



The Child's Family

The family environment, which includes activities in and around the home as well as the parents' physical and emotional health, provides 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, telling stories to young children and sharing meals) 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 factors that can influence a child's health and well-being.

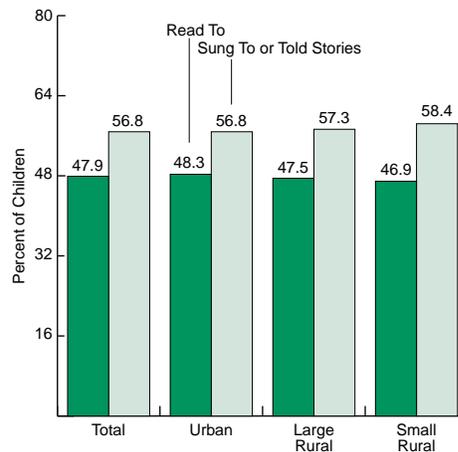


Reading, Singing, and Telling Stories to Young Children

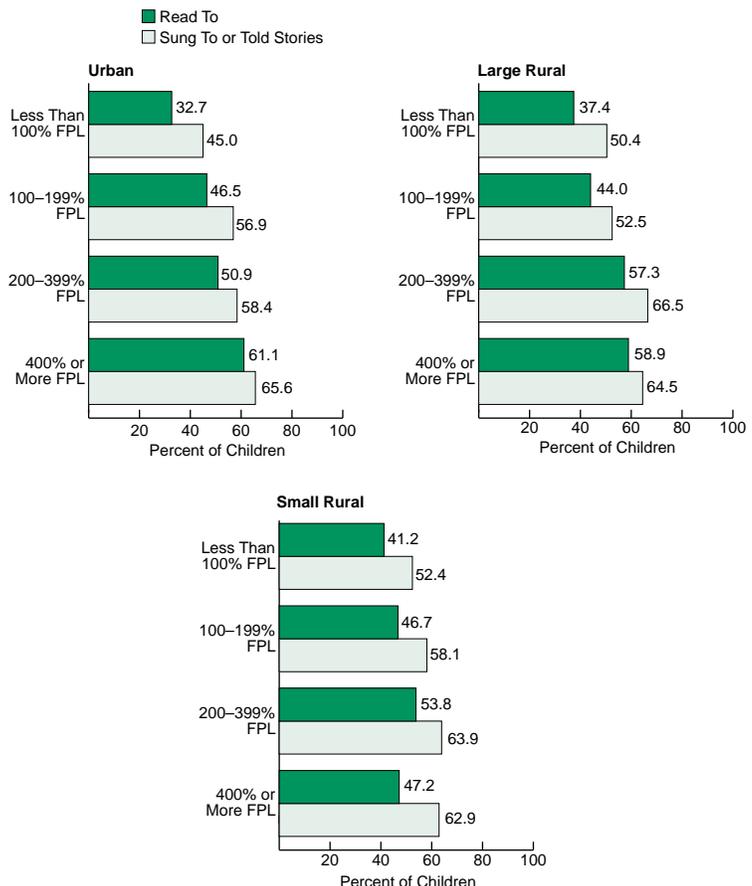
Reading, singing, and telling stories to young children regularly can lay the foundation for future literacy and educational success. Parents of children aged 0–5 were asked how often their children were read to during the past week. A total of 47.9 percent of children in this age group were read to (by a parent or other family member) every day. Parents were also asked how often they or other family members sang or told stories to their children in the past week. Overall, 56.8 percent of children aged 0–5 years were sung to or told stories every day. Neither of these percentages varied significantly across locations.

Children in low-income households were less likely to have a family member read to them every day. Among children in large rural areas, the parents of 37.4 percent of children with household incomes below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) read to them every day, compared to 58.9 percent of children with household incomes of 400 percent or more of the FPL. The percentage of children whose parents sing or tell stories to them every day varied significantly by income within each location. In urban areas, for example, 45.0 percent of children with household incomes below the FPL were sung to or told stories every day, compared to 65.6 percent of those with incomes of 400 percent or more of the FPL.

