



## The Child's Family

The family environment, including parents' physical and mental health and the activities that go on at home, provide the backdrop and context for children's health and development. Therefore, the survey explored a number of aspects of the family, including shared activities (such as reading, singing, and telling stories to young children; shared meals; and attending religious services) as well as risk factors (such as smoking in the household, parenting stress, and the health status of the child's parents). These indicators provide a picture of some of the factors that can influence children's health and well-being.



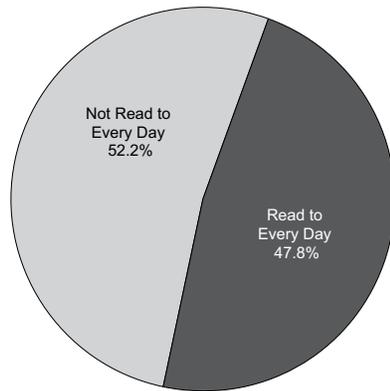
## Reading, Singing, and Telling Stories

Reading, telling stories, and singing to young children regularly can lay the foundation for future literacy and educational success. Parents of children aged 0-5 years were asked how often their children were read to during the past week. A total of 47.8 percent of children in this age group were read to by a parent or other family member every day.

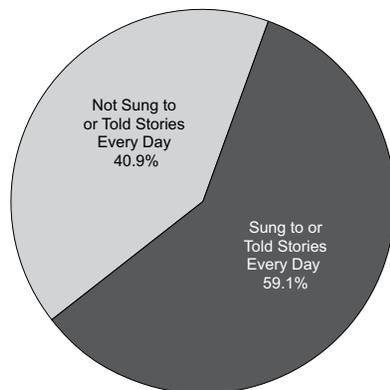
The likelihood of children being read to every day differs by race and ethnicity. More than half of White (57.4 percent), multiracial (54.1 percent) and children of other races (50.8 percent) were read to every day, compared to 38.6 percent of Black children and 28.2 percent of Hispanic children.

Parents were also asked how often they or other family members sang songs or told stories to their children in the past week. Overall, 59.1 percent of children aged 0-5 years were sung to or told stories every day. Singing and storytelling also varied by race and ethnicity: More than 65 percent of White and multiracial children were sung to or told stories every day, compared to 59.7 percent of children of other races, 55.4 percent of Black children, and 42.9 percent of Hispanic children.

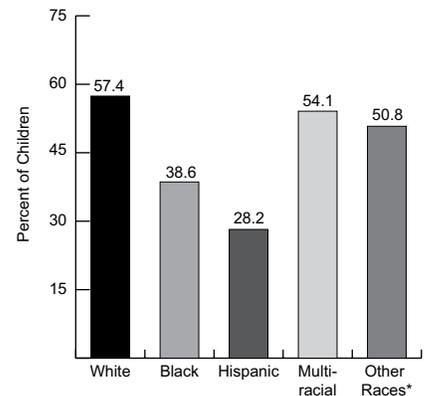
Reading to Children Aged 0-5 Years



Singing and Telling Stories to Children Aged 0-5 Years

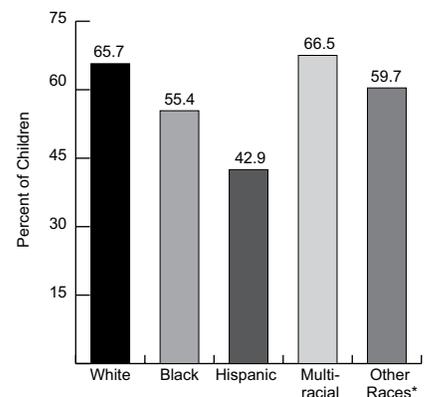


Children Aged 0-5 Years Who Are Read to Every Day, by Race and Ethnicity



\*Includes Asian/Pacific Islanders and American Indian/Alaska Natives.

