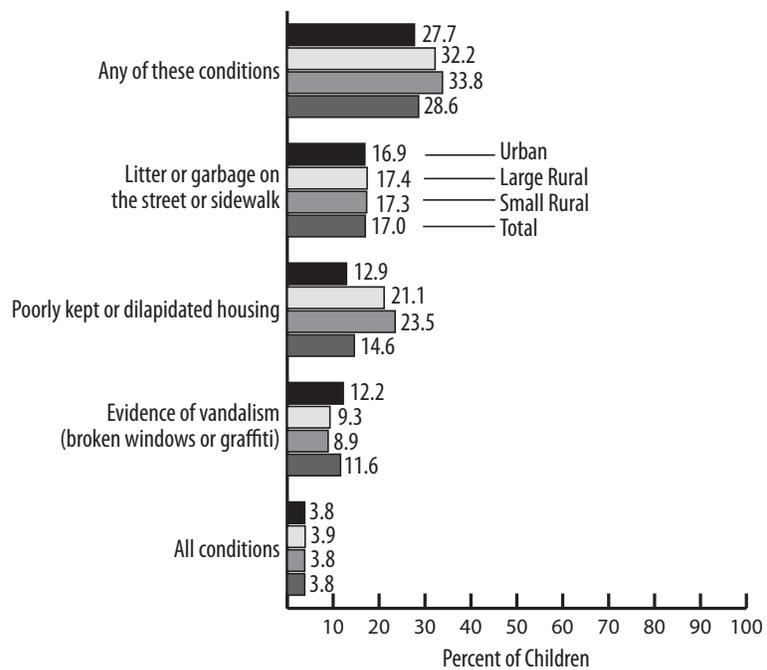
Neighborhood Conditions

The physical environment can affect the physical health, safety, social opportunities, and development of a child. Poor neighborhood conditions, such as dilapidated housing, evidence of vandalism, and litter or garbage on the street may contribute adversely, either directly or indirectly, to a child's overall well-being.

Parents of 17.0 percent of children reported that they lived in neighborhoods with litter or garbage on the street or sidewalk, while 14.6 percent of children were reported to live in neighborhoods with poorly kept or dilapidated housing, and 11.6 percent lived in neighborhoods with evidence of vandalism, such as broken windows or graffiti. Overall, 71.4 percent of children were reported to live in neighborhoods with none of these conditions, while the remaining 28.6 percent lived in neighborhoods with at least one of these conditions.

A small percentage of children—approximately 3.8 percent, regardless of location—lived in areas with all three of these conditions. The percentage of children whose neighborhoods have any of these conditions was highest in small rural areas (33.8 percent) and lowest in urban areas (27.7 percent).

Condition of Children's Neighborhoods, by Location



The percentage of children whose neighborhoods have litter or garbage on the street or sidewalk did not vary substantially by location. Rural children were more likely to live in neighborhoods with poorly kept or dilapidated housing: 21.1 percent of those in large rural areas and 23.5 percent of those in small rural areas,

compared to 12.9 percent of urban children. Children in urban areas were the most likely to live in neighborhoods with evidence of vandalism: this was reported by the parents of 12.2 percent of urban children, compared to 9.3 percent of children in large rural areas and 8.9 percent of those in small rural communities.