Children Aged 0–5 Who Were Read to, Sung to, or Told Stories Every Day, by Location



Children Aged 0–5 Who Were Read to, Sung to, or Told Stories Every Day, by Location and Poverty Level*



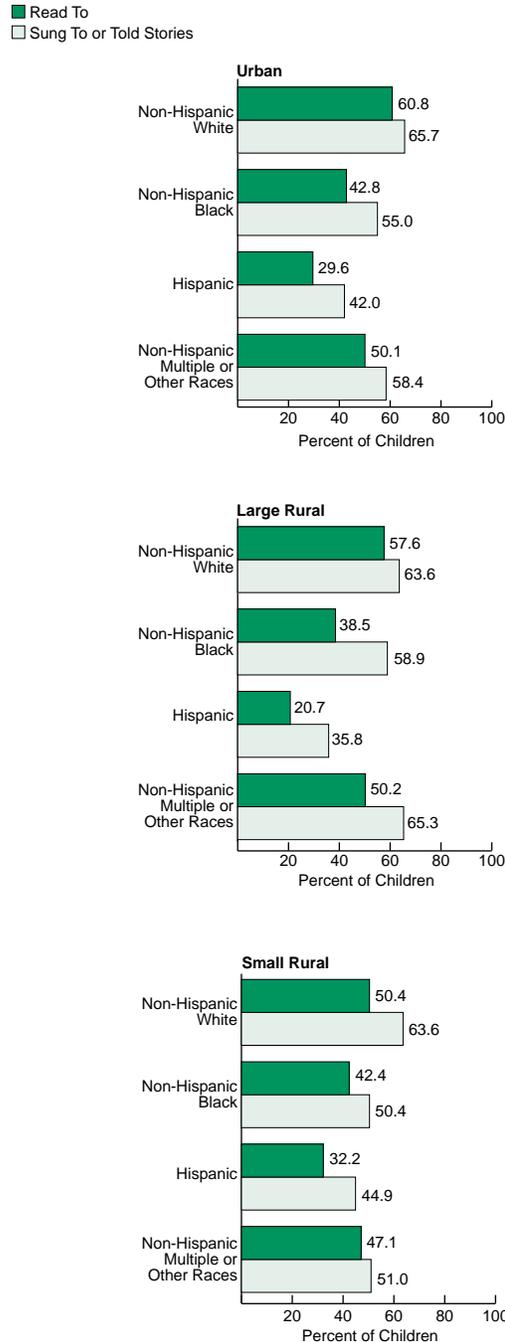
*Federal Poverty Level (FPL) is based on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines; poverty was \$23,050 for a family of four in 2012.



Reading, Singing, and Telling Stories to Young Children (continued)

The percentage of children who were read to, sung to, or told stories by family members every day varied significantly across racial and ethnic groups, with Hispanic children least likely to be read, sung to, or told stories to every day in both urban and large rural areas. Within each racial and ethnic group, the proportions of children engaging in these activities every day generally did not vary greatly by location. One exception was among non-Hispanic White children: Within this group, children living in small rural areas were less likely to be read to than those in urban and large rural areas (50.4 versus 60.8 and 57.6 percent, respectively).

Children Aged 0-5 Who Were Read to, Sung to, or Told Stories Every Day, by Location and Race/Ethnicity





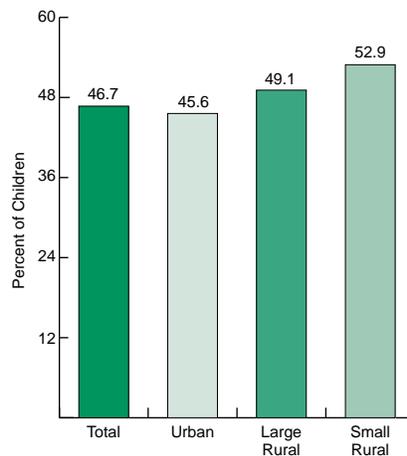
Family Meals

Eating together as a family can promote family bonding and good nutrition and eating habits.¹ Overall, the parents of 46.7 percent of children reported that their families had eaten at least one meal together every day during the previous week. Nearly 32 percent of families were reported to eat meals together on 4–6 days per week, while 18.1 percent ate meals together on only 1–3 days per week and 3.5 percent of families did not eat at least one meal together during the previous week (data not shown). The percentage of children who shared a meal with their families every day in the past week was highest in small rural areas, where 52.9 percent of children did so, followed by those in large rural areas (49.1 percent) and urban areas (45.6 percent).

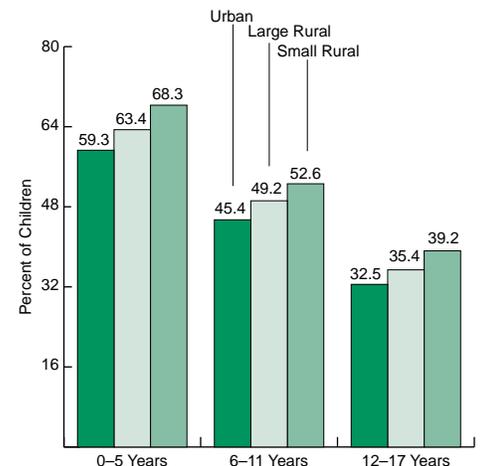
In all locations, younger children were significantly more likely than older children and adolescents to share meals with their families. In small rural areas, for example, 68.3 percent of children aged 0–5 shared meals with their families every day, compared to 39.2 percent of adolescents aged 12–17. In all age groups, the percentage of children who shared meals with their families every day was significantly higher in small rural areas than in urban areas.