Children Aged 0-5 Years Who Are Sung to or Told Stories Every Day, by Race and Ethnicity



\*Includes Asian/Pacific Islanders and American Indian/Alaska Natives.





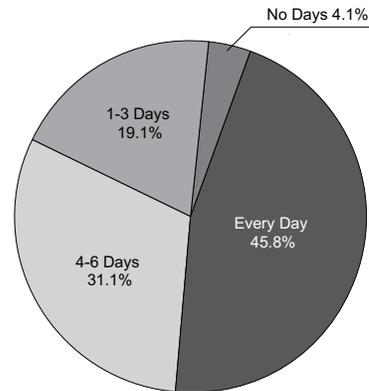
## Sharing Meals

Eating together as a family can promote family bonding and good nutrition and eating habits. Overall, the parents of 45.8 percent of children reported that their families had eaten at least one meal together every day during the previous week. More than 31 percent of families were reported to eat meals together on 4-6 days per week, while 19.1 percent ate meals together on only 1-3 days per week and 4.1 percent of families did not eat at least one meal together during the previous week. On average, children and families ate meals together on 5.4 days during the previous week.

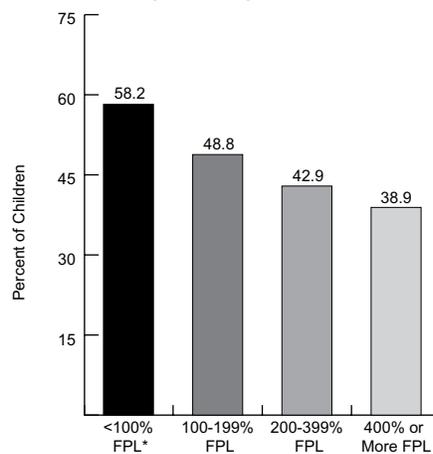
The likelihood of sharing meals is lower in households with higher incomes. Among children with household incomes below 100 percent of the Federal poverty level (FPL), 58.2 percent ate at least one meal together with their families every day, while 48.8 percent of children whose household incomes were between 100 and 199 percent of FPL did so. Nearly 43 percent of children with household incomes between 200 and 399 percent of FPL and 38.9 percent of children in households with incomes of 400 percent or more of FPL ate a meal together with their families every day.

Eating meals together every day also varied by race and ethnicity. Children of other races and Hispanic

Children Sharing at Least One Meal with Their Families

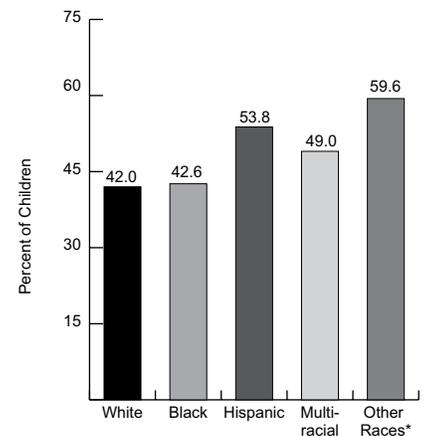


Children Sharing Meals with Their Families Every Day, by Poverty Status



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

Children Sharing Meals with Their Families Every Day, by Race and Ethnicity



\*Includes Asian/Pacific Islanders and American Indian/Alaska Natives.

children were most likely to eat at least one meal together as a family every day (59.6 and 53.8 percent, respectively), followed by multiracial children (49.0 percent). About 42 percent of Black and White children ate meals with family members every day.



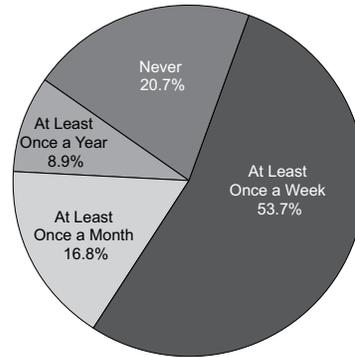
## Religious Services

Attendance at religious services is another activity that families can do together that can involve children in the broader community. Overall, the parents of 53.7 percent of children reported that their children attended religious services at least once a week, while 20.7 percent do not attend any religious services.

