

Survey gives snapshot of pandemic's impact on family finances, education, relationships

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Editor's note: For the latest news on COVID-19, visit <http://bit.ly/AAPNewsCOVID19>.

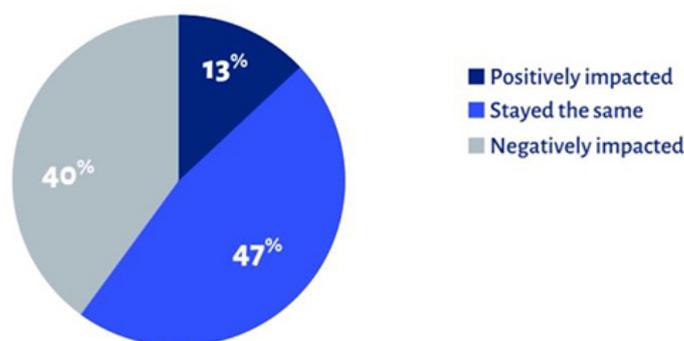
Data on how the pandemic has changed life for families can help pediatricians identify children's most pressing needs. The survey, Family Snapshots: Life During the Pandemic, includes responses from parents and caregivers about family life and positive and adverse childhood experiences.

Last November, 3,000 parents and caregivers were surveyed on the financial impacts, disruptions and positive and negative stress in their lives since March 2020. Results and resources are published on the [AAP website](#).

The survey is one of three involving a total of 9,000 families that was conducted by the AAP in collaboration with Prevent Child Abuse America, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Tufts Medical Center.

The pandemic has significantly affected employment and household finances of families with children, according to the survey. Forty percent of families reported a negative impact on finances (figure 1).

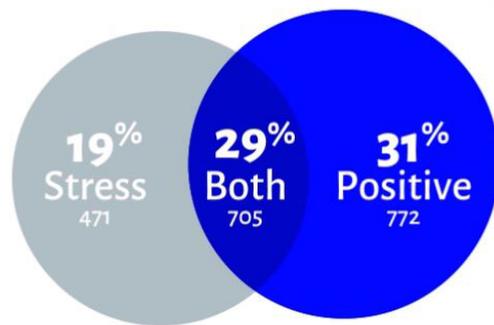
Change in Household Finances, March to November 2020



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Daily life and routines also have changed, but families have demonstrated adaptability and resilience, according to the report. For example, 29% of parents reported that educating their children at home was both stressful and positive (figure 2).

Parents Who Reported That Educating Their Children at Home Has Been Stressful Only, Positive Only, or Both



Neither positive nor stressful: 527 (21%)

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“In practice, these responses from parents suggest that pediatricians and pediatric health care providers should inquire further when families share feelings of stress or closeness. ... Similarly, many of those who share heartwarming stories about family closeness also might feel stressed or experience household tension,” according to the report. “These responses show that many families have these same mixed feelings.”

Adults who reported having healthy ways to manage their own stress were more likely to share positive experiences about helping their children with school, according to the report.

“It is important to foster the positive relational growth in families along with monitoring levels of elevated stress,” according to the report.

Impacted the most are women and families with school-age children. Twice as many women as men reported that they reduced their working hours to provide care. The highest proportion of reduced work hours was among families with 5- to 9-year-olds.

Nearly half of the survey respondents reported receiving some financial support during the pandemic, including assistance from local food banks, health insurance, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, income support and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. Information was not gathered about unemployment benefits.

In a [perspective](#) published today in *Pediatrics*, Robert D. Sege, M.D., Ph.D., FAAP, wrote about how the pandemic has exacerbated health effects of inequality and racism. He met virtually with more than 7,000 direct services providers across the U.S. through the Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences National Resource Center.

Dr. Sege said pediatricians can change the way they assess families and open the door to a more anti-racist approach to caring for children.

“We pediatricians might benefit from a shift in mindset, towards a view that integrates our understanding of the effects of positive childhood experiences,” he wrote.

According to Dr. Sege, practice changes that can be implemented immediately include:

- asking parents about the health of their relationships, how they engage with family and community, and their sources of resilience;
- screening for serious or difficult problems via respectful relationships that build on strengths and provide support for deficits;
- talking with parents about ways to create positive experiences for their children; and

- focusing on safety and support families throughout their visit.

Two additional reports on parents' and caregivers' survey responses will be released regarding discipline and intimate partner/family violence during the pandemic and the pandemic's impact on families and children with special health care needs.

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