Children with household incomes below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) were also significantly more likely to share meals with their families than children in higher income families, regardless of location. In large rural

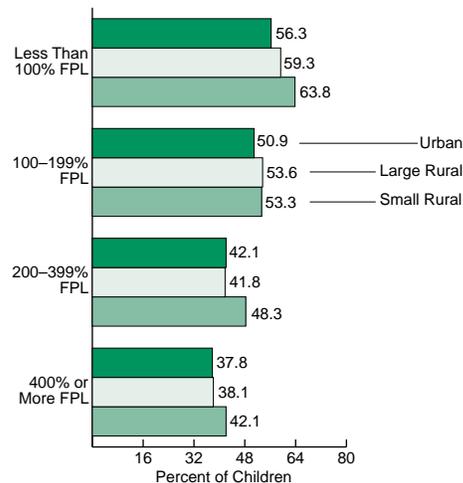
Children Sharing Meals With Their Families Every Day in the Previous Week, by Location



Children Sharing Meals With Their Families Every Day in the Previous Week, by Location and Age



Children Sharing Meals With Their Families Every Day in the Previous Week, by Location and Poverty Level*



*Federal Poverty Level (FPL) is based on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines; poverty was \$23,050 for a family of four in 2012.

areas, 59.3 percent of children with household incomes below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) shared a meal with their families every day, compared to 38.1 percent of children with household incomes of 400 percent or more of the FPL. The percentage of children in small rural areas who

shared meals with their families every day was significantly higher than that of children in urban areas, for only the highest and lowest income categories.

1 Hammons AJ & Fiese BH. Is Frequency of Shared Family Meals Related to the Nutritional Health of Children and Adolescents? Pediatrics. 2011;127(6):e1565-e1574.

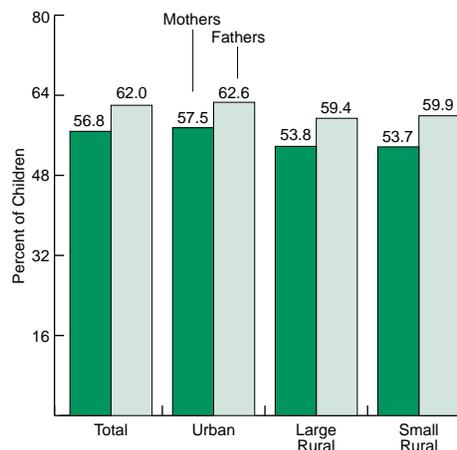


Parental Health Status

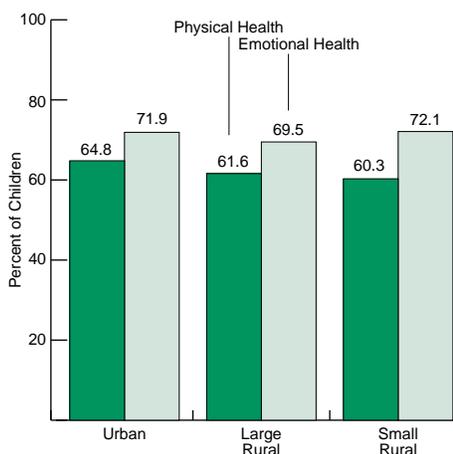
The physical and emotional health of a child's parents can affect their ability to care for their child and can influence the health of the family as a whole. Among children whose mothers were present in the home, the parents of 56.8 percent of children rated both the mother's physical and emotional health as "excellent" or "very good." This percentage was significantly lower in small and large rural areas (53.7 and 53.8 percent, respectively) than in urban areas (57.5 percent). Of children whose fathers were in the home, the parents of 62.0 percent reported that the father's physical and emotional health were both either "excellent" or "very good." Mirroring the physical and emotional health status of mothers, the percentage of fathers whose physical and emotional health was rated as "excellent" or "very good" was significantly lower in small and large rural areas (59.9 and 59.4 percent, respectively) than in urban areas (62.6 percent).

