

Household Pulse Survey: Children’s Mental Health

Data Brief | April 2023

ABOUT THE HOUSEHOLD PULSE SURVEY

The Health Resources and Services Administration’s Maternal and Child Health Bureau (HRSA MCHB) partners with the Census Bureau on the [Household Pulse Survey](#) (HPS) to measure the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on U.S. households.

Launched in April 2020, the HPS is a 20-minute online survey of adults living in the United States.

HRSA MCHB began partnering with the Census Bureau on content that launched in April 2021. Beginning in June 2022, questions sponsored by HRSA MCHB on children’s mental health behaviors were added to the survey. Households with children reported on whether in the last 4 weeks any children seemed to:

- Feel anxious or clingy
- Feel very sad or depressed
- Show changes in eating habits
- Show changes in ability to stay focused
- Show unusual anger or outbursts
- Engage in problematic behavior such as lying, cheating, stealing, or bullying
- Behave in ways they had previously outgrown (developmental regression)
- Complain of physical pain with no medical issue

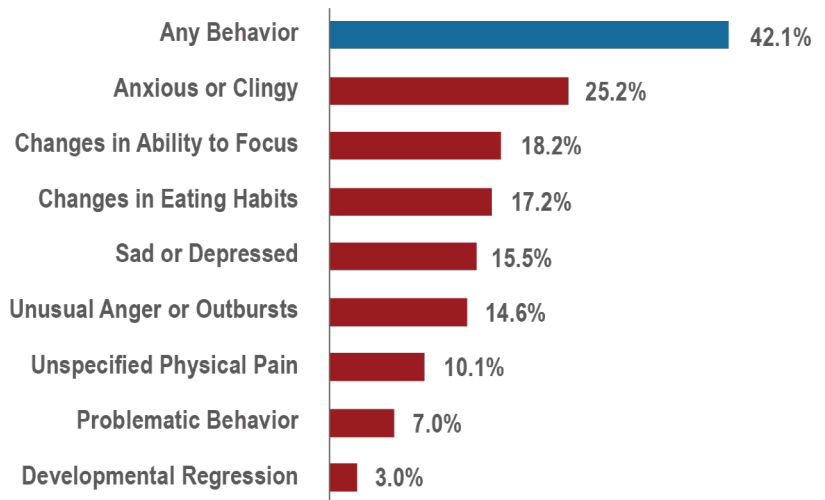
In recent years, the number of U.S. children diagnosed with [mental health conditions has increased](#), while pediatric mental health services have been insufficient to meet these needs. Monitoring children’s mental health symptoms and behaviors provides important data on children’s mental health needs that may not be captured by reported diagnoses. This data brief describes the prevalence of households with children reporting child mental health-related behaviors from the Household Pulse Survey. Estimates are based on data collected from September 14 to November 14, 2022.

KEY FINDINGS

Overall Prevalence of Mental Health Behaviors

- In Fall 2022, about 4 in 10 (42.1%) surveyed households with children (representing 30.7 million U.S. households) reported that one or more children displayed at least one of eight mental health behaviors in the past four weeks.
- The most frequently reported behaviors were seeming anxious or clingy (25.2%), changes in ability to focus (18.2%), and changes in eating habits (17.2%).

Percent of U.S. Households with Children Reporting Child Mental Health Behaviors, September 14-November 14, 2022



Mental Health Behaviors by Health Insurance

Publicly insured respondents were more likely than privately insured respondents to report all mental health behaviors in children except for children who seemed “anxious or clingy.”

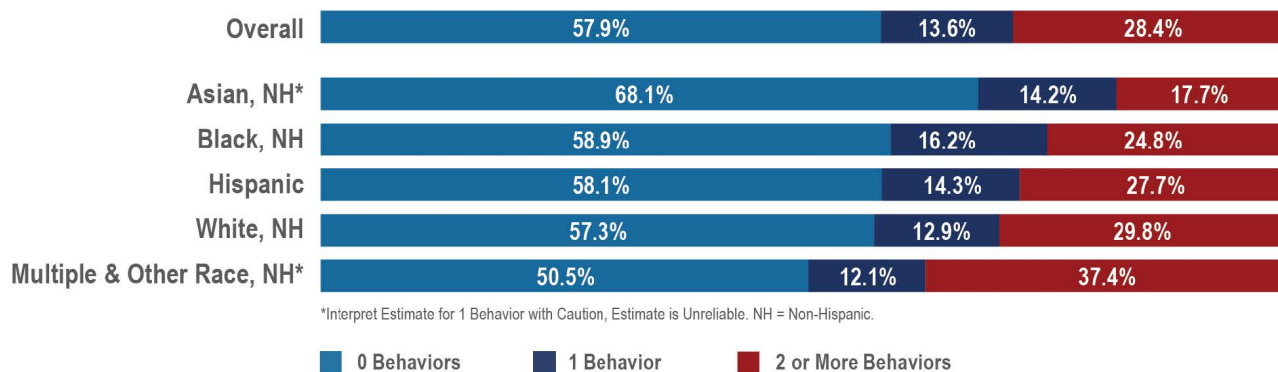
Percent of U.S. Households with Children Reporting Child Mental Health Behaviors by Respondent’s Health Insurance, September 14-November 14, 2022

	Any Public Insurance	Private Insurance
Any Behavior	46.1%	40.4%
Anxious or Clingy	25.0%	26.2%
Changes in Ability to Focus	22.1%	16.1%
Changes in Eating Habits	22.5%	14.8%
Sad or Depressed	16.7%	14.4%
Unusual Anger or Outbursts	18.7%	12.5%
Unspecified Physical Pain	12.0%	9.0%
Problematic Behavior	9.3%	5.6%
Developmental Regression	3.3%	2.6%

Number of Mental Health Behaviors by Race/Ethnicity

- Almost 3 in 10 (28.4%) U.S. households with children reported two or more mental health behaviors.
- Non-Hispanic Multiple and Other race respondents were most likely (37.4%) to report 2 or more mental health behaviors.

Number of Child Mental Health Behaviors Reported by U.S. Households with Children, Overall and by Respondent Race/Ethnicity, September 14-November 14, 2022



DATA NOTE

From September 14 through November 14, 2022, 49,558 adults residing in households with children completed the Household Pulse Survey. Of these, 38,032 adults answered the question about children’s mental health behaviors. Estimates in this brief are weighted to represent U.S. households with children. Estimates were weighted for nonresponse, adults per household, and coverage to match the U.S. population by age, sex, race, ethnicity, and education level. Detailed information about the Household Pulse Survey can be found on the [Census Bureau website](#) or on the [HRSA MCHB Pulse Survey webpage](#).