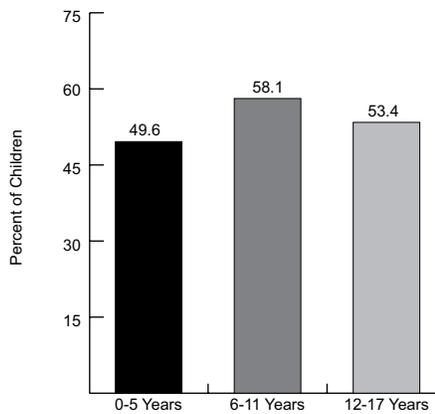
Children in middle childhood (aged 6-11 years) were more likely than younger and older children to attend religious services at least once a week (58.1 percent). In comparison, 49.6 percent of children aged 0-5 years and 53.4 percent of those aged 12-17 years attended religious services at least once a week.

Attendance at religious services also varied by race and ethnicity. Black children were most likely to attend religious services at least weekly (61.8 percent), followed by Hispanic children (56.0 percent). Slightly more than half of White children attended services each week, as did 48.1 percent of children of other races and 44.9 percent of multiracial children.

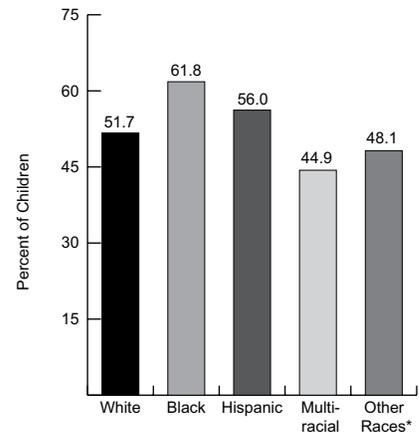
Attendance at Religious Services Among Children



Weekly Attendance at Religious Services Among Children, by Age



Weekly Attendance at Religious Services Among Children, by Race and Ethnicity



\*Includes Asian/Pacific Islanders and American Indian/Alaska Natives.



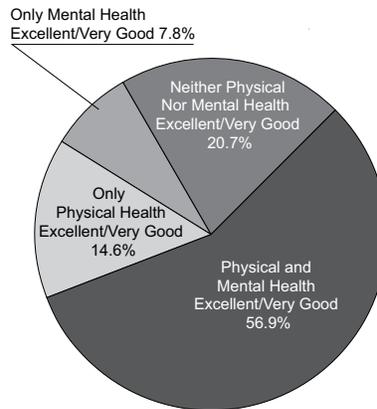


## Parental Health Status

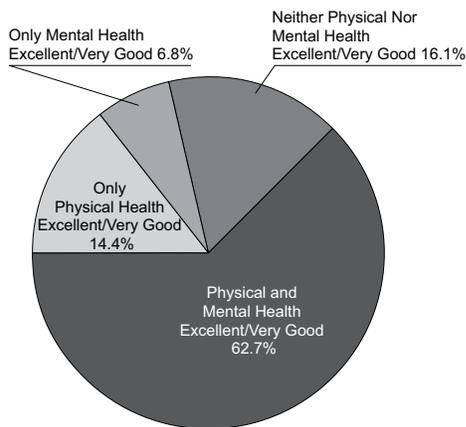
The physical and emotional health of a child's parents can affect their ability to care for their children and can influence the health and well-being of the family as a whole. Among children who live with their mothers, 56.9 percent of mothers rated both their physical and mental/emotional health as "excellent" or "very good." Similarly, of children who live with their fathers, the fathers of 62.7 percent were reported to be in excellent or very good physical and mental/emotional health.