When considering physical and emotional health separately, some similar differences were observed by location. The mothers of children in urban areas were significantly more likely than those in rural areas to be in excellent or very good physical health: 64.8 percent of urban children had mothers whose physical health was excellent or very good, compared to 61.6 percent of children in large rural areas and 60.3 percent of those in small rural areas. The percentage of

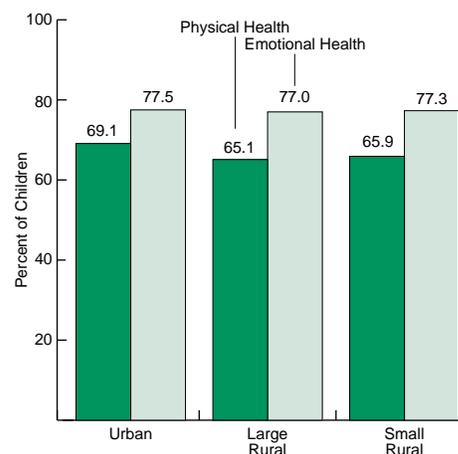
Children Whose Parents Are in Excellent or Very Good Physical and Emotional Health, by Location



Children Whose Mothers Are in Excellent or Very Good Physical and Emotional Health, by Location and Type



Children Whose Fathers Are in Excellent or Very Good Physical and Emotional Health, by Location and Type



children whose mothers were in excellent or very good emotional health was around 70 percent in all areas.

The same pattern was evident for the health status of fathers. Of children in urban areas, the fathers of 69.1 percent were reported to be in

excellent or very good physical health, compared to 65.1 percent of children in large rural areas and 65.9 percent of those in small rural areas. In the case of fathers' emotional health, there was no significant difference by location.

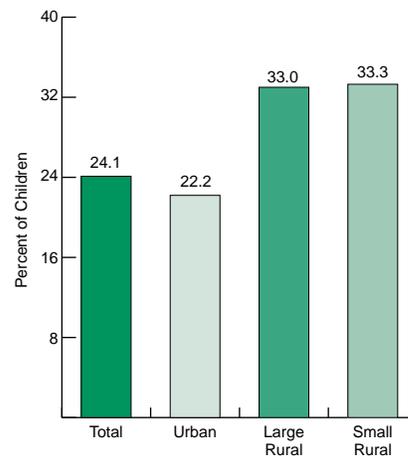


Smoking in the Household

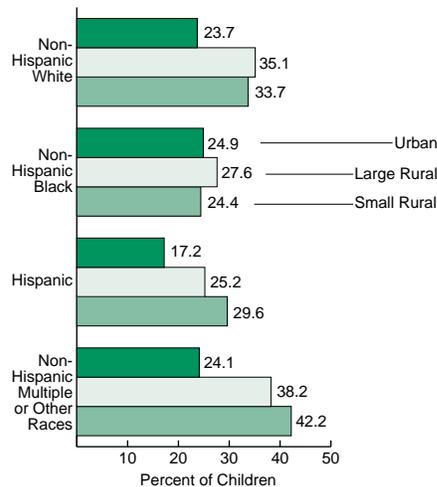
Exposure to environmental smoke—from cigarettes, cigars, or pipes—can be a serious health hazard for children. Secondhand smoke causes numerous health problems in infants and children, including more frequent and severe asthma attacks, respiratory infections, ear infections, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Smoking during pregnancy results in more than 1,000 infant deaths annually.^{1,2} Parents were asked whether anyone in the household used cigarettes, cigars, or pipe tobacco. Overall, 24.1 percent of children were reported to live in households where someone smokes, and 4.9 percent of children were exposed to secondhand smoke inside their homes (data not shown). The percentage of children who lived in a household with a smoker was significantly higher in rural areas compared to urban areas. One-third of children in large and small rural areas lived with a smoker, compared to 22.2 percent of urban children.

Non-Hispanic White, Hispanic, and non-Hispanic children of multiple or other races living in small and large rural areas were significantly more likely to report living with a smoker than their urban counterparts. Among children in both large and small rural areas, non-Hispanic White and non-Hispanic children of multiple or other races were significantly more likely than non-Hispanic Black children to live with a smoker.

