



KidsHealth KidsPoll — What do kids think of their parents? Summary of Findings

The KidsHealth KidsPoll is a collaborative effort among the Nemours Foundation/KidsHealth, the Department of Health Education and Recreation at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, the National Association of Health Education Centers, and participating health education centers. The poll gathers information (opinions, attitudes, and feelings, etc.) from children about current health issues that kids face. The data are gathered from children ages 9 to 13 using handheld data-collection devices as they attend classes in the health education centers. The information is shared with educators, caregivers, health care organizations, the media, and other interested parties at the national and local levels. The goal is to provide insights that will enable those interested to develop programs to help kids make healthy life decisions, prevent disease and injury, and to better understand their bodies. This particular poll focused on what kids think and feel about their parents.

Individual Demographics

Individual information was collected anonymously from each child who participated.

- 855 children
- 49% girls, 51% boys
- 9-13 (average age 10.7 (9 = 15%, 10 = 28%, 11 = 33%, 12/13 = 24%))
- 6 centers participated in this poll:
 - Children's Health Education Center – Milwaukee, WI
 - Health World Children's Museum – Barrington, IL
 - Kansas Learning Center – Halstead, KS
 - Harold W. McMillen Center for Health Education – Ft. Wayne, IN
 - Ruth Lilly Health Education Center – Indianapolis, IN
 - Poe Center for Health Education – Raleigh, NC

School Demographics

School information was not collected from each child, but is based on statistics for the respective schools.

- 219 schools
- Participating schools' student-body demographics averaged: 72% White, 12% Black, 11% Hispanic, 2% Asian/Pacific, 1% Native American

- 72% of students came from schools with student bodies that were 0-33% Black/Hispanic/Asian/Native American combined
 - 10% of the students came from schools with student bodies that were 33-67% of these groups
 - 18% of the students came from schools with student bodies that were 67-100% of these groups
- An average of 40% of the students from these schools qualify for free or reduced lunch
- 45% of students went to schools where 0-33% of the student body qualify for free or reduced lunch
 - 42% of students went to schools where 33-67% of the student body qualify for free or reduced lunch
 - 10% of students went to schools where 67-100% of the student body qualify for free or reduced lunch

The U.S. Census Bureau and Department of Education use measures of city size and location called Core Based Statistical Area (CBSA) and Consolidated Statistical Area (CSA) to categorize geographical areas based on population density. The categories for CBSA and CSA are:

- *Large city center = center of a CBSA or CSA city with population > 250,000*
- *Mid-size city center = center of a CBSA or CSA city with a population < 250,000*
- *Large city fringe = urban fringe of a large CBSA or CSA city*
- *Mid-size city fringe = urban fringe of a midsize CBSA or CSA city*
- *Large town = not within a CBSA or CSA with a population > 25,000*
- *Small town = not within an CBSA or CSA with a population 2,500-25,000*
- *Rural outside = not within an CBSA or CSA with a population < 2,500*

- The percentage of students hailing from schools in each category were: 21% large city center, 10% mid-size city center, 33% large city fringe, 4% mid-size city fringe 3% large town, 12% small town, and 17% rural.
- Average school size — 404 students
- 42% of students attended schools with an enrollment of 0-300
 - 39% of students attended schools with an enrollment of 301-600
 - 14% of students attended schools with an enrollment of 601-900
 - 5% of students attended schools with an enrollment of 900+

Statistically Significant Findings — Overall

1. **Who do you live with?**
 - a. **Both my parents**
 - b. **My mom**
 - c. **My dad**
 - d. **Someone else**

Nearly 75% of the children said they live with both parents, 20% with their mothers, 4% with their fathers, and 3% with someone else. The results didn't differ by age or gender.

2. How often does everyone in your house eat together?

- a. At least one meal a day**
- b. A few meals a week**
- c. Hardly ever or never**

Approximately half of the kids (53%) said their families share daily meals, 28% said a few meals a week, but one in five children said they hardly ever or never eat together. Girls were more likely to report daily meals (58% vs. 49%), as were older students (12/13 = 61%, 11 = 58%, 10 = 45%, and 9 = 44%). Those who said their parents talk to them about as often as they want were more likely (63%) to report eating together daily than those who say their parents talk to them more than they want (51%) or less than they want (44%). The results weren't affected by who a child lives with.

3. How often does your parent (or parents) ask you about what is going on in your life?

- a. A lot more than I want**
- b. A little more than I want**
- c. About as often as I want**
- d. A little or a lot less than I want**

More than half of the students (55%) said their parents talk to them more than they want. Another 31% said about as often as they want, and 14% said less than they want. And, they were more likely to say they that their parents talk to them less than they want (21% vs. 15% and 12%). There were no differences by gender, age, or who a child lives with.

