

Experiences of Families With Young Children During the COVID-19 Pandemic, 2020 to 2021: Data Source and Methods

Data for the brief are drawn from the 2020 and 2021 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) adult and child questionnaires. Parent respondents who reported difficulties paying their rent or mortgage or paying for basic necessities, who were essential workers, or who reported difficulties either paying for child care or having increased child care costs were identified by the CHIS adult questionnaire COVID-19 module question, “Have you experienced the following because of the coronavirus or COVID-19 outbreak?” Respondents selected one or more of the following options: “I’ve continued to report to work because I was an essential worker,” “I’ve had difficulty in obtaining child care or had an increase in child care expenses,” “I’ve had financial difficulties with paying rent or mortgage,” and “I’ve had financial difficulties with basic necessities, such as paying bills, tuition, affording groceries, etc.”

Parental involvement behaviors are from the CHIS child questionnaire. Parents were asked about the frequency of reading stories (“In a usual week, about how many days do you or any other family member read stories or look at picture books with (the child)?”), playing music or singing songs (“In a usual week, about how many days do you or any other family member play music or sing songs with (the child)?”), and taking the child out somewhere (“In a usual week, about how many days do you or any other family member take (the child) out somewhere—for example, to the park, store, or playground?”). Possible responses were “every day,” three to six days, “one to two days,” or “never.”

UCLA CHPR cautions readers in interpreting statistically unstable estimates demarcated with an asterisk (*) in certain exhibits in this brief. Analysis of the coefficient of variation (CV) determines the statistical stability of the data. The CV is the ratio of the standard deviation to the mean; a higher CV resulted in greater dispersion around the mean. Estimates that have a CV of 30% or higher are considered statistically unstable. Certain statistically unstable estimates are shown in this brief (e.g., in the racial/ethnic categories) to demonstrate disaggregation of data. When available, two or three years of CHIS data combined may produce statistically stable estimates.

The poverty level CHIS variable used in this brief indicates total annual household income as a percentage of the federal poverty level (FPL). The 100%, 200%, and 300% cutoff values for each household were calculated during the administration of the survey by multiplying the 2020 Census Poverty Threshold “size of family unit” by “related children under 18 years” table amounts by 1, 2, or 3 (U.S. Census Bureau: Current Population Survey). For example, for a household of one single person under age 65, the FPL used was \$13,465; for a four-person family unit with two related children under age 18, the FPL used was \$26,246.

Additional information about CHIS methodology and questionnaires is available at www.chis.ucla.edu under the methodology and questionnaire sections.