Children Living in Households With a Smoker, by Location



Children Living in Households With a Smoker, by Location and Race/Ethnicity





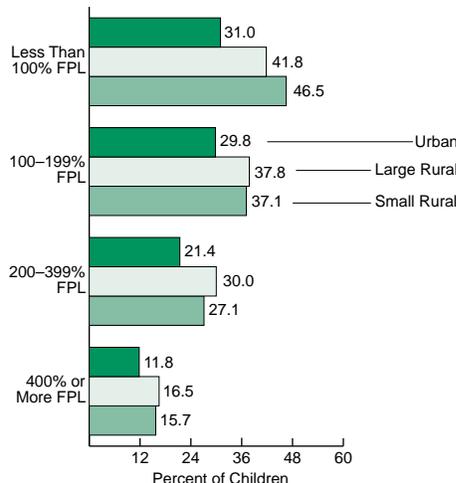
Smoking in the Household (continued)

In all locations, children with higher household incomes were significantly less likely to live with a smoker. For example, among children in large rural areas, 41.8 percent of those with household incomes below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) lived with a smoker, compared to 30.0 percent of children with incomes of 200-399 percent of the FPL and 16.5 percent of those with household incomes of 400 percent or more of the FPL. Within each income group, the percentage of children who lived with a smoker was significantly higher in both large and small rural areas than in urban areas.

1 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Lets Make the Next Generation Tobacco-Free: Your Guide to the 50th Anniversary Surgeon Generals Report on Smoking and Health*. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health; 2014.

2 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Health Consequences of Smoking 50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health; 2014.

Children Living in Households With a Smoker, by Location and Poverty Level*



*Federal Poverty Level (FPL) is based on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines; poverty was \$23,050 for a family of four in 2012.



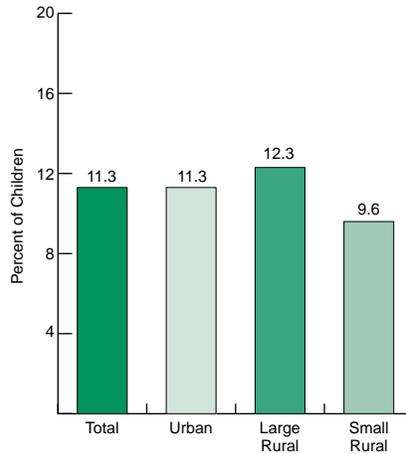
Parental Stress

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 feel stressed often if they answered “usually” or “always” to at least one of these measures. Overall, parents of 11.3 percent of children reported often feeling stress. Parents in small rural areas (9.6 percent) were significantly less likely to report often feeling stress than those in urban or large rural areas (11.3 and 12.3 percent, respectively).

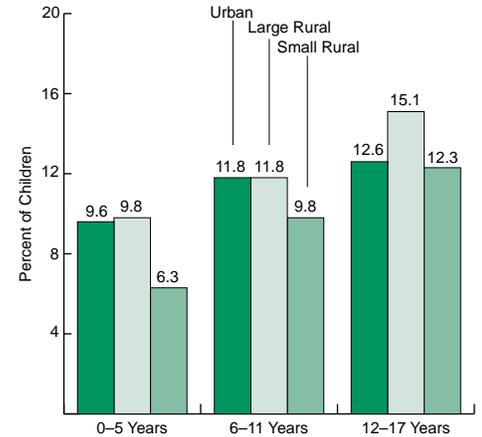
In all locations, parents of adolescents (aged 12–17) were significantly more likely to report often feeling stress than parents of younger children. This difference was greatest in small rural areas, where the percentage of children whose parents felt stress was nearly twice as high for adolescents as for young children aged 0–5 years. Within each age group, the percentage of children whose parents felt stress did not generally vary by location with the exception of parents of children aged 0–5; those in small rural areas were significantly less likely to report often feeling stress than those in urban and large rural areas.

The proportion of children whose parents reported often feeling stress due to parenting decreased signifi-

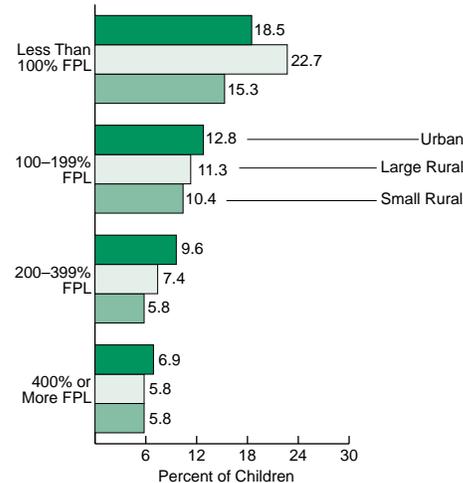
Children Whose Parents Usually or Always Feel Stress, by Location



Children Whose Parents Usually or Always Feel Stress, by Location and Age



Children Whose Parents Usually or Always Feel Stress, by Location and Poverty Level*



*Federal Poverty Level (FPL) is based on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines; poverty was \$23,050 for a family of four in 2012.

cantly as household income increased. In all locations, children in households with incomes below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) were most likely to report often feeling stress. More than one-fifth of children in large rural areas with incomes below the FPL had parents who often felt stress, compared to less than 8 percent of those with incomes of 200–399 percent

and 400 percent or more of the FPL. Among those with household incomes below the FPL, the proportion of children whose parents felt stress varied significantly across locations: those in large rural areas had the highest rates (22.7 percent), followed by children in urban areas (18.5 percent), while children in small rural areas were least likely to have parents who felt stress often (15.3 percent).