The mothers of 64.7 percent of children reported that their physical health is excellent or very good, while 69.5 percent of children's fathers did so. The percentage of children whose parents' mental or emotional health was reported to be excellent or very good is slightly higher: mothers of 71.5 percent of children and fathers of 77.1 percent of children reported excellent or very good mental health.

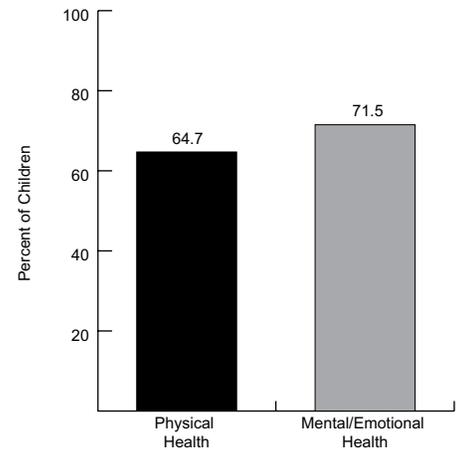
### Mother's Health Status



### Father's Health Status

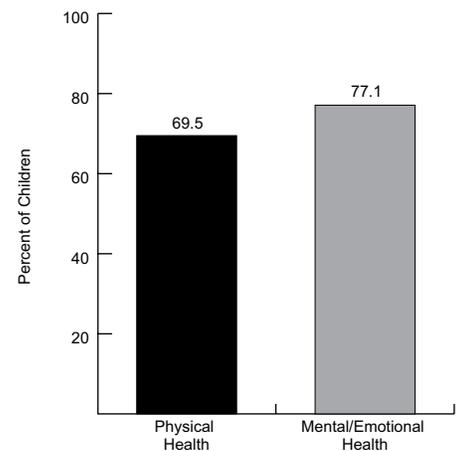


### Children Whose Mothers Are in Excellent/Very Good Health,\* by Type



\*Among children with a biological, step, foster, or adoptive mother in the household.

### Children Whose Fathers Are in Excellent/Very Good Health,\* by Type



\*Among children with a biological, step, foster, or adoptive father in the household.





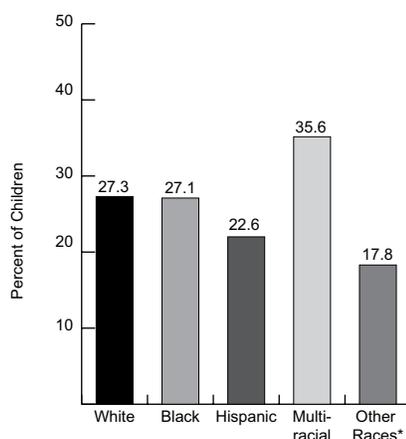
## Smoking in the Household

Exposure to environmental smoke— from cigarettes, cigars, or pipes— can be a serious health hazard for children. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, exposure to secondhand smoke is associated with higher rates of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), more frequent and severe asthma, and acute respiratory infections in young children.<sup>8</sup> Parents were asked whether anyone in the household used cigarettes, cigars, or pipe tobacco. Overall, 26.2 percent of children were reported to live in households where someone smokes, 7.6 percent of whom were exposed to secondhand smoke inside their homes (data not shown).

More than one-third of multiracial children (35.6 percent) lived in households with a smoker, as did 27.3 percent of White and 27.1 percent of Black children. Rates of household smoking among other racial and ethnic groups were lower: 22.6 percent of Hispanic children and 17.8 percent of children of other races lived in households with a smoker.