4. I feel that my mom loves me:

- a. A lot**
- b. Some**
- c. A little or not at all**
- d. My mom is not in my life**

5. I feel that my dad loves me:

- a. A lot**
- b. Some**
- c. A little or not at all**
- d. My dad is not in my life**

Four percent of the students said their mother is not in their lives and 8% reported their fathers aren't in their lives. Of those with respective parents in their lives, the majority feels that their mothers (88%) and fathers (85%) love them a lot. If they lived with someone other than a parent, they were less likely to believe that their fathers loved them a lot (see summary tables). Those who lived with both parents were more likely to believe that their mothers and their fathers loved them a lot (see summary tables). Those who hardly ever or never eat together were also less likely to say that their mothers and their fathers love them a lot. Similarly, those who said their parents talk to them less than they would like were also less likely to believe that their mothers

and their fathers love them a lot (see summary table). The 12/13 year olds (80%) were somewhat less likely than younger students (89%, 90%, and 92% respectively) to say their mothers love them a lot. The same pattern was not true for fathers. There were no differences by gender.

6. When you are feeling upset, who do you go to first?

- a. My mom**
- b. My dad**
- c. A friend**
- d. Someone else**

Half of the kids said they go to their mothers first; this was followed by “a friend” (21%). Dad came in a distant third, tied with “someone else” for the lowest response (15%). Boys were more likely than girls to say mom (53% vs. 45%) or dad (20% vs. 10%); girls were more likely than boys to say a friend (31% vs. 11%). Older kids were more likely to say someone else and less likely to say mom (see summary tables). Those who live with someone else were more likely to say someone else; those who live with their fathers were more likely to say their fathers. Those who live with either their mothers or with both parents, were more likely to go to their mothers (see summary tables). The less often a family eats together, the less likely a kid is to go to either parent, and the more likely the same kid is to go to a friend or someone else (see summary tables). Kids whose parents talk to them the amount they want were more likely to go to their mothers first(see summary tables).

7. How would you like to spend time with your parents?

- a. I like to spend time with both my mom and my dad**
- b. I like to spend time with only my mom**
- c. I like to spend time with only my dad**
- d. I don't like to spend time with either of my parents**

Two-thirds of the kids chose both parents followed by 12% preferring mom, 9% preferring dad, and 6% opting for neither. Older kids were slightly more likely to say dad or neither parent (see summary tables). As may be expected, larger proportions selected the choice that corresponded to whom they lived with (see summary tables). Kids who said their family rarely eats together were less likely to want to spend time with both parents (57%) than those who eat together weekly (68%) or daily (79%).

8. How involved would you like your parents (or parent) to be at your school?

- a. A lot more involved**
- b. A little more involved**
- c. The same amount as now**
- d. A little or a lot less involved**

Approximately two in five students said they would like their parents to be more involved (a lot = 25% or a little = 18%). One third preferred their parents current level of involvement and 23% said a little or a lot less involved. Younger children were more likely to say a lot more involved (9 = 38%, 10 = 26%, 11 = 26%, 12/13 = 14%), whereas older children were more likely to prefer current levels of involvement (9 = 27%, 10 = 31%, 11 = 37%, 12/13 = 40%). Kids from families who eat together often were also more likely to say they prefer the current level of their parents involvement (daily = 40%, semi-weekly = 29%, rarely = 28%). Differences by how often parents

talk to kids could not be interpreted. There were no significant differences by gender or whom a child lives with.

Other Highlights

Another way of looking at the data is to calculate odds ratios for outcomes based on the predictive variables. To statistically control for inter-correlation among variables, odds ratios were calculated using Multivariate Logistic Regression. The outcomes of interest were how often parents ask kids about their lives, kids perceptions of how much their mother and fathers love them, and how involved kids want their parents to be at school.

	Ask as much or more than wanted vs. Less than	Mom loves a lot vs. Some or less	Dad loves a lot vs. Some or less	Same or less involved vs. More involved
Gender				
Male	1.1 (0.7-1.7)	0.9 (0.6-1.4)	0.9 (0.6-1.4)	1.2 (0.9-1.6)
Female	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Age				
12/13	1.4 (0.8-2.8)	0.4* (0.2-0.9)	0.9 (0.5-2.0)	0.3* (0.2-0.5)
11	1.6 (0.8-2.9)	0.8 (0.3-1.7)	1.3 (0.7-2.5)	0.7 (0.4-1.1)
10	1.7 (0.8-3.3)	0.9 (0.4-2.3)	1.7 (0.8-3.3)	0.8 (0.5-1.3)
9	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Live with				
Mom	0.8 (0.5-1.3)	0.6* (0.3-0.9)	0.4* (0.3-0.7)	0.7 (0.5-1.1)
Dad	2.4 (0.6-9.9)	0.3* (0.1-0.8)	0.7 (0.3-1.8)	1.1 (0.5-2.0)
Neither	0.4 (0.1-1.1)	0.7 (0.1-3.2)	0.1* (0.1-0.5)	0.9 (0.3-2.2)
Both	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0

*Statistically significant differences.

The oldest children (12/13) are not even half as likely to say their mothers love them a lot (AOR = 0.4) and to believe their parents are sufficiently involved at their schools (AOR = 0.3) than the youngest respondents (9). Children who live with one parent were less likely to believe that their mothers and fathers love them a lot compared with those who live with both parents. Those who live with only their mothers or with neither parent were less likely to believe that their fathers love them a lot.

For additional information, contact:
 Stephen L. Brown, PhD
 Health Education and Recreation
 Southern Illinois University
 Mailcode 4632
 Carbondale, IL 62901-4632

 (618) 453-1863
slbrown@siu.edu