Flourishing

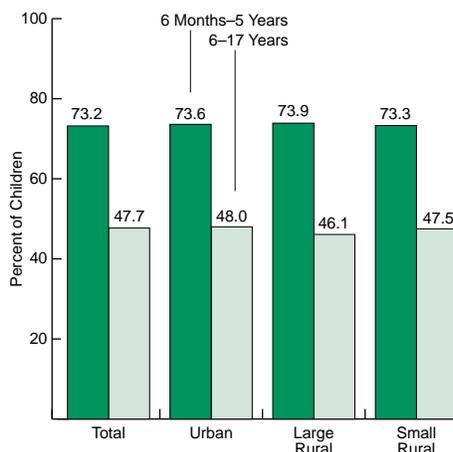
Children's well-being within their families can be measured by assessing their ability to function within the family and community. Parents were asked a series of questions, based on the child's age, about the extent to which they were flourishing in these contexts. For young children aged 6 months–5 years, parents were asked how often during the previous month the child was affectionate or tender, bounced back quickly when things didn't go his or her way, showed interest and curiosity in learning new things, and smiled and laughed a lot. For children aged 6–17 years, parents were asked how often during the previous month the child finished the tasks he or she started and followed through with what he or she said that he or she would do, stayed calm and in control when faced with a challenge, and showed interest and curiosity in learning new things. Overall, 73.2 percent of children aged 6 months–5 years were reported to usually or always meet all four items, and 47.7 percent of children aged 6–17 years were reported to usually or always meet all three items for their age group. These percentages did not vary significantly by location.

For both age groups and in all locations, children with higher household incomes were significantly more likely to meet all of the criteria for flourishing. Among young children, this difference was greatest in small rural areas,

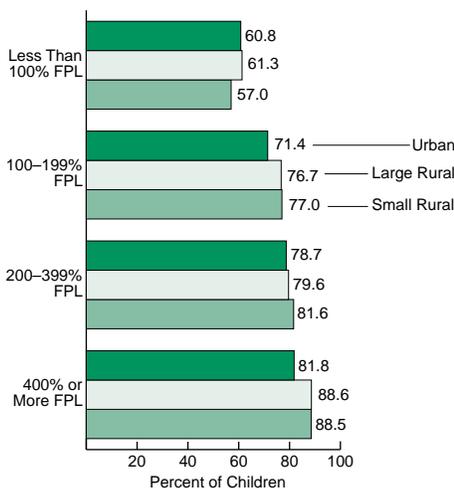
where 57.0 percent of children with household incomes below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) met all the criteria for flourishing, compared to 88.5 percent of children with household incomes of 400 percent or more of the FPL. In general, within each income

category, the percentage of young children reported to be flourishing did not vary significantly by location, except that children in large and small rural areas with household incomes of 400 percent or more of the FPL were more likely to meet all the criteria

Children Meeting All Criteria for Flourishing, by Age and Location

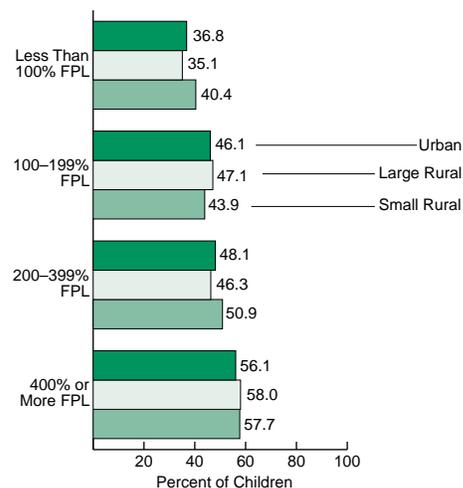


Children Aged 6 Months–5 Years Meeting All Criteria for Flourishing, by Location and Poverty Level*



*Federal Poverty Level (FPL) is based on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines; poverty was \$23,050 for a family of four in 2012.

Children Aged 6–17 Years Meeting All Criteria for Flourishing, by Location and Poverty Level*



*Federal Poverty Level (FPL) is based on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines; poverty was \$23,050 for a family of four in 2012.