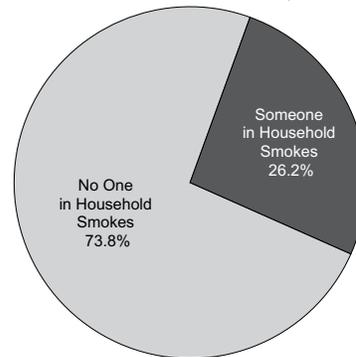
Rates of household smoking are lower in households with higher incomes. Of children with household incomes below the poverty level, 36.9 percent lived in a household with a

Children Living in Households with a Smoker, by Race and Ethnicity

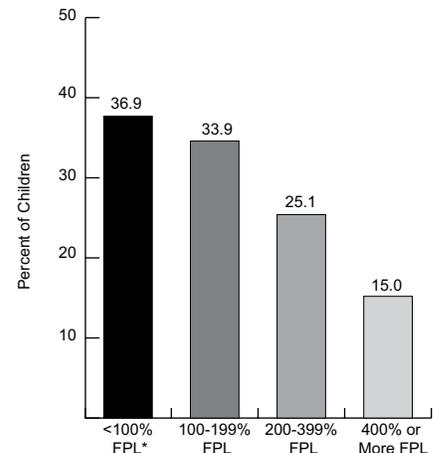


\*Includes Asian/Pacific Islanders and American Indian/Alaska Natives.

Children Living in Households with a Smoker



Children Living in Households with a Smoker, by Poverty Status



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

smoker, as did 33.9 percent of children with household incomes between 100 and 199 percent of the Federal poverty level (FPL). Of children with household incomes between 200 and 399 percent of FPL, 25.1 percent lived

with a smoker, and of children with household incomes of 400 percent or more of FPL, only 15.0 percent had a smoker in the household.



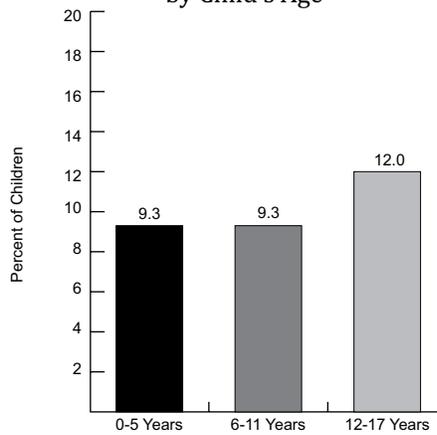
## Parental Stress

The demands of parenting can cause considerable stress for families. Parents were asked how often during the past month they had felt that their child was much harder to care for than others of his or her age; how often the child did things that really bothered them a lot; and how often they had felt angry with the child. Parents were considered to often feel stressed if they answered “usually” or “always” to at least one of these measures: Overall, parents of 10.2 percent of children reported often feeling stressed.\*

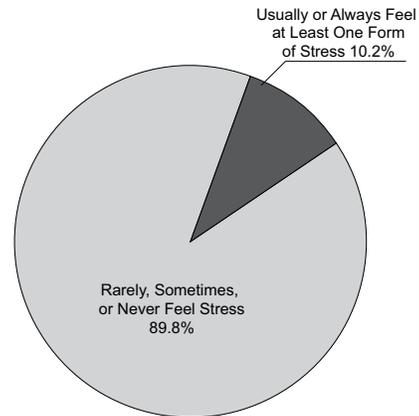
Levels of stress appear to be higher among parents of older children. While the parents of only 9.3 percent of children aged 0-11 years reported often feeling stressed, the parents of 12.0 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds met the standard for parenting stress.

Lower household income is also associated with higher levels of parenting stress. Among children with household incomes below the Federal poverty level (FPL), the parents of 17.6 percent reported high levels of stress, compared to parents of 12.8 percent of children with household incomes between 100 and 199 percent of poverty. Of children with household incomes between 200 and

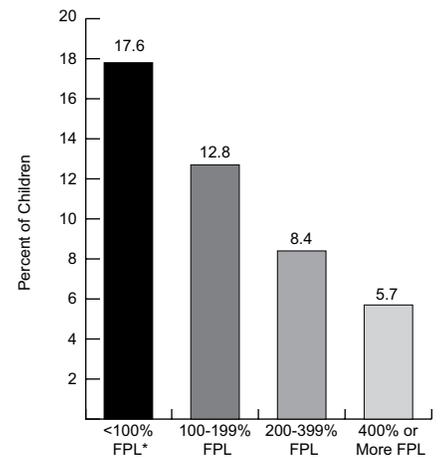
Children Whose Parents Usually or Always Feel Stress, by Child's Age



## Parental Stress



Children Whose Parents Usually or Always Feel Stress, by Poverty Status



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

399 percent of FPL, the parents of 8.4 percent of children reported high stress levels, as did parents of 5.7 percent of children with household incomes of 400 percent or more of FPL.