Flourishing (continued)

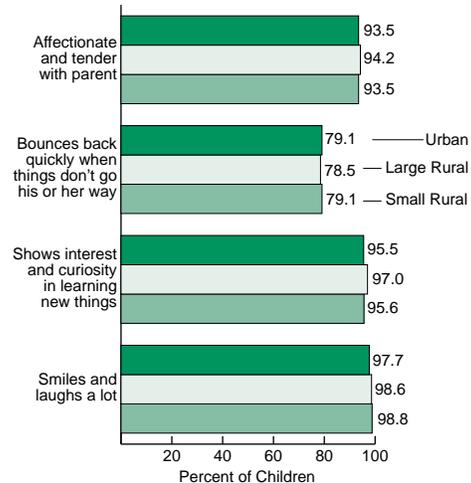
than their urban peers (88.6 and 88.5 versus 81.8 percent, respectively).

Among school-aged children, the greatest differential between income groups was seen in large rural areas, where 35.1 percent of children with household incomes below the FPL were reported to be flourishing, compared to 58.0 percent of children with household incomes of 400 percent or more of the FPL. Within each income group, there were no significant differences across locations in the percentage of children meeting all criteria for flourishing.

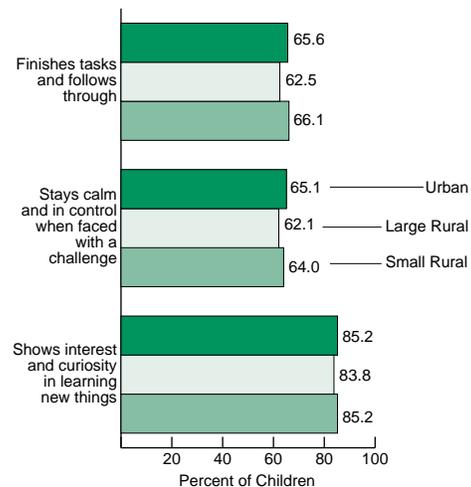
Among young children, nearly all children in all locations were reported to usually or always be affectionate and tender with their parents, smile and laugh a lot, and show interest in learning new things. A smaller percentage, approximately 79 percent were reported to usually or always bounce back quickly when things did not go their way.

Among school-aged children, about 85 percent of children in all locations were reported to usually or always show interest in learning new things. A smaller percentage, just under two-thirds, were reported to usually or always finish tasks and follow through and to stay calm and in control when faced with a challenge. There were a few differences in flourishing criteria by location: children in large rural areas were slightly less likely than those

Children Aged 6 Months–5 Years
Usually or Always Meeting
Criteria for Flourishing, by Location



Children Aged 6–17 Years
Usually or Always Meeting
Criteria for Flourishing, by Location



in urban and small rural areas to be reported as usually or always finishing tasks and following through. Children in large rural areas were also slightly

less likely than those in urban areas to be reported to usually or always stay calm and in control when faced with a challenge.

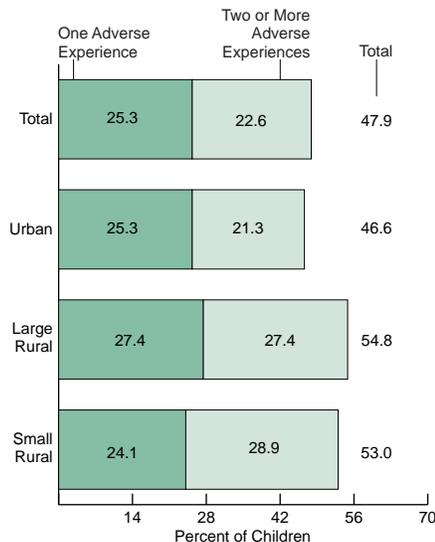


Adverse Childhood Experiences

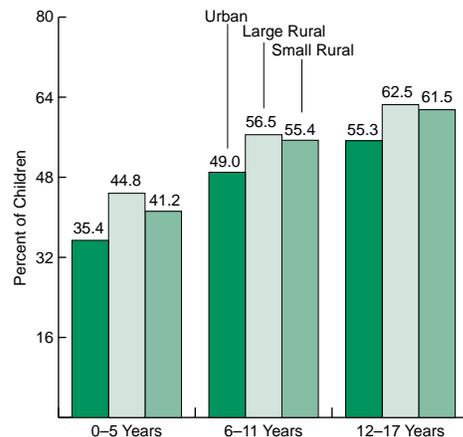
Challenging experiences, such as death, divorce or separation of parents, witnessing violence, and living with someone with mental health or substance abuse problems can undermine a child's emotional health and overall well-being. Parents were asked about nine specific adverse experiences which the child may have confronted in his or her lifetime: (1) whether it was hard to get by on the family's income "very often" or "sometimes often," (2) whether the child experienced the divorce or separation of parents, (3) whether the child experienced the death of a parent, (4) whether a parent served time in jail, (5) whether the child witnessed domestic violence, (6) whether the child was a victim of neighborhood violence, (7) whether the child lived with someone who was mentally ill or suicidal, (8) whether the child lived with someone who had alcohol or drug problems, and (9) whether the child was treated or judged unfairly due to their race or ethnicity.

Overall, 25.3 percent of children had experienced one of these adverse experiences, and 22.6 percent had experienced two or more. Children in large rural areas were more likely than their peers in urban or small rural areas to have had at least one adverse childhood experience, and children in urban areas were less likely than those in rural areas to have had two or more.

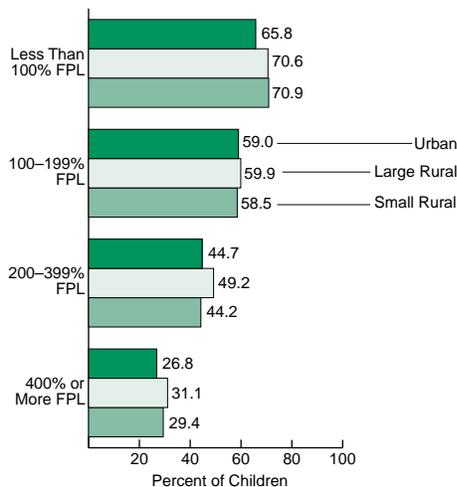
Children With One or More Adverse Childhood Experiences, by Location



Children With One or More Adverse Childhood Experiences, by Location and Age



Children With One or More Adverse Childhood Experiences, by Location and Poverty Level*



*Federal Poverty Level (FPL) is based on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines; poverty was \$23,050 for a family of four in 2012.

Because these measures were assessed for children since birth, the percentage of older children who had had adverse experiences in their lifetimes was greater than that of younger children. In all age groups, children living in urban areas were significantly less likely than those in

small or large rural areas to have had at least one adverse experience in their lifetimes.

In all locations, the proportion of children experiencing one or more adverse events significantly decreased with increasing household income. For instance, 70.9 percent of children

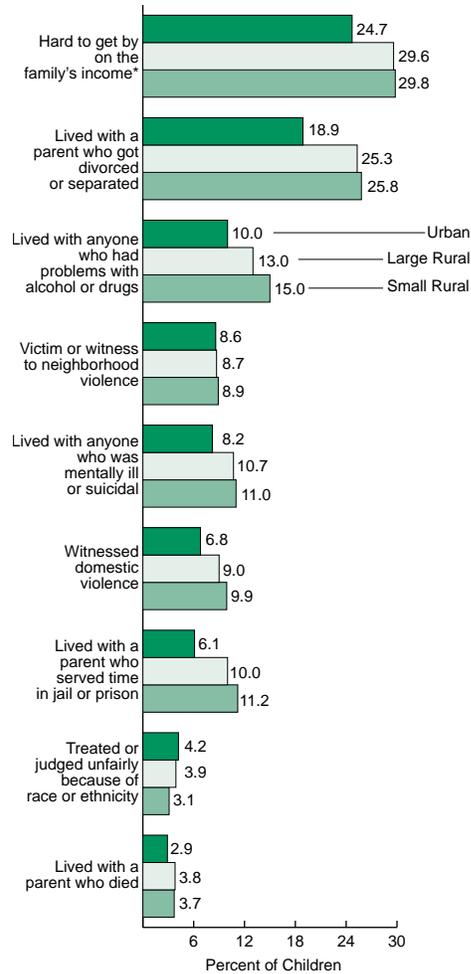


Adverse Childhood Experiences (continued)

in small rural areas with household incomes below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) experienced one or more adverse events, compared to 29.4 percent of those in households with incomes of 400 percent or more of the FPL. Among children with household incomes below the FPL, those in urban areas were significantly less likely to experience one or more adverse events when compared to children in large and small rural areas.

In all locations, the adverse experience most commonly reported was economic insecurity, and this was significantly more common among children in rural than urban areas. The parents of nearly 30 percent of children in small and large rural areas reported that it was somewhat often or very often hard to get by on the family's income, compared to 24.7 percent of urban children. Children in rural areas were also more likely than their urban counterparts to report other adverse childhood experiences, including: the divorce or separation of parents, living with a parent who served time in jail or prison, witnessing domestic violence, living with someone who was mentally ill or suicidal, and living with someone who had a problem with alcohol or drugs.

Children With Specific Adverse Childhood Experiences, by Location



*Very often or somewhat often