\* Due to changes in response options to the survey questions, 2007 data cannot be directly compared with that from 2003.



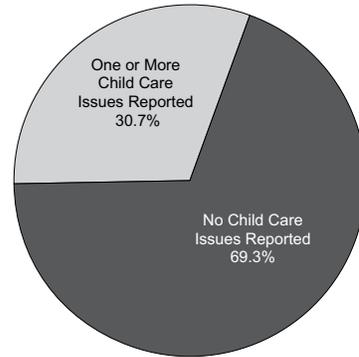
## Child Care

The availability of child care, and the need to make backup child care arrangements in emergencies, can also put stress on parents and families. Overall, parents of 54.2 percent of children reported that their child needed and received some form of nonparental child care; however, parents of an additional 9.1 percent of children reported needing but not receiving child care during the past month (data not shown).

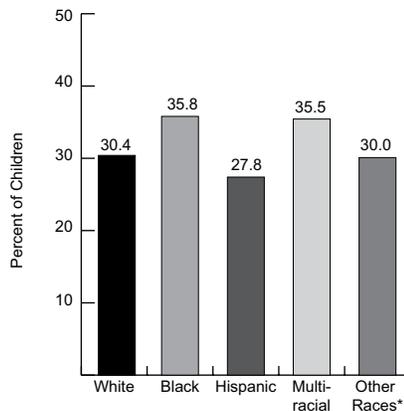
Parents of children aged 0-5 years who received care from someone other than a parent were asked whether they had had to make different child care arrangements in the past month due to circumstances beyond their control and whether anyone in the family had had to quit a job, not take a job, or greatly change their job because of child care problems within the past year. Among parents with children receiving care, 30.7 percent reported at least one of these child care issues.

Parents of Black and multiracial children were most likely to have reported at least one child care problem (35.8 and 35.5 percent, respectively), compared to 30.4 percent of White children and 30.0 percent of children of other races. Parents of Hispanic children were least likely to have reported child care problems (27.8 percent).

Children Aged 0-5 Years Whose Families Experienced Child Care Problems

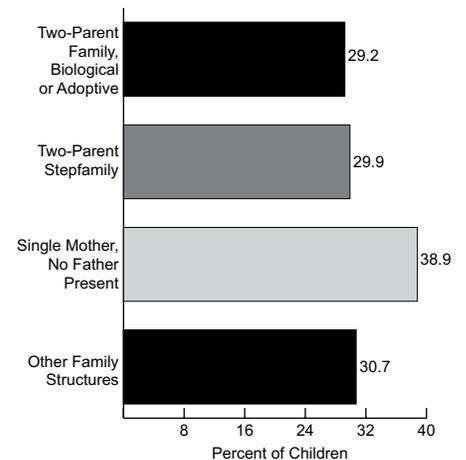


Children Whose Families Experienced One or More Child Care Problems, by Race and Ethnicity



\*Includes Asian/Pacific Islanders and American Indian/Alaska Natives.

Children Whose Families Experienced One or More Child Care Problems, by Family Structure



Problems with child care appear to be more common among families with single mothers than among two-parent families or families of other structures: the parents of 38.9 percent of children of single mothers reported at least one child care problem. Among children with two biological or adoptive parents,

parents of 29.2 percent had child care problems, while 29.9 percent of those with a two-parent stepfamily did so. Among children in families with other structures, the parents of 30.7 percent experienced at least one child care problem.